PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993-94

COMPRISING PERIOD
11 January - 21 January 1994

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 235**

THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Tuesday 11 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Tanks

1. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to procure more tanks for the Army; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I announced on 1 December that, subject to the negotiation of satisfactory contractual terms, we intend to place a further order with Vickers Defence Systems for up to 259 Challenger 2 main battle tanks.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the announcement that the Government intended to buy 259 further Challenger tanks was warmly welcomed by David Brown Gears in my constituency, because the company makes the Challenger gearboxes? When exactly will the order be placed? Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that such an order would not have been possible if the Government had had a defence policy of cutting defence spending by £7 billion, as Labour has, or a policy of cutting it by 50 per cent., as the Liberal Democrats have?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is certainly correct in saying that our announcement should have important employment implications in Leeds, in Newcastle, in his constituency and elsewhere because of the implications for many subcontractors. The actual date for placing the order will depend on the successful negotiations that we hope to have with Vickers. My hon. Friend is, of course, entirely correct in believing that such a proposal could not even have been entertained with the defence budgets to which the Labour party and the Liberal Democrat party appear to be committed by their party conferences.

Mr. Mudie: Will the Secretary of State accept the thanks of the Vickers workers in my constituency for defeating the Treasury and placing the order? Will he confirm that he is determined to resist further approaches from the Treasury and that the order will become a reality as soon as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: We were able to place the proposals before Vickers because we defeated the Labour party at the general election. If we had failed to defeat the Labour party, the hon. Gentleman's constituents would not be as satisfied as they clearly are today.

Helicopters

2. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what time scale he envisages for the tender of helicopters for the armed forces.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): For our attack helicopter requirement, tenders have already been received and are being assessed. For our support helicopter requirement, we are currently entering negotiations with Westland and with Boeing.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that the negotiations for the Royal Air Force support helicopter can be completed by the end of May this year and that the negotiations for the attack helicopter can be completed by April next year? Can he confirm those dates? Does he agree that the 50 per cent. defence cut proposed in the Liberal Democrat defence policy and a reduction in nuclear arms

do not fit easily with the strong words of the leader of the Liberal Democrats? Is it any surprise that the music at the Liberal Democrats' parliamentary ball was provided by the Zig-Zags?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is broadly correct in his estimate of the time scale for attack helicopter procurement. The support helicopter negotiations are likely to take several months longer than he anticipated. All I can say on the zig-zags in Liberal Democrat policy is that if any Government implemented the defence cuts for which the Liberal Democrat conference called, the only helicopters that they would be likely to buy for our armed forces would be those on sale in toyshops.

Mr. Hardy: As the Wessex is in its 30th year of service with the Royal Air Force, when does the Minister expect it to be replaced? Does he believe that the Air Mobile Brigade will be able to maintain adequate heavy lift capacity?

Mr. Aitken: The Wessex remains an extremely effective and good helicopter despite its age because it has been consistently well maintained and its parts have been replaced. We are now studying proposals for replacements for the Wessex. In response to the hon. Gentleman's second question, yes, we are confident that the Air Mobile Brigade can be adequately supported by helicopters.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Will my hon. Friend get back to the basics of warfare by reminding the generals that, at the end of the day, the important thing is to get men on the ground? Instead of spending money on tanks, which are rapidly becoming redundant, he might seek to modernise the British Army by spending the same on helicopters.

Mr. Aitken: One of the many virtues of the EH101 helicopter that my hon. Friend has championed in Adjournment debates and elsewhere is its survivability. That quality is appropriate to the future of support helicopters in addition to lift capability, which is also an important consideration.

Mr. Martlew: In April 1987, the then Secretary of State for Defence assured the House that the Ministry of Defence would place an order for 25 EH101s for the RAF. In December last year, the present Secretary of State told the Select Committee on Defence that the negotiations would start immediately for the purchase of the EH101 and Chinook. Why has the Minister told us today that those negotiations will be subject to even further delay?

A decision in June will be too late and the fact that the hon. Gentleman has said that the negotiations will last for many months beyond that will cause great dismay at Westland. Seven years' delay is long enough. Does he not realise that the EH101 creates good jobs in Britain for British industry, and that it is much needed? Why a further delay?

Mr. Aitken: The last time the hon. Gentleman intervened in a debate on this subject, he accused me of deliberately rushing through decisions on helicopters for party political purposes. Now he has accused me of going too slow. The reason that there has been a delay since 1987 is that, unlike the Labour party, the world has changed since then and there have been important security alterations in the balance of power. We have, quite appropriately, had to consider carefully what helicopters are necessary for that changed security environment. We are now moving forward at a pace which we believe pleases most objective observers, including those at the helicopter companies.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Greenwich

3. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is having discussions at ministerial level with the Department of Health concerning the future use of the Queen Elizabeth hospital in the borough of Greenwich.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): Discussions are continuing and, subject to the resolution of outstanding issues, both Departments would hope that agreement on the question of the possible sale of the hospital to the Greenwich Healthcare Trust will be achieved in the near future.

Mr. Bottomley: I welcome that information. May I say that the services provided by the hospital are held in great regard and affection in Eltham, Woolwich and the rest of the borough of Greenwich. It would be a fine thing if the Queen Elizabeth military hospital could become the replacement for the Brooke on the other side of Shooters Hill and absorb some of the services from Greenwich district hospital as well.

Mr. Hanley: Satisfactory levels of medical and clinical activity will be sustained during the period, and we envisage that there will be shared use at the hospital. I am pleased that the resolution of matters is now rapidly concluding. Some financial and other details need to be dealt with in the next few weeks, but I hope that the matter can be put out for consultation in late spring or early summer, resulting, possibly, in a sale by the end of the year.

Mr. Raynsford: Can the Minister be a little bit more precise about the implications of shared use? How many beds are likely still to be required by the MOD at the hospital in the years ahead? How long will the MOD require millitary use of that hospital, thereby determining the date on which it will finally become available to the national health service?

Mr. Hanley: Two hundred and three beds, by 1998.

Bosnia

4. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest developments in Bosnia.

Mr. Hanley: The Government will continue to provide support to United Nations humanitarian relief operations in Bosnia through the winter.

Ms Hoey: I am sure that the whole House will want to pay tribute to the work that our British troops are doing in Bosnia. Is the Minister aware, however, of the credibility gap that is undermining both NATO's role and that of the UN because of their failure to take sufficiently severe action against Serbian aggression? Will the Government now support immediate selective air strikes to get the airport at Tuzla reopened and, most of all, to lift the siege of Sarajevo?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Lady is absolutely right to pay tribute to what is being achieved by the British contingent in Bosnia. I know that the whole House would want me to

congratulate it, especially as we approach the most difficult months of the winter. So far, 1,675 convoys have been escorted by British troops—more than 80,000 tonnes of aid. In addition, more than 1,000 flights have been carrying aid to Sarajevo and more than 14,500 tonnes of aid have been delivered in that way.

The hon. Lady is not right, or fair, to say that there is a credibility gap. We are helping to save countless thousands of lives in Bosnia, and countless thousands of people are being kept alive by our efforts. We believe that there is a balance to be achieved in carrying out that United Nations resolution. I repeat the NATO summit declaration that we restate our commitment to air power. The NATO summit also called for further action by UNPROFOR to draw up plans to deal with the blockage of the rotation of troops at Srebrenica and we are considering ways in which to make efforts to examine whether Tuzla airport can be reopened. We are doing a great job of which I am proud.

Mr. Wilkinson: May I express my appreciation for the appointment of Commander, United Kingdom Land Forces, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose as general officer commanding-designate of United Nations forces in the former Yugoslavia? Will my hon. Friend tell the House whether the general officer will go out to the theatre with any new political instructions from Her Majesty's Government or other United Nations countries with troops assigned to the theatre?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his tribute to Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose. He will assume command of the United Nations protection force in Bosnia-Herzegovina soon, and shall be out there by the end of month; and I know that he will carry out his task superbly. He is a magnificent soldier, and no change in role is foreseen.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister agree that the language of declarations threatening air strikes is much less significant than the political will that lies behind such declarations? The Government have shown little enthusiasm for air strikes over the past 12 months. What has changed that we should now believe that the Government have the political will to carry them out?

Mr. Hanley: If the hon. and learned Gentleman is questioning the political will of the nations that came together at the NATO summit and reconfirmed the commitment to air strikes, as they had done in August, he will see that it is the strongest commitment that could have possibly been given towards air strikes. If he watches in the days ahead, he may realise that our commitment is a darn sight more than his party's commitment to defence. Instead of mouthing generalities, NATO is getting on with the job.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend accept that any ultimatum given to Serbia or the Serbs following today's declaration must be clear and unequivocal, and that if it is not accepted, it must be followed by action?

Mr. Hanley: I accept that threats are credible only if it is believed that they are likely to be carried out. However, we hope that the action that they are threatening will not take place. If the actions by others not to carry out the sort of acts that have occurred recently—happily, it seems that there have been fewer shelling attacks on Sarajevo yesterday and today—perhaps the threats will have worked. There certainly remains the political will and the military capability to carry out those threats if necessary.

Dr. David Clark: The Prime Minister's much-touted claim this morning to have persuaded NATO to strengthen its stance on bombing of the Serbs in Bosnia stands ill with the long official communiqué from NATO which merely dismissed the matter in two short sentences beginning with the words, "We reaffirm". In view of that, can I ask the Minister whether there has been any change in NATO and Government policy, or whether this is merely another example of PR hype?

Mr. Hanley: Of course it is not a matter of pure PR hype.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there any change?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) degrades the efforts of the NATO countries in coming to their conclusions and in bringing clearly to the attention of the world their intentions with regard to Bosnia.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there any change?

Mr. Hanley: It is easy to be dismissive of help in——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there any change?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman at the back is chattering away and saying, "Is there any change?"

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hanley: There is change daily in Bosnia. We react daily to the situation in Bosnia. We are helping to save lives in Bosnia, and we are making sure that we have the wherewithal to act if the situation gets worse in Bosnia. We will continue to do that. There is no media hype. The Prime Minister will report to the House in due course on the summit.

Mr. Viggers: Does my hon. Friend agree that air strikes, however selective, increase the risk that the British forces, as part of the United Nations, could be perceived as the fourth side in the civil war? Will he ensure that Her Majesty's Government do not enter into any commitment that they cannot fulfil?

Mr. Hanley: I can assure my hon. Friend that if there were air strikes, they would not be taken unilaterally by the United Kingdom forces but would be part of the international effort. Therefore, I do not believe that the United Kingdom should be seen to be a fourth party. However, my hon. Friend is right to say that air strikes change the situation and make it more difficult to deliver aid on the ground. That has to be borne in mind with each passing day.

Home Defence

5. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what new proposals he has to improve the defence of the British Isles.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government's plans for the defence of the United Kingdom and for our wider security interests are detailed in the White Paper "Defending Our Future", and in my evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee on 1 December.

Mr. Flynn: Is not the greatest danger to Britain and the rest of the world the proliferation of nuclear weapons, especially to the new tyrannies that are growing up from the right and the left? Is it not an act of insanity for Britain to commission THORP, which will create enough plutonium to make 50,000 nuclear weapons in the next 10 years, and to export the plutonium to the four corners of the world? Was the Secretary of State consulted on the defence implications of the commissioning of THORP?

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally, I was involved in the discussions that took place on the matter. I am entirely satisfied that the hon. Gentleman's assertions are plain nonsense. First, we have not the slightest intention of exporting any of the material to countries that do not conform absolutely to their international commitments. Secondly, the material in question could not, without the most extreme difficulty, be converted for any military purpose. The hon. Gentleman appears to be unaware of that.

Mr. Mans: In relation to the defence of the United Kingdom, will my right hon. and learned Friend look closely at the potential threat that is likely to develop towards the end of the decade of a surface-to-surface missile attack on this country from various emergent nations in the middle east?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct to draw attention to such a problem. We already have reason to believe that countries such as Libya have a missile capability that could threaten Italy or parts of southern France. As the years go by, it is possible that a range of such missiles could penetrate much further north. It is one of the new emerging threats of which NATO as a whole and Britain must take increasing account in our future defence plans.

Mr. Maginnis: Is the Secretary of State aware that, in terms of the defence of the United Kingdom, and despite the wishes of the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland, the IRA has already decided to reject any opportunity of peace, and is simply trying to find a way of rejecting the Downing street declaration? Is he satisfied, in the light of that information, that regiments such as the Parachute Regiment are adequately manned for the role that they have to carry out in Northern Ireland? There are reports that such regiments are having to depend on the territorials to make up numbers. Can the Secretary of State tell us what the knock-on effect on our special forces will ultimately be?

Mr. Rifkind: First, I am sure that the whole House will unite in condemning the vicious attack in the past 24 hours in Crossmaglen, which resulted in serious injury to two soldiers serving in Northern Ireland. It is not unusual for individual territorials to serve in Northern Ireland, but I am conscious of the fact that it is important that any unit, whether serving in Northern Ireland or elsewhere, should be as fully manned as possible. One reason why I announced last December an increase of some 3,000 in the field Army was precisely to help ease the difficulties that occasionally occur.

Mr. Devlin: On maximising resources for the defence of the United Kingdom, why is my right hon. and learned Friend allowing the Navy to empty a large office building in my constituency at the Royal Navy spare parts department and then to construct a new building—to all intents and purposes exactly the same—in the Bath area, as part of the new Naval Support Command?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand my hon. Friend's natural concern on behalf of his constituents. I assure him that the proposal to which he refers was strenuously examined. We concluded that it was right to go ahead with that proposal only because we were satisfied that there would be substantial cost benefits for the armed forces.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The Secretary of State must have been made aware over the past months of the anxiety among senior Territorial Army officers that, although the forces at their command are adequate now, if the proposed cuts are implemented, they will not be adequate for the task of regenerating British forces. What reassurances can he give our TA that it will have the capability to carry out the assigned task of regenerating our forces?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman refers to proposed cuts in the TA. I am aware of no such proposed cuts. A review is going on into the future size and structure of the TA, but it has yet to make recommendations to Ministers. The hon. Gentleman's comments are premature, to say the least. He should be joining in the welcome that the TA has given to the Government's proposal to make much wider and more flexible use of the reserves. We published that proposal recently and, as the hon. Gentleman should be well aware, it has been widely welcomed throughout the Territorial Army.

Tracker Radar

6. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to place a contract for the conversion of type 911 tracker radars to meet the requirement for vertical launched Sea Wolf on type 23 frigates.

Mr. Aitken: An order for the conversion of the type 911 tracker radars is currently planned for the spring.

Mr. Burns: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer, which will be warmly welcomed in my constituency. If the contract is placed with Marconi Radar, it will help to safeguard jobs there. However, will my hon. Friend seek to clarify exactly what "the spring" means? Is there a chance that the contract will be determined before 31 March? Will the contract be similar to the original contract bid put out in August 1992?

Mr. Aitken: All that I can say in response to my hon. Friend, remembering his assiduous representations in Adjournment debates and at other times on that subject, is that we will do our best to try to ensure that spring comes a little early to Chelmsford this year.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Minister take this opportunity to congratulate the shipyard workers of Tyneside on the quality of the type 23 frigates that they have already delivered to the Royal Navy? Will he also confirm that the Ministry of Defence regards Swan Hunter as an important supplier of equipment to the Royal Navy, and that it envisages a future for Swan Hunter, in spite of its present difficulties? Will he now list the work that could be immediately available to Swan Hunter were it purchased by a private sector shipbuilder?

Mr. Aitken: I am certainly glad to pay a warm tribute to the high skills of Tyneside shipbuilders in general and Swan Hunter in particular. I confirm that we should like to do everything possible to ensure that Swan Hunter has a future. For that reason, we have not only let the existing type 23s continue to be finished there but have provided some extra work in the shape of the rectification contract on Fort George. In terms of future work that Swan Hunter might be able to win, I believe that a tender is now out for a ship life extension programme of landing ship logistics for which I think Swan Hunter may be bidding. Of course in future we should like to see a new owner for Swan Hunter to guarantee its viability, but in terms of technical quality there is no reason whatever why Swan Hunter should not submit a first-class bid for that or other MOD work.

Defence Budget

7. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the defence budget for 1992-93 as a percentage of gross domestic product; and what are the planned figures for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Rifkind: The defence budget was equivalent to 4·1 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1992-93. It is expected to be 3·7 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1993-94 and 3·5 per cent. in 1994-95.

Mr. Williams: Against that background of contraction in the defence budget, the Minister will know of my concern about the proof and experimental establishment at Pendine in my constituency. I understand that the final recommendation on rationalisation of the direct labour test and evaluation is on the Minister's desk. Can he give some idea when decisions will be made and say whether they will be announced in the form of a statement to the House?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct in assuming that we are at a fairly advanced stage in considering the matter to which he has referred. We hope to come to a conclusion in the next few weeks.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the figures include alleged savings made by the closure of HMS Malabar? Will he explain why that closure was announced on the day before Christmas recess when very few hon. Members were present, although he had given an undertaking that important closures of that kind, of strategic Royal Navy bases, would be made in the House and not leaked to the press the day before an announcement was made?

Mr. Rifkind: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is being most uncharitable, and that is in increasingly characteristic form. He ought to be aware that the naval significance of the base that he mentions is not of the same order as in the past. At present, it is largely used merely for rest and recreation. Modern frigates do not require refuelling in the way that was required in the past. We have had full consultations with the Government of Bermuda, and it is right and proper that we should not incur unnecessary expenditure. I pay great tribute to the important part that HMS Malabar played in past years. However, modern technology and requirements mean that it is no longer necessary.

Ms Rachel Squire: Does the Secretary of State agree that a sensible approach to public expenditure on defence is to seek value for money? If he does, will he explain why he is planning to waste taxpayers' money and lose control of vital strategic interests by going ahead with the privatisation of the two dockyards?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not think that there is any question of losing control in the way that the hon. Lady suggests. As she is aware, both yards were corporatised and have been run by the private sector for several years. That has led to substantial improvements in both yards. It is in the long-term interests of the yards for them to be transferred to the private sector.

Mr. Streeter: Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that any reduction in the budget for 1994-95 will affect support services and not our front-line capability? In particular, will he confirm that every aspect of our support services, including fleet maintenance, will be subject to impartial and rigorous scrutiny so that we can ensure value for money for the Navy and the taxpayer?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. It is right and proper to have rigorous scrutiny of ways of reducing the cost of providing the defence services that are needed. I am happy to confirm that, in doing that, we are determined not to reduce the fighting capability of our armed forces.

Russia and European Security

9. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the Russian Defence Minister to discuss European security.

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to meet General Grachev at a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers and their counterparts from the member states of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, to be held later this year.

Mr. Gapes: Does the Secretary of State share my concern at the rising support in Russia for the fascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, a man who has threatened a third world war? Is he aware that even the Yeltsin Government have so far failed to recognise the borders of Ukraine, which is contrary to the requirements of international law under the CSCE agreement, to the Paris charter, and to yesterday's NATO communiqué? When he next meets hisRussian counterpart, will he impress on him the fact that if we are to get the Ukraine to carry out its policy of getting rid of nuclear weapons, it will be vital to obtain firm assurances from Russia that there will be no intervention in neighbouring states, either in the so-called near abroad or in any of the former republics of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally it is important that Russia recognises the independence and integrity of all the former republics of the former Soviet Union, and it is also crucial that neither Mr. Zhirinovsky nor others in Russia harbour any illusion that somehow the old Russian empire could be recreated. There is every sign that in the near future there will be an announcement of an agreement between Ukraine and Russia, in which President Clinton seems to have played a major part, and which will help to resolve the long-standing problem of nuclear weapons in Ukraine and help to bring further stability to that important region.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Has my right hon. and learned Friend noticed that recently, in rejecting calls for cuts in defence expenditure, the Swedish Defence Minister went on to say that Sweden should increase its spending by about 30 per cent. because the Russians had failed to cut the number of their troops near Sweden? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that has a huge bearing on us? In his future discussions with the Treasury will he draw that fact to its attention and point out that there is still a strong potential threat from Russia?

Mr. Rifkind: It is undoubtedly true that Russia remains a nuclear super-power, and also a formidable conventional power. The reductions in the defence forces of the NATO states have taken into account the massive reductions made by Russia, but I entirely accept that it is necessary to monitor the situation carefully and to ensure that throughout Europe, including Russia, the various countries concerned are not in any way rearming or imposing new threats.

Dr. David Clark: When the Secretary of State next meets the Russian Defence Minister, will he stress the desire of the people of the west to live in peace and harmony with those of Russia, but will he also stress that it is not a hostile act to wish to determine our own security arrangements and that Russia should not expect to veto the expansion of NATO, which in due course will increase the stability of the whole continent?

Mr. Rifkind: NATO has made it clear, most recently in the summit that has just finished, that its future expansion is indeed a possibility, and that the "Partnership for Peace" proposals do not preclude the possibility that a number of states that have shown an interest in joining NATO may one day be members. The present priority is for NATO to develop links with all the countries of central and eastern Europe, including Russia itself, but the possibility of additional membership cannot be excluded.

Global Conflict

10. **Mr. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his priorities in relation to reducing the risk of global conflict in 1994.

Mr. Hanley: The Government's plans for the defence of the wider security interests of the United Kingdom are set out in "Defending our Future", the 1993 statement on the defence estimates, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given that events in places such as Korea cannot give any encouragement to the belief that we are succeeding in nuclear non-proliferation around the world, and given the decision announced in the House before Christmas to go ahead with THORP, unless the court case that begins on Thursday overturns the position —whatever else that decision may be, it cannot make nuclear non-proliferation less likely—will the Government state what they intend to do this year to implement their obligations under article 6 of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to

"pursue negotiations in good faith"

for non-proliferation? What action will be taken on negotiations this year?

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom Government's policy on the non-proliferation treaty is to work towards its unconditional indefinite extension in 1995. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and we have shown our readiness to reduce our nuclear arsenal wherever we can. In addition to the recent announcement on warhead numbers by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, we have reduced our RAF nuclear strike squadrons from 11 to eight, we have given up our nuclear artillery and Lance missile roles, we have reduced our WE177 stockpile by more than half, and we have eliminated our maritime sub-strategic nuclear capability.

The hon. Gentleman asked about priorities and global conflict. I assure him that one priority of the Government is not to follow the Liberal Democrats' policy of cutting defence expenditure by half by the year 2000, which is grossly irresponsible.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that we can enhance our contribution to the task of reducing the risk of global conflict by reducing our support services costs in favour of front-line forces? In the context of privatisation and the front-line force review, will my hon. Friend consider freezing the decision to move the RAF's support management group in my constituency to RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire so that a market test can be undertaken, without the cost of the move, into the possibility of retaining that group in Harrogate?

Mr. Hanley: I think that my hon. Friend has the support of the House when he says that the most effective British forces are those with the greatest capability in the front line. We do, however, need effective and efficient support. That has to be looked at and we should certainly not cut back on the front line at the cost of allowing ineffective and inefficient support.

I am afraid that the particular case that my hon. Friend has raised has already been proven and will not be reopened.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does the Minister agree that one of the greatest threats to global security today is the rise of nationalism and facism? Does he not consider that one of the best ways to fight that rise is to indicate strongly to the Serbian fascists that their aggression will not be tolerated?

Mr. Hanley: I think that the whole House will agree with the hon. Lady. I should add, however, that the Serbs are not the only people who can be guilty of those charges.

"Front Line First"

12. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of the "front line first" review.

14. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on provisions within the "front line first" report.

Mr. Rifkind: The purpose of the "front line first" study is to identify areas where we can reduce the costs of support to our front-line forces so as to ensure that defence provision is properly concentrated on front-line operational effectiveness. That comprehensive and radical study is now well under way.

Mr. Mans: Will my right hon. and learned Friend indicate early in the process the elements and units in the front line that are unlikely to be affected by the review and those that are more likely to be affected? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the House would settle down. It is very difficult to hear hon. Members.

Mr. Rifkind: The instruction that has been given to those carrying out the study is that it would not be appropriate for them to consider any proposals that, if implemented, would reduce the fighting capability of our armed forces. I believe that that is the right criterion to apply to such a study.

Lady Olga Maitland: While assessing operational effectiveness under "front line first", will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that putting extra tanks, helicopters and men into the field is worthless unless those forces are properly sustained by training, fuel and spare parts?

Mr. Rifkind: I do, indeed, accept that. It is important to ensure that our armed forces are not only well manned but well trained and well equipped. Only the combination of those three factors will enable them to be certain of winning any conflict in which they might be involved and of maintaining the high reputation that they deservedly have.

Dr. Reid: First, I sincerely wish the Secretary of State a much happier year in his job than he has had in the past few miserable years and I congratulate him on his low press profile over the recent recess. However, by what curious twist of logic does the Secretary of State feel it appropriate to conduct a formal review of the efficiency and administration of our armed forces when he has pointedly refused for the past three years to carry out a proper and thorough review of their commitments and strategic objectives? How can we possibly review our structures without knowing the strategy and commitments? Is it not clear that the Secretary of State's main priority during the review will be to identify Treasury-dictated budgetary savings rather than to provide for the defence of the realm?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman, as usual, fails to understand the purpose of the review. We are seeking to reduce unnecessary costs and to be able to use at least some of the savings to enhance the fighting capability of our armed forces. It is precisely for that reason that I was recently able to announce an increase in the field Army and the go-ahead for new tanks, support helicopters and mine hunters as indicated a few weeks ago.

Yugoslavia

13. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest position in respect of British troops operating in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: An Army battalion group, currently 1 Coldstream Guards, is deployed on humanitarian aid and refugee escort duties. Royal Air Force and Royal Navy aircraft are engaged in the humanitarian airlift and other operations and Royal Navy assets are deployed in the Adriatic.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not absolutely essential during these winter months that adequate supplies get through to the civilians in Bosnia? Is it not intolerable that anyone, including the Serb commanders, should hold up supplies which ought to be going to the men, women and childen who so desperately need aid? What are the international community and the British Government going to do to ensure that all the humanitarian aid supplies get through to the people who need them?

Mr. Hanley: Without the efforts of the United Kingdom forces and others in the United Nations protection force, no aid would be getting through. We are doing our best, and saving hundreds of thousands of lives as a result. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is right—we must continue all our efforts to get that aid where it should go.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 January.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the NATO summit in Brussels.

Mr. Denham: Is the Leader of the House aware that there is a certain amount of confusion about the precise nature of the "back to basics" policy? Will he confirm that honesty is one of the "back to basics" values? If it is, why did the Conservatives promise at the last general election not to put up tax and then impose £10 per family per week?

Mr. Newton: Our concern as a Government is with good standards in education, strengthening the fight against crime and, not least, ensuring a sound economic foundation on which all other objectives must rest. Our policy on taxation and in all economic matters is directed towards that end and it is manifestly bringing about the growth that people want to see.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the barometers of the British economy is the housing industry? Does he therefore share my satisfaction —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It is good to start the new year in good humour, but I should like to hear the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark).

Dr. Michael Clarke: Does my right hon. Friend therefore share my satisfaction with the figures revealed yesterday, which show that private sector housing starts are on the increase?

Mr. Newton: I do indeed share my hon. Friend's pleasure in those figures. Private sector housing starts increased significantly in November, as in the previous month. Indeed, in November they were the highest since October 1989, and 42 per cent. higher than a year earlier. That is very good news and it shows the benefits of the policies to which I referred a few moments ago.

Mr. John Smith: Is it not now abundantly clear that "back to basics", a slogan which was devised to get the Prime Minister through the Tory party conference, has spectacularly backfired on a Government who are now in hopeless confusion and disarray about what it means, particularly when applied to themselves?

Mr. Newton: I have already made it clear, in answer to the first question asked of me this afternoon, that our concern is with raising standards in education, strengthening the fight against crime and, above all, strengthening the British economy. Those are objectives which the British people support and want to see achieved, and they know that they would not get them from the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. John Smith: Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that the problem is that the current definitions are so markedly different from the moralistic speeches of Minister after Minister at the Tory party conference? Does he recollect the Home Secretary saying to the conference that the distinction between right and wrong had to be sharpened instead of blurred? Why is it all so different now?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was absolutely right to make that point in the context of the fight against crime, which the House will debate later today. The objectives of what the Government are seeking to bring about remain and will remain as I have stated them and as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set them out at that conference.

Mr. John Smith: Does the right hon. Gentleman not yet appreciate that what the British people dislike intensely is the hypocrisy of double standards which "back to basics" has now become? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us and the public why there should be one set of rules for the the people and another set of rules for Ministers and Tory Members of Parliament?

Mr. Newton: What I think that the British people most dislike is the hypocrisy of a party which talks like that and then opposes every move to raise educational standards and every move to fight crime, and which pursues policies which could only damage Britain's economy.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Britain continues to maintain a flexible and responsive approach to military action in Bosnia? Does he agree that, until recently, Britain has been entirely right to resist premature calls for air strikes in the region, which would have led to extreme danger for our troops on the ground who were sent there to police a United Nations ceasefire, not to take part in guerrilla warfare?

Mr. Newton: I can say that, after some very fruitful meetings in Brussels this morning, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in speaking there, has made it clear that we will be drawing up plans to help UNPROFOR to bring in a Netherlands contingent to replace the Canadians in Srebrenica and has also agreed to examine how Tuzla airport can be opened, with the intention that it should serve as a conduit for humanitarian relief. My right hon. Friend has also made it clear that if it is necessary to use air power to achieve those objectives, we would be willing to do so.

Q2. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Connarty: Does the Leader of the House now think that morality is very important also in public life? Is he aware that, in the Forth valley enterprise area, thanks to the diligent investigation by the local paper, *The Falkirk Herald,* it has been revealed that £2 million in grants from the enterprise board has gone to people who sit on the board? In fact, just recently, the secretary of the board resigned after an investigation by Scottish Television. There are allegations of training grants to companies that had no trainees and allegations of the register of companies' interests being falsified, and there is still £50,000 missing. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, appointees who have a self interest to pursue will not look after the public interest and that running the country by quangos, as the Government have tried to do, will lead to corruption inevitably?

Mr. Newton: In view of some of the things that have emerged about, for example, Labour local authorities, I think that that is a curious charge for the hon. Gentleman to make, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will examine anything that needs to be examined in the light of that or any other event of that kind.

Mr. Waterson: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the Dun and Bradstreet report, which shows increased business confidence in trading conditions at the moment? Does he agree that that augurs well for the future of the British economy in the next 12 months?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The survey published today shows that United Kingdom businesses are more confident about trading conditions in the current quarter, with well over half forecasting higher profits and nearly a third expecting to take on more staff. That shows the benefits of the policy of low interest rates and low inflation which the Government have successfully been pursuing.

Q3. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: I wish you, Madam Speaker, and the rest of the House, a happy new year. Will the Leader of the House make it a happy new year for the disabled miners who are at home and worried because of the lack of guarantees for the future of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, a worthwhile organisation which looks after them and their families? If the Leader of the House wants a moral crusade, I would name that one.

Mr. Newton: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes for the new year, which I much appreciate. With regard to the substantive thrust of his question, he will of course have an opportunity before long to raise that and any other point during discussions on the Coal Industry Bill. I will of course draw them to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to consider the remarks of Tom Donnett, a Liberal county councillor in Somerset, who has described villagers whose views he disapproves of as being no better than yids, nignogs, eyeties and Pakis? Does not my right hon. Friend find a curious distinction that the Liberal Democrat party leader in his appearances in the House adopts a tone of

self-righteous pomposity while harbouring people within his party whose views would not be tolerated in the National Front?

Mr. Newton: In line with the good wishes for the new year, I had better say that my hon. Friend might say that, but I cannot possibly comment. I understand that the remarks have been referred to the Commission for Racial Equality. Perhaps we shall see not only what the commission has to say, but in due course what the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and his party have to say.

Q4. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Hoey: Will the Leader of the House urge the Prime Minister, in what will obviously be a review of his "back to basics" policy, to consider a "back to basics" in foreign policy? Does he agree that part of that should be a basic understanding that aggression should not be rewarded? Does he further agree that it is crucial that the siege of Sarajevo be lifted and that the Government call for immediate air strikes to take out the artillery surrounding that city?

Mr. Newton: Without for one moment accepting the suggestion in the first half of the hon. Lady's question, I think that the need with these policies is to get on and ensure that they are effective, which is what we seek to do. On the second part, with reference to Bosnia—the hon. Lady mentioned particularly Sarajevo—I referred earlier to another couple of issues: the position at Srebrenica and the position at the airport at Tuzla. I think that the hon. Lady would be well advised to read full reports of the understandings that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reached with our allies in Brussels today about further action in those areas.

Mr. Dickens: Concentrating still on important matters, does my right hon. Friend welcome the improvement in the balance of trade figures announced yesterday?

Mr. Newton *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] I was caught out by my hon. Friend's unaccustomed brevity, but I am grateful both for his brevity and for the good point that he raised. I am delighted to see the improvement in the balance of trade of something like £500 million in October, with exports outside the European Community up by some 12 per cent. on a year ago. It is further convincing evidence of the success of our policies. I look forward, although without much expectation, to the Opposition congratulating not only British industry and British workers but the Government on the conditions that have helped to bring that about.

Q5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Government be demanding of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) that he repay the £50,000 that he got out of his housing fiddle on the second council house in Westminster? How can the Government justify bailing out the firm owned by the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) at £200,000 when thousands of firms in Britain have gone to the wall and millions of people have been made redundant? Why does not the right hon. Gentleman demand that the hon. Member for City of Chester foots the bill himself?

Mr. Newton: I have nothing to add to what my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has said in recent days. I imagine that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) appreciates that the position of my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) is exactly the same as that which would arise with any other company which does not succeed. Neither the company nor my hon. Friend has been treated differently from any other company or any other individual in similar circumstances.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Has the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) told you whether he intends to make a statement, particularly as the overwhelming view of hon. Members is that he should repay the £50,000 that he has conned out of ratepayers in Westminster? I am a ratepayer in Westminster——

Madam Speaker: So am I.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: —as are you, Madam Speaker, and many others, and the ratepayers want their money back.

Madam Speaker: I think that the matter has been aired sufficiently. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 14 December, I was fortunate enough to initiate a debate on the problems arising from the Child Support Agency. The Minister who replied to the debate said that the Department had the matter in mind but that he would not tell the House that day of its conclusions.

Just over a week later, while the House was in recess, the Minister publicly announced changes to the Child Support Agency. If that was not disrespectful enough to the House, in today's post hon. Members were sent a pamphlet, presumably published at public expense, saying that those changes would take effect in February 1994. As the changes have yet to come before the House in whatever form, is that not at the best unwise and at the least another example of gross disrespect for hon. Members?

Madam Speaker: When the resolutions are brought forward, as the hon. Gentleman will know, they will be in debatable form. I hope that it will not be too long before the House has an opportunity to debate them.

BILLS PRESENTED

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide protection to individuals and in the courts of the United Kingdom for the rights and freedoms specified in the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; to entrench those rights and freedoms; to establish a Human Rights Commission; to make further provision with regard to the protection of civil, political, economic and social rights; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Tuesday 25 January, and to be printed. [Bill 30.]

HEDGEROWS

Mr. Peter Hardy, supported by Mr. Peter L. Pike, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Patrick Cormack, Mr. Hugh Bayley, Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. Paul Tyler, Sir Dudley Smith, Mr. Alan Meale and Sir David Madel, presented a Bill for the protection and maintenance of boundary hedges, hedges bordering footpaths, bridleways and highways and other hedgerows and thorn fences: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 January, and to be printed. [Bill 31.]

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: Before we begin the debate, I must inform the House that an enormous number of hon. Members want to take part. Therefore, I must limit speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock to 10 minutes. I make a special plea to those hon. Members who are called outside that time to show respect for their colleagues and to restrict their speeches, if they would be good enough to do so.

I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. For the avoidance of doubt in the future, can you say whether as a matter of course you intend to consider reasoned amendments on Second Reading of Bills which do not indicate in the customary form that the House declines to give a Bill a Second Reading? I made some inquiries about whether an amendment such as that which has been tabled would be in order, and I was advised that it would not. I am therefore somewhat surprised by your ruling.

Madam Speaker: There is no set form, but I have looked carefully at the amendment. It contains such a long list of excluded provisions that it falls within the description of a reasoned amendment. Of course, I look carefully at all amendments and I will continue to do so.

3.36 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Both law and order Bills which have been introduced during this Session—the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill—have a very clear purpose: to assist in the fight against crime and to protect the public.

The Government have a consistent record of taking action to deal with crime. We have massively increased the number of police officers and their resources. We have strengthened the power of the courts to pass proper sentences on criminals. We have pioneered crime prevention measures of all kinds and in all areas of the country.

As all hon. Members know, crime has risen across the developed world. It has risen in this country, and it continues to blight our communities. As Home Secretary, I am determined to respond to the challenge with action —action that will make a difference.

In October, I announced the most comprehensive package of measures to tackle crime ever announced by a Home Secretary. The measures rest on some basic, common-sense principles: that protecting the public is the first job of Government, that criminals should he held responsible for their actions and that the police, who are in the forefront of the fight against crime, should be given the powers which they need to catch criminals. Those are principles in which the Government believe, and they lie at the heart of the Bill.

The response of the Opposition has been a truly feeble reasoned amendment. It believes that the Bill, which marks a fundamental shift in the criminal justice system against the criminal and in favour of protecting the public, is—I quote from the words of the Opposition amendment—"not an acceptable . . . measure" without its various additions. If the amendment fails, the Opposition will presumably vote against the Bill.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Of course not. If the Home Secretary accepts our reasoned amendment, we will support the Bill. The right hon. and learned Gentleman may want to support the amendment which he thinks is so feeble. If he does not accept it, the Opposition will abstain on Second Reading and table our amendments in due course.

The Home Secretary has announced what he claims to be the most comprehensive measure to fight crime ever to be announced by a Home Secretary. Upon what measure will the right hon. and learned Gentleman judge the success of the Bill? Will it cut crime, or will it not? If it does not cut crime, will he accept that it has failed?

Mr. Howard: It will provide the country with the most effective system of criminal justice which it is possible for a Government to provide. That is the task of Government, and it is the task which we set ourselves.

I must tell the hon. Gentleman that it is not the habit of the Government to accept feeble amendments such as that which has been tabled by the Opposition; and I rightly used the word "feeble" to describe the amendment.

Let us consider the implications of the answer that the hon. Gentleman has just given. If the feeble amendment is rejected, he and his party will abstain. They will abstain on a Bill that includes a massive expansion of DNA testing. They will abstain on a Bill that will allow juries to take into account a defendant's silence. They will abstain on a Bill that will establish secure centres to get juvenile criminals off the streets. The police want all those things, the public want all those things, but the Labour party cannot even make up its mind what to do about them.

Mr. Blair: On the contrary. I wish that Conservative Back Benchers could have seen the right hon. and learned Gentleman's face drop about six inches when we told him that we did not intend to oppose the Second Reading.

Surely, if the Bill is the most comprehensive measure to fight crime, a judgment must be made about whether it succeeds or fails. The right hon. and learned Gentleman sets performance indicators for everyone else; what is his? Will the Bill cut crime or will it not—yes or no?

Mr. Howard: We are taking a range of measures—some are contained in this Bill and some in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill. The police will be set performance indicators for the work that they do. We are determined to make this attempt to put in place the most effective measures that it is possible to devise. That is what the Bill is all about.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I have given way to the hon. Member for Sedgefield twice, so I shall give way to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and then I must get on with the Bill.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for giving way. He has said that the Bill will provide the most effective criminal justice system. What criteria for judging its effectiveness does he have in mind if not the numbers of crimes committed?

Mr. Howard: I have said that this Bill and the other measures that we are putting in place will achieve the most comprehensive and effective framework that it is possible to devise to prevent crime, to enable the police more effectively to catch criminals and to enable the courts more effectively to convict them and to deal with them when they have been convicted. That is the responsibility of Government and it is a responsibility that we are determined to discharge.

I now propose to explain exactly how we shall set about achieving those objectives and tackling the concerns which have been so widely expressed and which the Bill will address.

The feeble amendment tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition does not deal with, or indeed even mention, the key proposals in the Bill. The amendment shows the usual strategy of the Opposition whenever such matters are dealt with: whatever new and tough proposals the Government propose, they want to talk about something else. They never want to say whether they agree or disagree with what we are suggesting. No doubt that is why they will abstain tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Howard: Today should have been decision time for the hon. Member for Sedgefield. This is the Bill. He should make up his mind whether to vote for or against it.

Madam Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the Secretary of State does not wish to give way at the moment?

Mr. Howard: Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case hon. Members must not persist.

Mr. Howard: The Bill carries into effect many of the pledges that I made in October. Of the 27 points that I announced in October, 22 require legislation. Of those, 18 will be dealt with in the Bill and four will be taken forward later. The remaining five announcements do not require legislation but are being pursued equally vigorously. More help for victims, reducing cautions, establishing parish constables and cutting police paperwork—all of those policies are well under way.

The establishment of a new independent body to consider allegations of miscarriages of justice is one measure that requires legislation. I have accepted the royal commission's recommendation on that matter and I am determined to ensure that effective machinery is set up for that purpose. However, before that can be done we must settle some important issues that were not resolved by the royal commission's report, such as the relationship between the new authority and the Court of Appeal on the one hand and Ministers on the other and the way in which the authority will investigate representations, including the role of the police. Those matters have all been taken forward urgently and I intend shortly to issue a consultation paper which will deal with them in detail.

I plan soon to set out in more detail the Government's approach to the royal commission's report.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Home Secretary answer clearly so that the public can hear the answer on television the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair)? Will the Bill and the other legislation proposed by the Government cut crime—yes or no? We want no waffle; yes or no?

Mr. Howard: It is typical of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—and of the Labour party—that he first asks a question on the 27 points and then puts a question that does not even mention the 27 points. I answered the question put by the hon. Member for Sedgefield. The people of this country will understand the answer even if the hon. Member for Workington does not. The Bill will enact——

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Mr. Howard: Judging by the standard of the interventions by Labour Members, it would be utterly useless for me to give way to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) or to other Labour Members. I plan to go on to explain what the Bill contains.

The Bill will enact a major reform of the criminal justice system, which needs reform. It is not providing adequate protection for the law abiding. It has not been able to cope with the small hard core of persistent juvenile offenders. Bail is too often granted to criminals who offend again and again. Too many obstacles are still in the way of the police. They must have the powers that they need to combat crime and to bring criminals to justice. The powers of the courts are inadequate. They are not able to deal as they or we would wish with the cases that come before them. The balance in the criminal justice system is tilted too far in favour of the criminal and against protecting the public. The Bill will help to put that right.

The Bill deals with a wide range of issues, with which I shall deal briefly in turn. Part I contains measures to tackle juvenile crime. The message from police, from magistrates and from local communities throughout the country is clear. There is a small hard core of young tearaways who commit crime after crime, and who cock a snook at our entire criminal justice system. At present the courts are unable to deal adequately with persistent juvenile offenders, especially those aged between 12 and 14. The public must be protected from them.

The Bill provides for a new secure training order. The order will be available to the courts for dealing with persistent young offenders aged between 12 and 14 who have committed three or more imprisonable offences and who have failed to respond to punishment in the community. The maximum sentence will be two years: one year in custody, followed by an equal term of close supervision in the community to help prevent those young offenders from reoffending. That is one of the measures about which the Labour party cannot make up its mind. Labour will abstain on that measure tonight; it cannot decide whether to vote for or against it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is not one of the problems with the young thug and gang leader that there is no proper deterrent? Should not we be a little more radical than is my right hon. and learned Friend, with whose ideas I agree? I hope that we can put some positive element of training into the new institutions about which he speaks. In addition, should not we have the stick as well as the carrot? Should not we consider corporal punishment as a deterrent for people who have not otherwise been deterred?

Mr. Howard: I am not persuaded that corporal punishment would have the effect that my hon. Friend seeks to achieve. He is right to say that the secure training centres should not be mere detention centres. They should and will provide high-quality education and training designed to encourage those who benefit to lead law-abiding lives. These young criminals are people in respect of whom other attempts to stop them committing crimes have been tried but have failed. All of them will have been previously convicted and will have offended again. All of them will have received a supervision order and will either have offended during it or will have been in breach of it. All of them will have committed at least one offence that is serious enough to warrant custody.

For 15, 16 and 17-year-olds, the sentence of detention in a young offender institution is currently limited to 12 months. As I announced in October, the Government believe that that places an unnecessary restriction on the courts. The Bill therefore doubles the maximum sentence from 12 months to two years to give the courts the flexibility that they need to deal with serious offending by that age group. The Labour party cannot make up its mind on that proposal; it will vote neither for nor against it.

There is also a gap at present in the courts' power to deal with juveniles who commit very serious crimes. Currently, 10 to 13-year-olds can be sentenced to detention if they are found guilty of murder or manslaughter. The Sexual Offences Act 1993 allowed boys in that age group to be charged with rape, but it did not provide powers to detain them after conviction for that offence. The Bill therefore extends the scope of section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 so that 10 to 13-year-olds may be detained if convicted of any offence for which an adult could be sentenced to imprisonment for 14 years or more. That will cover not only rape but robbery, arson and domestic burglary.

The Bill also provides for 10 to 15-year-olds to be detained if convicted of indecent assault on a woman, the same penalty as is already available in the case of 16 and 17-year-olds.

As I announced in June last year, I propose one further change in the way in which the law treats young people before the courts. At present, the media cannot identify juveniles who are alleged to have committed or have been convicted of serious crimes and who are on the run. Those media restrictions make the task of the police in recapturing those young people much harder and the threat to the public much greater. Those restrictions should not be allowed to continue and the necessary changes to allow those youngsters to be named and their photographs to be published are contained in part III of the Bill.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): On 5 October, in Blackpool, the Home Secretary said that children who are born to people who are not married, where the father is not living with the mother at the time of birth, are more likely to spend their childhood concentrating on not getting caught. Does he still think that that is true?

Mr. Howard: Of course I still think it is true. I think that these are matters that must be addressed. We do not subscribe to the attitude of the thought police on the Labour Benches, who say that such matters should never

be mentioned. It was only the other day that President Clinton of the United States, not normally regarded as a right-wing Conservative, said that two-parent families are generally better. Of course that is right, and of course I stand by what I said on 5 October.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that I spent a number of years prosecuting in juvenile courts, particularly in the west midlands, prior to entering the House. Does he agree that the measures he has announced in the Bill will be greatly welcomed by magistrates, the police and the British people, because, at long last, juveniles who commit very serious crimes between the ages of 12 and 14 will be able to be sentenced to custodial sentences when other measures have been tried and have failed?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that the British people will not be at all impressed by the weasel words of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and his party, who will not say that they support the measures contained in the Bill? The British people recognise that the only party that truly believes in law and order is the Conservative party, while the Labour party continues to be soft on crime.

Mr. Howard: I agree, perhaps not entirely surprisingly, with every word that my hon. Friend has said. I do not think that the British people either will be impressed by the kind of frivolous attitudes demonstrated by the Opposition during the last quarter of an hour in which I have sought to address serious issues.

It is estimated that 50,000 offences are committed every year by people on bail. Part II sets out five new measures which will restrict the grant of bail and help to ensure that it is only given when that will not put the public at risk. First, the Bill will ensure that bail cannot be granted to someone charged with murder, manslaughter or rape who has a previous conviction for one of those offences. Secondly, the Bill removes the presumption in favour of bail for those charged with serious offences that appear to have been committed while the defendant was on bail. Thirdly, in line with a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, the police will be given the power to attach conditions to the granting of police bail after charge. The fourth measure gives the police the power to arrest, without a warrant, an individual who breaches police bail. That will mean that, if the police bail people to appear at a police station and they fail to do so, the police can immediately arrest them. The police have long asked for the power and the Government promised to meet that request in our election manifesto.

Fifthly, the public will be given further protection by a new power for courts to revoke bail if new information comes to light which makes that appropriate.

Together, those five measures put the granting of bail on a more sensible footing, ensuring that it is given in appropriate cases, but not where its granting is likely to lead to abuse. The Labour party cannot make up its mind on those proposals. It cannot decide whether to vote for or against them. Its attitude is to abstain.

I have made my view clear that the balance of justice is tipped too far in favour of the guilty and against protecting society in general and especially the victims of crime. Part III of the Bill takes important steps to redress that balance. For example, at the moment, it is compulsory for the judge to give a warning in court about uncorroborated evidence from the victim of a sex attack. That is offensive to the victim and unnecessary. That is why the Bill removes the mandatory requirement for judges to give such warnings in sexual offence and accomplice cases.

Part III also contains our proposals on the so-called right to silence. The provisions will allow a court to draw proper inferences from a suspect's refusal to answer police questions in circumstances which cry out for an innocent explanation, if there is one, or from a defendant's refusal to give evidence in court. That does not mean that a suspect or defendant will be compelled to speak under threat of a criminal penalty. Defendants can still remain silent if they choose. In future, the judge and jury will be able to weigh up why the defendant decided to stay silent and the jury will be able to draw reasonable inferences from that silence. In short, it is not about the right to silence; it is about the right to comment on silence.

The present system is abused by hardened criminals. As a professional burglar, interviewed on Radio 4, explained:

"Amongst professional criminals it . . . is . . . a code. Name, rank and number only, as it were . . . There were times when I was acquitted and I stayed silent—I'm not going to answer the question as to whether I was innocent or guilty".

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the chief constable of Kent has done considerable research into the matter which has shown a clear relationship between the number of times someone has been arrested, accused and convicted and that person's exercise of the right to silence?

Mr. Howard: I can confirm the point made by my hon. Friend; it is entirely right. The police have long asked for the change, which is why I am especially interested that the new adviser to the police in the House should want to intervene at this point. I shall be glad to accept his intervention.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Is not it the case that, even under the Home Secretary's proposed legislation, a professional criminal who has a solicitor present may take that solicitor's advice to remain silent? That remains a privileged communication under the legislation and the only inference that can be drawn from it in a court proceeding is that the person was wise enough to accept legal advice at the time. If a person does not have a solicitor present, he loses his right to silence. The professional criminal who has a solicitor present is protected in that sense from losing his right to silence, but the ordinary citizen who does not know the circumstances he faces in a police station and who does not have a solicitor present will lose his right to silence. Is not that a two-tier system?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. If he maintained closer contact with the Police Federation than he appears to have done since his appointment, he would know how strongly it favours the change that I propose to make. As the research cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) shows, conspicuously, it is professional criminals, hardened criminals and terrorists who disproportionately take advantage of and abuse the present system. That is why it has to be changed.

On the point about legal advice raised by the hon. Gentleman, the judge will be able to draw such inferences as he thinks proper from the fact that any solicitor will know that if an innocent explanation is available for the matters on which someone is charged, put or questioned, it

[Mr. Howard]

is in his interest to provide that innocent explanation at the earliest possible moment. The legislation that we propose to introduce follows that already in force in Northern Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said in 1988 when he was Home Secretary that he would seek the earliest opportunity to introduce legislation on the subject for England and Wales. We are now honouring that commitment.

I do not believe that the innocent have anything to fear from the changes. If there is a good reason for the suspect to remain silent, the jury will be able to consider it. But it is only right that, in a suitable case, the jury should know whether a person has remained silent or whether his story has changed. The current procedures can be and are abused by experienced criminals. It is more than 20 years since the Criminal Law Revision Committee recommended changes. It is time for Parliament to act.

Mr. Blair: Of course, the committee was dealing with "ambush" offences, as I think that the Home Secretary knows. The Home Secretary says that the legislation is based on the Northern Ireland experience. As he says, the right to silence has been abolished for five years in Northern Ireland. Has the percentage of convictions or prosecutions gone up or down in that period?

Mr. Howard: A number of other things have changed in that period. How can one possibly seek to test the influence of one isolated change? I understand the hon. Gentleman and his friends to be worried about the possibility of miscarriages of justice. I am worried about the possibility of miscarriages of justice. Can the hon. Gentleman point to any examples of miscarriages of justice in Northern Ireland during the past five years as a result of the abolition of the right to silence? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will answer that question.

Mr. Blair: As a matter of fact, several articles have been written recently specifically on that point, expressing concern about the possibility of miscarriages of justice. The Home Secretary's case is that abolition of the right to silence is the centrepiece of how he will make for a more effective criminal justice system. Let us leave aside the question whether it is right or wrong; let us focus on whether it is effective. The Home Secretary must have the figures. Presumably he has looked at them. Has crime gone up or down in Northern Ireland in the period since the right to silence was abolished? Has the number of prosecutions gone up or down? Has the number of convictions gone up or down—yes or no?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman betrays his total lack of real concern about such issues. If he goes to the police either in Great Britain or in Northern Ireland, they will be able to show him examples of cases in Northern Ireland in which the fact that the defendant remained silent was referred to and taken into account and conviction followed. That has been happening in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman, who claims to be worried about miscarriages of justice, did not have the scintilla of an answer to the specific question that I put to him. On this central point, again the Labour party cannot make up its mind. It will not vote for or against the measure. It will retreat into indecision at the end of the debate tonight. It will abstain.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, if one had to prove in advance that a measure would reduce the crime rate, it would be impossible to introduce any measure? Is not the point about abolition of the right to silence that in any given situation it makes a conviction more likely? Is not that in itself justification for the policy?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend. Those who wish to put off action constantly ask for more information when they know that the information cannot be supplied in the form in which they seek it. It is another element in the total and chronic indecision from which the Labour party suffers.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman about four times. He will have an opportunity to make his speech. I must get on.

Part III of the Bill contains one other provision which provides protection for victims and witnesses. I am very concerned about the ordeal which some witnesses in criminal cases have to face outside the court. Witness intimidation can be difficult to detect and quantify, but it certainly goes on.

We need to make it clear that intimidating those who assist the criminal justice process will not be tolerated. The law already takes a serious view of such behaviour, but there is scope to do more, particularly in relation to activity before and after the period when a trial is in progress. That is why the Bill creates new offences that will make it easier to bring to justice those who intimidate or take revenge on people for assisting the police or acting as witnesses or jurors in a criminal trial.

Part IV of the Bill is aimed at the complex area of body samples, in particular those taken for the purpose of DNA analysis. As techniques have improved, DNA has become a powerful tool in the investigation of crime, but the law has lagged behind. The Bill will end the current arbitrary restrictions on the police use of body samples and of DNA analysis.

At the moment, samples can be taken only for the investigation of serious arrestable offences. The royal commission recommended that the power to take non-intimate samples without consent should be extended to include offences of assault and burglary. We agree with the thrust of the royal commission's recommendation, but we want to go further. It would be simpler and more logical to treat DNA sampling on precisely the same basis as fingerprinting. As a result, the Bill allows the police to take samples from anyone who is to be charged with a "recordable" offence, and to use the samples to search against existing records of convicted offenders or unsolved crimes. In time, a national database will be built up.

Those powers will be of real practical help in the investigation of crime. For example, in a sample of people convicted of rape, eight out of 10 had previous convictions for other offences. They will be easier to catch and convict when their DNA profile is in the database.

The Opposition cannot make up their minds about whether that is a good thing. They cannot decide whether to vote for or against it but will abstain in the vote tonight.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): May I return to the right of silence? My right hon. and learned Friend accepted the arguments, presumably adduced, in the

Kentish police study. However, the royal commission commissioned a study into the right of silence and it does not seem to bear out the argument that is being advanced. Will my right hon. and learned Friend say a little more about his weighing process in terms of the royal commission? This is the third royal commission that has endorsed the continuance of the so-called right of silence. Why has he come to a contrary decision?

Mr. Howard: If my hon. Friend will read the royal commission's minority report, which is extremely clearly set out and records the fact that most judges who gave evidence to the royal commission were in favour of a change, he will see exactly why I have come to my conclusion.

Part V of the Bill contains important measures designed to tackle the destruction and distress caused mainly to rural communities by trespassers. Local communities should not have to put up with, or even fear the prospect of, mass invasions by those who selfishly gather, regardless of the rights of others. The Bill gives the police improved powers to remove trespassers from land and new powers both to stop raves that are in progress and to prevent the mass raves that have caused such a menace in recent years. It will also empower the police to remove vehicles if trespassers refuse to comply with directions to leave and to seize amplification and other equipment being used for raves.

There will also be new powers against those who trespass and seek to disrupt the lawful activities of others. In recent months, we have seen many examples of disruptive and threatening behaviour—at the Grand National, during country sports and even fishing. Those who dislike such activities have a perfect right to campaign to change the law, but they do not have the right to trespass, threaten or intimidate. The Bill will give the police powers to direct trespassers to leave land if they have reason to believe that they will seek to disrupt or prevent a lawful activity. Furthermore, such disruption itself will be made a criminal offence.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Howard: I have a lot of ground to cover. I shall give way to my hon. Friend, but then I must press on.

Dame Jill Knight: My question on part V is extremely relevant. We all understand why aggravated trespass is included in the legislation in the way it is, but will two particular misdemeanours also be covered? One is far worse than a misdemeanour and involves attacks by animal activists on those who conduct research for which they need to use animals. The other involves those who put various substances into things such as hair spray and baby talc in chemists' shops. Will the Bill cover that?

Mr. Howard: The new powers that we propose to introduce apply to all those who trespass and seek to disrupt the lawful activities of others. They are not confined to any particular set of circumstances, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot go into a detailed analysis of every conceivable set of hypothetical circumstances that might be raised.

Part V also deals with changes to the law to deal with squatters. We made a commitment in our election manifesto to improve the law in that respect. The Bill provides the teeth behind the new procedures introduced by the Lord Chancellor to give lawful owners and occupiers of property access to a quick and effective remedy against squatting. It will mean that the owner or occupier of a property can go to court immediately and apply for an interim possession order ex parte. If the interim order is granted, the squatters will have 24 hours in which to leave the premises. Failure to do so will be an offence, and the police will have powers to enter property to enforce the order.

Part VI of the Bill gives the police new stop and search powers aimed against terrorism and creates two new offences against public security. There will be a power to stop and search vehicles and their occupants, and to stop pedestrians to search anything that they may be carrying. Those new powers will help to safeguard the public against the dual threats of vehicle bombs and small devices carried by individual terrorists. Since they are powers that already exist in Northern Ireland, I am happy to give way to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble).

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Concern has been expressed over the past month about possible amnesties for terrorists, in connection with which I think that the Prime Minister has said that the law will take its course. Will the Home Secretary assure us that, in his view, the law taking its normal course will exclude any programme for rapid early release of people who have been convicted of terrorist offences?

Mr. Howard: There will be no amnesty for terrorists. We do not recognise terrorism as a specific crime—a political crime—under our law. Those who are in prison for such offences are not in prison for offences of a political nature. They are in prison for offences against the ordinary law of the land, which will take its course without any amnesties.

The Bill provides for very strict controls over how and when the new powers on terrorism can be used. Those new powers could help to save lives, and when lives can be saved Parliament has a duty to act.

Part VII seeks to strengthen the controls against pornography. First, the Bill provides a power of immediate arrest of those who trade in obscene material and child pornography. The police will also be given additional powers of search and seizure in those cases. The trade in child pornography is particularly abhorrent. The Bill will, for the first time, make it possible to send to prison those found guilty of possessing such material.

Changes in the law are also needed to keep up with new technology. Computer pornography poses a particular threat. The Bill will put it beyond doubt that, for the purposes of the law relating to child pornography, a photograph includes images of children stored on computer disks. It will also ensure that there is no legal loophole for paedophiles who create indecent images of children through the use of computers. Those are important steps that make the law against pornography more effective. The Labour party cannot decide what its attitude should be on them. It cannot decide whether to vote for or against them. The Labour party's attitude to them tonight will be one of chronic indecision.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Howard: Sit down.

[Mr. Howard]

Part VIII of the Bill takes forward the Government's commitment to involve the private sector in the provision of prisons, prisoner escorts and some prison services. It widens and improves my current powers—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When a Minister says, "Sit down", he is talking to you, Madam Speaker. Will you ask him to withdraw that command?

Madam Speaker: If that is the case, I must ask the Minister to withdraw the remark, and I am sure that he will do so.

Mr. Howard: I am sure that you appreciate, Madam Speaker, that the remark was not aimed at you. However, if anyone took it in that sense—I am sure that you did not, Madam Speaker—I would be happy to withdraw it. I had already made it perfectly plain to the hon. Member for Sedgefield, to whom I have given way four or five times, that he will have an opportunity to make his own speech. That is why I addressed the remark to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in line with the procedures of the House that hon. Members should not make sedentary speeches?

Madam Speaker: That is certainly the case. It is my desire that all 650 Members over whom I preside should follow that example.

Mr. Howard: I am not at all surprised at the sedentary muttering of the Opposition. They would not dare nor do they have the courage to get up and say what they have been muttering.

The part of the Bill relating to prisons widens and improves my current powers to contract out prisons and prison services in England and Wales. In particular, it will enable me to award contracts for the design, building, management and financing of the six new prisons that I announced last year.

The Bill increases my powers to provide additional accommodation to cope with increases in the prison population, and it takes forward our initiative to contract out prison escort services. Skilled prison officers should be free to do the job that they are trained to do instead of spending large parts of the day travelling to and from court with prisoners. Contracting out will make sure that that happens, and it is an excellent example of how market testing and contracting out can provide value for money and a much better service for those who are involved.

The Bill also allows contracting out of prisons and prisoner escorting in Scotland for the first time, and will enable the prisoner escort service in Northern Ireland to be contracted out.

Part VIII also puts industrial relations in the prison service on a sounder footing. The recent threat by the Prison Officers Association to lock out prisoners was a totally unacceptable threat to the criminal justice system. In response, I sought and obtained an injunction from the courts restraining the POA from taking such action, but clarification of its position under employment protection law is required.

The Bill's provisions will extend to prison officers and governors in England, Wales and Northern Ireland the employment rights that are currently enjoyed by their counterparts in Scotland and by other Crown employees. It will give their associations the status in law of trade unions. New pay determination procedures will be established for the staff that are involved. Consultations are about to begin with the relevant unions about the precise details of the new arrangements, but the Bill will put beyond doubt the fact that it is unlawful to incite prison officers to withhold their services or to commit a breach of discipline. That will be backed up by making explicit in the prison rules the implied contractual duty of prison officers to co-operate in the effective running of prisons.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Before the Secretary of State leaves the topic of new offences that the Bill seeks to introduce, will he explain why this comprehensive Bill contains nothing specific to deal with the rising tide of anti-semitic and racist violence? How can he explain his silence on that issue, which concerns people of all colours and creeds in this country?

Mr. Howard: I have made it plain that I am prepared to look at any sensible proposal to improve the law in relation to those matters. However, I am not yet satisfied that such proposals have been advanced. We are still examining some, and I am convinced that others would not add one jot or tittle to the effectiveness of the present law. I am prepared to consider all such suggestions strictly on their merits.

The Bill, taken together with the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, forms an important part of our strategy to beat crime. But even as those Bills are being discussed and debated in Parliament, we are taking every step that we can to ensure punishment for the guilty, justice for the victim and protection for the public.

We have taken action to cut police paperwork, which could over time release more than 2,000 officers for front-line duties. We are streamlining police middle management, which will allow chief officers to recruit up to 3,000 more constables. We are taking action to end the inappropriate use of cautions, and we are curtailing cautions for repeat offenders and serious offences. We have boosted funding for Victim Support to more than £10 million, which will enable witness support schemes to be provided in all Crown court centres in England and Wales by the end of 1995, and local schemes and branches to be developed.

We are taking wide-ranging measures to help to prevent crime. We have acted on the advice given by rural communities about ways in which their relationships with the police can be improved. Almost 40 parish constable schemes have now been agreed, and we shall continue to encourage local communities and police forces to develop a partnership against crime. Our safer cities projects further demonstrate the Government's support for local crime prevention partnerships. We intend to launch up to 40 new projects to replace the 20 that are coming to an end; 10 of those new project areas have already been announced.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I acknowledge that many of the developments in the Bill are important, but does the Home Secretary not realise that police forces need more resources if they are to carry out their work? Has there not been abundant evidence in recent weeks from

police forces in Wales that they need real additional resources to avoid having to cut the manpower that enables them to do their work and to keep policemen on the beat?

Mr. Howard: I should be more impressed with the hon. Gentleman's intervention if every time the Government had increased the resources available to the police over the past 14 years he had congratulated us. There has been an increase of more than 80 per cent. in real terms in the resources available to the police. In this country we have 17,000 more police officers than we had in 1979, and 16,000 more civilians helping them. Now we must make the most effective use that we can of the hugely increased resources available. That is what the Government's measures are designed to achieve.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that, although the recent revenue support grant for Cambridgeshire allocated £1·5 million specifically to the police, the Lib-Lab coalition on the county council has applied only £105,000 of that money to that purpose. Does that not show the importance that the Lib-Lab coalition gives to the police?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because that is eloquent testimony to the derision with which the Opposition treat the police.

The measures in the Bills are our response to rising crime. What response have we had from the Opposition? When I announced my proposals in Blackpool last October, the hon. Member for Sedgefield denounced them. They were, he said,

"a series of gimmicks to get a headline".

But since then my proposals have won support from the police and the public, so the hon. Gentleman, weathervane politician that he is, has changed his tune. On television before Christmas he protested:

"I did not say that all the measures the Home Secretary announced were gimmicks. I said that some of them were gimmicks".

I challenge the hon. Gentleman to name the gimmicks. I will happily give way to him here and now if he wishes to make good his preposterous claim.

Mr. Blair: Let me name one gimmick. The Home Secretary said that he would bring about a dramatic difference in the treatment of people who have already been convicted of murder or rape and who come up for bail on another charge of murder or rape. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that there was a great problem in the criminal justice system because people in those circumstances are given bail. Can he give us an example of such a person having been given bail?

Mr. Howard: There have certainly been instances of people being given bail in those circumstances. Nor did I ever say—and the hon. Gentleman is renowned for the extent to which he distorts, misrepresents and misquotes my remarks—that that measure in isolation would make a dramatic impact. It will make a useful impact; it is a useful measure; it will protect the public; and it is not a gimmick.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the McGurk murder case, and that the man who killed Anna McGurk had been arrested for rape and let out on bail?

Mr. Howard: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that the Opposition will take due note of that example.

It will not be too long before the hon. Member for Sedgefield starts to pretend that our proposals are his own—indeed, he has already started. Not long ago, I made a speech about the victims of crime in which I said that victims should be kept informed about the progress and outcome of their cases and that the Crown Prosecution Service should seek victims' views before decisions are taken. Three months later, the hon. Member for Sedgefield wrote an article in *The Sun* repeating what I had said almost word for word and claiming it as an initiative of his own. The fate that awaits the hon. Gentleman is the fate that awaits all weathervane politicians: he will end up spinning round and round in ever decreasing circles until neither he nor anyone else has the faintest idea of the direction in which he is facing.

I have made my aims and objectives clear. I want every aspect of our criminal justice system to work at its best—to do all that it can to make life safer for the law abiding and more difficult for the criminal. The Bill represents an important stepping stone on the path to that objective.

We have had months of rhetoric about being tough on crime from the hon. Member for Sedgefield. The moment of truth will come tonight after his feeble amendment has been defeated. Our Bill is indisputably tough on crime: it increases sentences; it protects the public from juvenile criminals; it cracks down on bail; and it has been praised by the police, who believe that it will

"help tremendously in the fight against crime."

When the hon. Member for Sedgefield sits on his hands tonight, the British people will see that his rhetoric is just hot air: he will have funked the first opportunity that he will have had to turn his words into action.

As I made clear at Blackpool, this is just the first instalment. I am looking hard at the national standards for community sentences to ensure that they are properly demanding punishments in which the courts and public can have confidence. I am reviewing many of the rules in our prisons, especially those governing testing for drugs and home leave.

I am determined to do all that I can to encourage a real partnership between the police and the public. On Sunday night I went out on patrol with town watch in Sandwich. *[Interruption.]* Listen, Madam Speaker, to the Opposition's response to active and concerned citizens who are playing their part in the fight for law and order. I accompanied a group of citizens who were acting as the eyes and ears of the police, helping to escort elderly people who are afraid to go out at night, and making a real contribution to the reduction of crime in their community. We must encourage our citizens to play their part in the war against crime and, if we are to do that, we must ensure that our criminal justice system gives their efforts full and effective support. The Bill will help to achieve that objective, and I commend it to the House.

4.27 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House believes that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is not an acceptable and effective measure to tackle crime unless it includes the following: a proper statutory framework for crime prevention and other measures to prevent crime; the provision of a full and comprehensive range of treatment and

[Mr. Tony Blair]

punishment for young offenders including local authority secure accommodation; measures to introduce cautioning and bail support and enforcement programmes in all areas of the country; programme for drug education for young people available in all local authorities with funding ring-fenced; measures to tackled the link between truancy and crime; measures to strengthen the law on racial harassment and violence; a legal right on the part of victims of crime to be consulted when the Crown Prosecution Service decides to change or drop the charges for the offence in respect of which they are the victims, together with a written statement of the reasons for the decision; measures to tackle the provision of dangerous weapons particularly by mail-order supply; the establishment of a proper independent Judicial Appointments Commission for the appointment of judges; and the setting up of an Independent Review Authority for miscarriages of justice as recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice."

The purpose of the amendment is to bring balance and strategy to a Government approach that at present lacks both. We do not oppose the strengthening of the criminal justice system—on the contrary, we support measures that actively strengthen that system. Although we can agree with some of the measures in the Bill, we fundamentally disagree with others, and we shall show that there are better and different ways of making the criminal justice system more effective. Above all—as the Home Secretary's total refusal to answer the question whether the Bill would cut crime shows—the Bill is based on the old Tory deceit. The Tories tell us that they are tough on law and order and they have introduced this Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. However, the measure is fundamentally flawed because it is one-track. It does not deal with prevention as well as punishment or causes as well as crime.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I will give way in a moment. I am delighted by the enthusiasm and eagerness which are being displayed on the Conservative Benches.

There is no doubt about the importance of crime. Nothing is a greater source of fear and anger in our communities. It is a scandal that Asian women and children cannot walk down the street in broad daylight. It is outrageous that elderly people are mugged and robbed in their own homes and that entirely law-abiding young people should be set upon and beaten up for sport.

Householders and car owners feel despair when their property is stolen and they know that there is little that will be done about that. Although the Home Secretary did not mention this in his speech, it is surely true that when drugs are commonly offered, even in school playgrounds, and as an everyday occurrence, society has a serious sickness at its heart.

We know all that and the Government accept and admit all that. However, after 14 years, people do not want another dose of Tory rhetoric. They want effective action that works.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman asks whether the proposals will reduce crime. Is he aware that the stop-and-search procedures which the City of London police introduced over the past year have reduced crime in the City by 18 per cent.?

Mr. Blair: If that were the case, one would expect the Home Secretary to tell us that the measure will cut crime. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) has provided a basis upon which the Home Secretary should leap to his feet to say that that is the judgment that we should make of the measure. However, the Home Secretary must agree that one cannot tell the British people at a party conference that the Bill comprises the most comprehensive and effective series of crime measures that have ever been put before the British people and then be unable to pledge that the judgment that will be made about its effectiveness is that it will cut crime.

Dr. Spink: Does the hon. Gentleman honestly believe that taking young thugs and habitual criminals off the streets and tackling bail bandits will not reduce crime? What measures would the hon. Gentleman propose to reduce such crime?

Mr. Blair: I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should ask that question, because it was the Opposition who first raised the problem of persistent juvenile offending and who proposed measures to deal with that problem. When I deal with that part of the Bill, I will say exactly where we agree and disagree. At that point, perhaps the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) will judge which are the more effective measures.

It was the Opposition who helped to secure the passage of the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The hon. Gentleman said that it was the Opposition who first raised the question of persistent juvenile offenders. I assure him that during the five years that I have been parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation I have raised that issue constantly in the House. Indeed, I did so long before the hon. Gentleman came to his present post. My predecessors also raised that matter.

Mr. Blair: I do not doubt that. However, it is patently obvious that the Government Front Bench did not listen to the hon. Gentleman. I remember that when we first raised the issue in the House we were told that juvenile offending was on the decline and that the problem was therefore not as great as people had said.

As I have said, people want a strategy to fight crime that works. They want one that will cut crime. They want a strategy that, above all, is geared not to catching headlines so that Ministers can give the illusion of activity but to stopping crime so that communities become safer.

The Government must start with a straightforward explanation. They now admit the scale of the problem. They must explain why, after 14 years of Tory government, things are as bad as they are. The Tories have been in power for 14 years. There have been 14 years of rising crime. For 14 years, the Tories have had the chance in government to put things right, but there have been 14 years of Tory failure. That is the record on which the Government stand. The significance of the Bill is that the Government now admit that there is no confidence in the system.

What is the Government's explanation? It is not as though the issue of crime has just surfaced. Crime has risen by more than 120 per cent. since 1979. It rose in the Government's first and second terms of office and it has carried on rising. The only time that it fell was between 1988 and 1990. The Government have had 14 years in

which to deal with it, but they have not done so. One might think that, after 14 years, the great Conservative purveyors of collective responsibility would take responsibility for the situation. After all, they are the Government. Do they say that they are responsible? Not a bit of it. The one thing that we must never underestimate about the Tories is their brazen nerve and their brass neck.

I shall give the House the explanation that the Home Secretary now gives—he gave it on the "Today" programme just a morning ago. He says that the real problem is that the Government have been hamstrung in their fight against crime because their civil servants forced them to accept the nostrums of the liberal establishment.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I shall give way from right to left this time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): The hon. Gentleman keeps referring to 14 years in which to tackle crime. Fourteen years ago, two of the Bill's provisions were not possible—those on DNA sampling and on the crime of computer pornography. Will the hon. Gentleman dismiss the modernisation of our criminal justice system by saying that we have had 14 years in which to do everything? We are doing it now.

Mr. Blair: As an explanation of why crime has risen over the past 14 years, that intervention is somewhat less than credible. It would have been a good deal more convincing had the Tories not taken office promising to cut crime and promising to do so at all subsequent elections.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Many elements of the criminal justice system are well known, independent of government, for their softness on crime. For example, the probation service is known to refer to thugs and criminals in its charge as clients. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with such a description?

Mr. Blair: It is truly unbelievable. I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what he should try to do, and that is not attack the probation service, which does its best in extremely difficult circumstances. The hon. Gentleman should try to join us in putting into place measures that will cut crime.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): So far, all that we have heard from the hon. Gentleman is a lot of hot Blair. If his party is serious about tackling crime, why did his party's manifesto at the previous general election say more about sport and leisure than about tackling crime?

Mr. Blair: Actually, the hon. Gentleman is completely wrong. We put crime at the very centre of our concerns, and we have always done that. The standard of Tory insults has declined in recent years.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman has been very concerned to blame the Government for rising crime. If his point is valid, who does he blame for rising crime in every comparable civilised country?

Mr. Blair: That is another explanation—I shall not deal with it in detail today—that the Prime Minister once gave, and it is not correct. Crime has risen to a much greater extent here than in many other countries. I do not say that everything is the fault of the Conservative Government, but, after 14 years, they should take responsibility for the situation that has arisen. That is what we wish them to do.

Mr. Stephen: The hon. Gentleman focuses very conveniently on the past 14 years, but, if he is honest, he will accept that today we are reaping the consequences of the breakdown of respect which occurred in the 1960s. Is it not the problem that successive Governments have listened far too much to the left-wing social reformers?

Mr. Blair: I have to say that the hon. Gentleman is right about one point. I should not focus on 14 years because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) has pointed out, the Conservatives have been in power for 15 years. I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what it is that people object to in the present-day Tory party and what makes them angry. It is that he stands there after almost 15 years of Government, with crime rising in the way that it has, and will not take any blame or responsibility but puts it on the 1960s or the trendy liberal establishment—anywhere but on the Government who have been in power and have had a chance to do something about it. That is what people dislike about the Government. What people dislike about the Government more than anything else is that they will preach to everybody about taking personal responsibility, but they do not have the guts to take any responsibility themselves for the situation that they created.

Let me tell the hon. Gentleman another thing. We are told after 15 years that it was all the problem of the 1960s. Have the Government just woken up? What was happening in the 1980s? When that great fan of the liberal establishment, the noble Baroness Thatcher, was presiding over the Government, why did they not try to take things on and deal with them? Of course, it is all just another piece of Tory deceit. The truth is that history cannot be rewritten in that way.

The Home Secretary's prison works policy is not new. It is not the case that, for 15 years, the Government pursued exactly the same policy. In fact, throughout the 1980s, the very strategy that he pursues today was the strategy of the Tory party. Let me quote him the figures on the prison population. In the 1980s, the number rose to its highest level ever—almost 50,000 in 1988. The idea that, all through the 1980s, the Home Office was caught by the liberal establishment is rubbish. The truth is that the policy was changed because it did not work.

What we need to do now, therefore, is not repeat the mistakes of the past but learn from them. We face a choice. We can either go in the direction of the United States, where there are 1·25 million people in gaol——

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam) *rose*——

Mr. Blair: No, I cannot give way at the moment.

There has been a trebling in 10 years of the prison population in the United States and violent crime has continued to rise. Alternatively, we can understand that it is important to combine programmes of reform and prevention with the strengthening of the criminal justice system. The Home Secretary's policy of prison works will not succeed.

I must say that there is one exception, which the Home Secretary has introduced to the prison works programme. The headline in the *Daily Express* today is "Howard Joins Battle to Free Ambridge One". The article says:

"Such is the national outrage at the jailing of the Archer, Susan Carter, that Home Secretary, Michael Howard, has joined the campaign to free her. Mr. Howard is upset, like many others, because Susan received six months jail for helping her robber brother to elude the law."

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It continues:

"Home Office officials seemed stunned at Mr. Howard's sudden involvement. After all, the Archers is fiction, isn't it, asked a spokesman? Speculation there now is that he might follow Princess Margaret, Terry Wogan, Dame Edna Everidge and Britt Ekland in a guest appearance on the show."

The Home Secretary would certainly do less damage in Ambridge than he does in Whitehall.

The prison works slogan—a return to the short sharp shock, and we have been there before—is to be put to work in relation to juvenile offenders. As I have been asked about it before, let me make quite clear the difference between the two sides. We do not disagree that those who are out of control and making life hell—there are juvenile offenders who are doing that—must be in secure accommodation. *[Interruption.]* It is said that that is very surprising. Let me state the Government's record on the issue.

Three years ago, the Government promised 65 extra secure accommodation places. To this day, the so-called party of law has not built a single one. The Government's explanation is given time and again. It was given by the Secretary of State for Education in the debate on the Queen's Speech—it is that Labour-controlled local authorities refuse to give planning permission or co-operate in their building. We have done some research into that. The local authorities' directors of social services have not refused to countenance more secure accommodation; instead, they have been asking for it.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I shall give way in a moment.

Many local authorities, Labour and Tory, have been urgently requesting the promised resources. According to the national bed bureau, there have been hundreds more inquiries from those local authorities for secure accommodation. Leeds city council has been applying for 10 extra places of secure accommodation for two years and the promise has still not been honoured. The only example that has ever been given is Leicestershire. It has changed its decision and now wishes for secure accommodation places as well.

The truth is that this whole excuse has been got away about local authorities because the Government have not wanted to honour the sensible course and the promise that they gave three years ago.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: In a moment.

Mr. Howard: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I shall certainly give way to the Home Secretary—unlike, if I may say, his decision in relation to me. But I shall give way first to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, as she has been waiting.

Lady Olga Maitland: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. On the subject of secure units, does he accept that the real problem is not the lack of beds available, because, according to the bed bureau, space can almost always be found for a child? The real problem is that the juvenile magistrates are deeply frustrated at the fact that they have to hand a child back to social services, which persistently refuse on ideological grounds to make use of secure units.

Mr. Blair: That is absolute nonsense. We have made inquiries of the national bed bureau within the past few weeks. It says that there is a huge surplus of demand for secure accommodation by local authorities over supply. The hon. Lady's statement is quite incorrect.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman said with a great flourish a moment ago that the Lib-Lab council in Leicestershire was now—and he used the words—prepared to co-operate with the Government in providing the accommodation. Perhaps he will tell us what the Labour party did over the past 10 years, when it refused to proceed with a proposal for secure accommodation, which had been approved by a previous Conservative Administration. For the whole decade the Labour party consistently refused to provide secure accommodation. The fact that it is now prepared to co-operate hardly alters the record for that decade.

Mr. Blair: With respect, that is only one example. I have made quite clear what has now happened and what our view of it is. The notion that that can invalidate the entirety of the policy is plainly absurd. Let me tell the Home Secretary the advantages of dealing with the matter in that way. First, the places could be achieved without delay. This country does not want to wait years before the problem is dealt with. It wants it dealt with now. Secondly, it allows the provision to be both local and integrated, as everybody, including the Select Committee on Home Affairs and the Association of Chief Police Officers, have asked for.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I must press on.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman said earlier that he would give way.

Mr. Blair: I am sorry. I really must press on.

We have also discovered an internal Government document which specifically compares young offenders institutions with secure local authority units and finds that for local authority units there is not only a better record on education and training but a better rate of reconviction—*[Interruption.]* I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman is going to heckle me all the way through.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I do not wish to heckle him, but he may recall that he promised some time ago that he would give way to me.

The hon. Gentleman is receiving a briefing now from his hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who knows that, as soon as I was elected to the House, he and I went to see Welsh Office Ministers to make sure that secure accommodation was available in south Wales, particularly in the Cardiff area, which is experiencing the highest rise in crime anywhere in the country. Perhaps the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) will explain to the House why, after all that time, secure accommodation is now to be made available in Neath—another local authority area altogether?

Mr. Blair: That is an outrageous claim, which has been dealt with on several occasions. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and other hon. Members were pressing for that secure accommodation, but the Government refused to co-operate, and lessons can be learnt from that.

The advantage of that provision is that it can be integrated into proper programmes of diversion, prevention and punishment within local communities. A short time ago, a report was published, showing the gaps in provision in all sorts of good programmes for young people. To make way for some of the new secure training centres, not only are we failing to build on the provisions already there but other programmes of assistance to deal with habitual young offenders are being systematically dismantled. Residential places for disturbed young children and motor projects dealing with car thieves are closing and two thirds of local authorities have been forced to make cuts in youth services. To weaken the provisions in local communities and then to claim that building the new secure training centres will help to prevent juvenile crime is a sham. We know that and I believe that the Government know that as well.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows that this is an elaborate smokescreen. He has to answer a simple question: does he think that the courts should be given the power, which they do not now have, to sentence those young people to periods in secure accommodation, or does he not? If he does, is he prepared to vote for that provision in the Bill?

Mr. Blair: As the Minister well knows, because that point is put to me every time, our dispute with him is not about the powers—we agree that the courts require them—but over our belief that it is better to deal with the problems by integrating the powers with proper local provision. That is what has been suggested by virtually everyone who has looked into the problems.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Home Secretary is selective in the points to which he replies? He responded on the Leicestershire point, but ignored the Leeds point. More than two years ago, discussions were under way with the Leeds authority on the provision of 10 extra places at a cost then of £500,000. I also know, as does my hon. Friend, that the bed bureau is run by the Leeds authority, so it has unique knowledge of the numbers of spaces needed and of the impossibility of getting a secure place. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) is wrong. Places cannot be achieved. Why does not the Home Secretary answer the question as to why the offer from Leeds, the plans made and discussed with Departments, were not followed up? Why do we still not have those places? Why——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Hon. Members should ask one question at a time, not six.

Mr. Blair: I apologise for missing that inconsistency in what the Home Secretary said, but there are so many inconsistencies that occasionally one slips through the net. This issue shows the difference between what the Tories say and what they do on law and order. Such action could be taken now and combined in the w[illegible] I set out, but the exaggerations go all the way through.

Let us be clear about the purpose of a criminal justice system. It should be not on the side of the accused or of the prosecution but on the side of truth. The Royal Commission on Criminal Justice was set up to establish the framework for improving our system. I disagreed with some of its points and others disagreed with other points but, on the whole, it was welcomed. However, the Government will now depart from two key aspects of it.

First, the Government have refused to include in the Bill provision for the establishment of a proper independent review body for miscarriages of justice. That omission cannot be justified. The recommendation was widely trailed and examination of it was the principal reason for establishing the commission. There is justifiable dismay that it has not been included in the Bill. We shall be tabling amendments to include it.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Home Secretary's explanation of why it has not been included does not make much sense? The suggestion has been around since 1982, when the Home Affairs Select Committee first made it—its then Chairman is now a Minister in the Northern Ireland Office—and it was so uncontroversial that it had the support of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). The suggestion was again made by the royal commission, but the Government have still ignored it.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is right. Recently, I saw comments made three years ago by the present Foreign Secretary showing why he supported such a body. Omission of that provision cannot be justified.

The second issue is the right to silence. The royal commission decided that, although abuses could be remedied, it was wrong to abolish that right, particularly in the police station. The royal commission took that view after the most careful research which showed, among other things, that it was relied upon in a small number of cases and, in the majority of them, there was a conviction or a guilty plea. Even those in the minority who dissented took the view that there had to be fundamental additional safeguards before that right could be interfered with.

What people find most worrying is the tone and attitude of the Home Secretary when he discusses the issue. Even those who have advocated curtailing the right to silence have done so with some regard to the sensitivity of the issue and with some sense of the fact that we are dealing with fundamental legal questions. When the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland moved the Irish provision, he did so in that way, not with a one-liner delivered to the Tory party conference. That was not the action of a responsible Home Secretary.

The right to silence covers two entirely different situations. The first is, where a prosecution case is disclosed, the accused knows exactly what is being alleged and its significance and is acting with qualified legal advice. There is justifiable concern that entirely new facts or defences could be raised at trial and, as it is described, the prosecution ambushed. There is huge dispute about the prevalence of that, but let us assume that it happens.

I do not believe that it is inconsistent with civil liberties to allow that lack of disclosure to be properly commented on, but that is a million miles away from the other type of case. That is, before charges are brought, when the person is being questioned—he may not understand the significance of what he is asked and may not be legally

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represented—he fails to mention a fact that is later relevant. Under the Government proposals, even if that fact were subsequently disclosed before the trial so that there was no question of ambush, the failure could be used to draw inferences of guilt.

Any reasonable person could see that that approach is open to potential injustice. The Bill makes no provision for extra safeguards. The chairman of the Criminal Bar Association, Richard Ferguson QC, himself a former Member of Parliament——

Mr. Trimble: No, of the Stormont Parliament.

Mr. Blair: I apologise. He was a member of the Stormont Parliament. He has said that it is not the professional criminal who is at risk but the vulnerable innocent.

I asked the Home Secretary a specific question about Northern Ireland and he told me that he was unable to give figures. However, we have the figures, so let me tell him that, since the right to silence has been abolished in Northern Ireland, the number of prosecutions has dropped, although crime has been rising, and the number of convictions as a percentage of prosecutions has dropped. I appreciate that that is not proof absolute that the right to silence has not had the impact suggested by the Home Secretary, but when he tells us that the change is fundamental to getting more criminals prosecuted or convicted, it is more than passing strange that he has not even analysed what happened when the change was introduced in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of what was said by the head of the anti-terrorist branch, when asked whether there was any single measure that he believed could save lives? He said that the most frustrating experience for him and his officers was when they had before them a terrorist suspect who would not even confirm or deny his identity, and that to have the ability to draw that to the attention of the jury was important. What would the hon. Gentleman say to that?

Mr. Blair: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what I would say. It is that that has to be done following an examination of whether that is the problem that we face. At the very least, before we have the fullest possible evidence of its impact in Northern Ireland, it is wrong to legislate here. When the matter was debated in relation to Northern Ireland five years ago, considerable hesitation was expressed, even by those on the Government Benches. As I say, it is the tone and the attitude as much as anything else which concerns people. That same dogma and lack of balance turn up again in the proposals for more prison privatisation.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I must move on. The proposals for prison privatisation have been made when we have not evaluated the existing private prisons.

The dogma and lack of balance come up again in the curbing of those who protest against fox hunting, whereas no reciprocal duties are put on anything else. I disagree totally with anyone who starts disrupting the ability of people to go fishing, and so forth. However, I do not see why police officers should try to prevent people from lawfully protesting against fox hunting. That does not seem to be the proper role of the police.

There is rank hypocrisy in some of the provisions. The Prime Minister said a few days ago that he wanted to "put the victim first". He should tell that to the tens of thousands of victims who will lose proper compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board provisions. If we are to deal with the criminal justice system, let us deal with the real scandal of the system. At a time when crime is rising and when there is more violent and serious crime, the number of prosecutions is falling and the number of cases which are discontinued or in which charges are dropped is rising. Courts are lying idle while crime is rising around them. A Government who are concerned about law and order should address those issues. However, during the past few months, there has been a 17 per cent. drop in the number of cases that have been dealt with by Crown courts.

Those are practical measures, but the fundamental criticism of the Government is of their lack of balance. I return, as I have often done, to the fact that only one in 50 crimes leads to a conviction. The figures are one in 200 for crimes of vandalism and one in 10 for violent assaults.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I will not give way.

Only one in three crimes in Britain is even recorded. The prison population may top 50,000. How would that compare with the 20 million crimes a year which are committed in our country? That is the case for tackling causes as well as crime, and for prevention as well as punishment.

The deceit of the claims as to whether that would work is then combined with the dogma of the refusal to accept crime prevention measures that would give us a realistic chance of cutting crime. Three years ago, the Government published a report on crime prevention which suggested that an urgent statutory framework of crime prevention was needed. That proposal was rejected because of dogma and because it would give a role to local authorities. Worse, the Government are now to undermine community policing by centralising policing in the hands of the Government and by having Ministers appoint people to the boards.

We need, of course, a proper national programme of drugs education. A Home Office report last week said that drugs and crime were intimately connected and that there was widespread concern about that linkage. The report also said that work urgently needed to be undertaken to develop education for 12 to 18-year-olds. What is the Government's response? They have withdrawn funding from drugs education co-ordinators in our schools and youth services.

Time and time again, action that is required is not taken. New laws to tackle racial harassment and abuse are absent from the Bill. Safer cities projects and the urban programme are being cut and are having their funding reduced. In south Wales, police stations are at risk as a result of the problems. That is because the Government are more interested in a few grabbed headlines than in a proper strategy for fighting crime.

Let us be clear. No one but a fool would excuse the commission of crime on the basis of social conditions, but no one but a Tory would deny the influence that those social conditions can have on the way in whch our young people develop. That is why we need to remedy not just the

faults of the criminal justice system but the culture of despair, hopelessness, drugs, violence, instability, poor education and poor job prospects that characterise elements of our young people today.

To achieve that, we do not need or want lectures from Ministers on the responsibilities of everyone else but themselves. We want them to play their part in building a better and safer country of responsible citizens. We want them to open up new educational opportunities and to give our young people the chance of a decent job and training. We want them to rebuild the crumbling public services in many of our cities and towns. We want them to stop the rot of the social disintegration which is all around us. That is the "back to basics" that the country wants to see implemented today by the Government.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) knows full well that the hon. Gentleman who is at the Dispatch Box is not giving way to him. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would stay in his seat and remain quiet.

Mr. Blair: It is significant that when we talk about "back to basics" Conservative Members want to heckle and to interrupt to make sure that no one listens.

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has just accused me of wanting to heckle and interrupt, when what I wanted was to make an intervention and to put a question to him. Will you now ask him to withdraw that accusation?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I certainly will not ask the hon. Member to withdraw it. The hon. Member for Colne Valley knew full well that the hon. Gentleman who was at the Dispatch Box was not giving way. The rules of the House are clear and hon. Members should know them. The hon. Member who has the floor has the right to give way or not to give way. Hon. Members who choose not to give way should be respected.

Mr. Blair: I have given way a great deal during the debate, and there are other hon. Members who want to speak.

I was talking about the programmes which we want to see for our country, programmes which would tackle both the criminal justice system and the causes of crime. Government Members should know that one cannot build a strong and cohesive society that encourages responsible citizens unless one believes in a strong and cohesive society. We must acknowledge that people are not just individuals but that they are members of a society and a community and that they owe obligations to one another as well as to themselves.

To achieve that balance between individual responsibility and social responsibility, we must believe in our country as a society of responsible citizens. It is because the Opposition believe in that concept, and the Government do not, that our programme for fighting crime is better.

5.8 pm

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): Many hon. Members want to speak in the debate, and I have no wish to make a long speech. I welcome the Bill because of its contents, and I deplore the fact that the Opposition cannot bring themselves to do the same.

There is great deal which might, and no doubt will, be said about changes in the law and about strengthening the law in relation to young offenders, bail provisions and the other matters which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary mentioned. Those measures will be generally welcomed both outside and inside the House.

My immediate concern is fastened on one part of the Bill—part V, and in particular clause 61, which repeals the obligation that the Caravan Sites Act 1968 imposes upon local authorities to provide sites for gipsies and other travellers.

There is no doubt that the Act has long passed its use-by date. That was conceded by the Government and was welcomed by the House in a debate a year or so ago on the private Member's Bill which I sought leave to introduce to deal with the subject. I look forward to hearing more from Ministers in Committee about how the new system will work and how it will be applied. For example, will a target be set for the number of new sites to be opened around the country when the planning system takes over, and who will have the responsibility of making sure that sites are available?

I am a little surprised that there is no mention in the explanatory memorandum of the savings which will result from the repeal of those parts of the 1968 Act. Another point which will be of interest is the future ownership and management of existing council sites. Are those likely to be privatised? Will there be a licensing system? How will those matters be dealt with?

I have no doubt that that can be dealt with in Committee. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will not be disappointed to hear that I do not aspire to membership of the Committee, because I know that many other hon. Members who are much better qualified than myself will volunteer to deal with all the points of law involved.

Part V and its provisions to strengthen the position of those people who want law and order to prevail in the countryside are an important departure from precedent. The creation of a new offence of aggravated trespass is a significant step forward that will be widely welcomed in all parts of the country where people have become all too used to disorder, intimidation and violence prevailing and interrupting the lawful pursuits of those who live in the country, value it and want to continue with their countryside sports.

Frankly, I was astonished that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) —if I could have his attention for a second—felt obliged to throw a sop to his left-wing colleagues by saying that he did not see why police officers should be employed to prevent violent disorder from surrounding hunt activities and meetings.

Hon. Members: He did not say that.

Mr. Blair: I did not say that at all. Of course, whenever there is violence or the law is broken, the police should be involved, whether at a fox hunt or anything else. What I did say, however, was that it was not the function of the police

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to be employed to prevent people from engaging in otherwise lawful activities merely because they are opposed to fox hunting.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am glad to hear that rather reluctant confession. Nothing in the Bill is likely to prevent lawful protests, and if the hon. Gentleman reads it with care he will see that.

The Bill seeks to prevent people from invading the property of others and making free with it, in spite of the owner's wishes and the fact that he or she has given consent for certain activities there.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose——*

Sir Cranley Onslow: I find it extremely difficult to follow the rationale of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, except in so far as he wants to curry favour with his anti-fox-hunting friends, one of whom I shall not give way to.

Mr. Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Cranley Onslow: No. The hon. Gentleman must make his lawful protest in a speech rather than an intervention.

Mr. Banks: I am at the bottom of the list.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am delighted to hear it. That encourages me to speak at even greater length, but I want to be fair to other hon. Members.

It is a disgrace that organised violence, deliberate provocation and physical assaults on people and animals have become an accepted way of life for a militant section of urban society. The saboteur movement has its roots not in the countryside but in the towns. Anyone who has seen busloads of Millwall supporters brought in to disrupt a hunt knows exactly what I am talking about.

Mr. Banks: As a Chelsea supporter, may I intervene?

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am afraid that on no account will I allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

It is important to add that provision on aggravated trespass to the statute book. However—this arises from some remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)—I must comment on the response that the offence of aggravated trespass has caused in another quarter. I dare say that most hon. Members will have seen a letter from the Research Defence Society on

"Animal extremism and medical research".

The letter expresses

"concern that the government's proposed legislation . . . is not offering any protection to the medical researchers who have been the main targets for animal rights extremists over the last two decades."

The letter continues:

"Animal rights groups have been intimidating, obstructing and attacking medical researchers who work with animals for much longer than they have been disrupting field sports. Indeed, the scale and intensity of these attacks, which have included IRA-type car bombs utilising high explosives and mercury-tilt switches, goes far beyond anything used against huntsmen and anglers. After over twenty car bombs, all against medical researchers, the police have been able to arrest not one person in connection with these terrorist attacks."

I believe that provisions exist on the statute book which make such activities unlawful and capable of prosecution in the most serious way. However, it worries me that the law and law enforcement agencies seem to have been unable to do anything to prevent the prevalence of animal rights terrorists. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take this as a serious plea, and that he will respond to the Research Defence Society.

Mr. Howard: That will be dealt with in the reply to the debate.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am glad to hear that, because there can be no justification for terrorism of that sort. The House should be satisfied that all appropriate action is being taken to deal with it.

I promised to be brief, so I shall move from the content of the Bill to another subject on which I hope that the House will find itself in agreement with me. Public confidence in the law does not depend merely on what we put on the statute book. Many of our constituents have long been at a loss to understand how the judicial process works, and their conception of it is drawn from press reports.

Many hon. Members will have received letters similar to one sent to me recently by a constituent, who said:

"I wish to protest in the strongest possible terms at the ludicrous practice of sending young offenders on these expensive trips . . . Surely some form of real punishment can be found for all these tearaways? There are thousands of honest hard-working families who can barely afford a week's holiday in a caravan —and to hear about the cost of those so-called therapeutic journeys leaves one speechless."

I think that that reaction is common to all of us who have been watching recent extraordinary events. The Prime Minister's reaction, which was reported in the press the other day, strikes an echo in everyone's heart. I hope that we shall hear from the Home Office that such safari penalties will be brought to an end.

For years, many people have been puzzled why, when the House sets maximum penalties for certain crimes, the maximum penalty is not applied in a case when it is difficult to conceive that a more serious offence could have been committed under the same heading. There was an example in the newspapers last week. A drink-driving taxi driver was convicted of killing three women in a head-on collision. The judge commented that his sentencing was restricted because the offence happened before a change in the law doubling the maximum penalty from five to 10 years, which in his mind made it impossible for him to impose a sentence of more than three years.

I would find it hard to explain to any constituents who asked me why such an offence—drink-driving, a head-on collision and killing three innocent women—should not warrant the maximum penalty in any case. What were the mitigating factors that enabled the sentence to be three years instead of five?

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) *indicated assent.*

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme) *indicated assent.*

Sir Cranley Onslow: I see that other hon. Members agree, and are equally baffled.

Hon. Members must understand that the system has to be seen to work effectively—not merely by Members of Parliament—if the public are to have confidence.

Several other cases in which court proceedings had a curious outcome come to mind. For the life of me, I cannot understand how a gentleman—if I can call him that—who

was involved in separating a large number of people from an enormous sum of money could come away with a sentence of 180 hours of community service. That is inexplicable. There is no rational explanation for it—or if there is, I have never heard it.

I have heard suggestions about what might have gone wrong in the court. I have heard criticisms of the counsel's approach, and of the way in which the trial was conducted. I do not know the facts of the matter, but the case was of enormous interest to the public, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary must realise that a public explanation for the sentence should be given. Such an explanation should be given in the House. It should be possible for a report-back process to develop, whereby incredible miscarriages of justice, as perceived by the public, can at least be made comprehensible, even if not defensible.

There is a case that is still in the public's mind and for which a report back might be appropriate. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend remembers the case of Joseph Elliot. I had correspondence, on behalf of concerned constituents, with the Home Office at the time. My hon. Friend the Minister wrote me a letter in which he said that the Home Secretary had said that he intended to take a fresh look at the details of the case to see whether there were lessons to be learnt.

The jury accepted a plea of self-defence in circumstances that most people found extremely difficult to understand. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister, when winding up tonight, finds it possible to say what, if any, results the Home Secretary's review of the case has produced.

We must have not merely the best possible statutes drafted by the most competent parliamentary draftsmen, which are clear in every detail and impossible to misinterpret or to misunderstand. That is the ideal of legislation and is, of course, sometimes achieved. We must also ensure that the system works. I was especially glad to hear the Home Secretary emphasise that.

We should be concerned not only with the Bill, but with the application, the enforcement and the interpretation of its provisions. The matter concerns not just the Government and not just Parliament. The whole system must work and be seen to work. The Bill is a great step forward, and I hope that it will be seen, interpreted and taken up by the other parts of the system in a way that will make us all glad that we passed it.

5.21 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The House listened to the Home Secretary reciting a long litany of defects in the criminal justice system. One would have thought that the criminal justice system was something that, with all its defects, had just been inherited from a previous Government, and that that was why it required such root-and-branch rectification.

The fact is that this criminal justice system has existed for almost 15 years under this Government, and has been the subject of repeated amendments through Criminal Justice Bills. I was involved in the debates on the previous Criminal Justice Bill, which a previous Home Secretary said would solve all the defects of which anyone could think.

The Government talk about dealing with the crime wave and, to use the Home Secretary's phraseology, about the fight against crime. Yet the wave of crime against which the Government say that they will wage a campaign has been escalating for almost 15 years—since the Government came to office. The Home Secretary told the House what he intended to do to deal with criminals in the 12-to-14 age bracket. Every one of those criminals was born and brought up under this Government, and every one is a child of the society that this Government have created.

The Home Secretary talked about what he would do with criminals aged between 15 and 17. Those criminals, some of whom commit serious crimes, have spent every sentient moment in the society created by this Government. They have been imbued with the values created by this Government; they are the creatures of this Government. Every criminal in his 20s—I say "his", not to be sexist but because most criminals are men—has spent his entire adulthood in a society created by a Government whose Prime Minister for many years said that there was no such thing as society. Crime is higher under this Government than it has ever been before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) repeatedly asked the Home Secretary what the Bill would do to reduce crime. The answer is nothing. There is nothing in the Bill that will cause a single crime fewer to be committed after the Bill has been enacted than before it was introduced. The Bill certainly contains one or two useful provisions, such as the one, cited earlier, that deals with child pornography. It contains many damaging provisions, some of which my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has listed. He has also explained why, rightly, we shall oppose them.

What the Bill mainly contains in its enormous length is futile provisions which will do nothing one way or the other, but which will impose burdens on the police, who are severely burdened already, and burdens on the courts and on juries when they are called on to deal with criminals —provided that those criminals are caught. The Bill was proclaimed by the Home Secretary in his speech at the Conservative party conference, and he praised it again today. Yet it is not about reducing crime; it is about what the Government will do with people who are accused of crime when they are arrested, charged, tried and, possibly, convicted.

The problem is, of course, that most criminals are not caught. Most offenders who have committed reported crimes—we know that a large proportion of crime is not even reported—are not caught. Almost three quarters of those responsible for crime that the police know about are never caught. Many crimes are not reported, because the victims see no point in reporting them.

The Royal Automobile Club has published, just in time for today's debate, figures about car crime. They show that car crime in Greater Manchester, part of which I represent, is No. 2 in the national table for car crimes. Yet we are only talking here about the 118 per 1,000 who report such crimes. Every member of the public knows that many people whose cars are broken into and who have the contents of those cars stolen never report those crimes. They do not think it worth while because they know that the police, despite their best endeavours, are extremely unlikely to apprehend the perpetrators. They do not report the crime even for insurance purposes: they will not claim on insurance, because that will affect their insurance benefits.

The national crime total is dreadful, but the rate for my constituency is far worse than the national rate. In the C

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division of Greater Manchester police, which broadly covers my constituency, the reported crime rate is 250 per cent. of what it was when the Government came to office. That increase is far higher than the increase in the country as a whole.

The clear-up rate in C division in 1980, when the Government had just come to office, was a creditable 45 per cent. Today, it is only 28 per cent. I do not criticise the police for that in any way. They do their very best in circumstances that, in large areas of crime, have gone beyond their control. Dealing with car crime, with burglary and with certain kinds of violent crime is beyond the best efforts of the police. They do not receive sufficient resources, and they have far too many burdens. The Bill will increase the burdens without increasing the resources.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Given the statistics for his constituency which my right hon. Friend has outlined, he will not be at all surprised to know that the figures in London are just as bad, if not worse. The clear-up rate in London is a mere 16 per cent. The Metropolitan police feel unable to deal with rising crime in London because of the lack of resources and the lack of commitment from the Government to help them to do so.

Mr. Kaufman: I recognise not only the problems of crime in London, but the grievances of the Metropolitan police about the way in which they are unable to give of their best, as they would like to do, in dealing with that situation.

The burdens on the police are not only more onerous, but more obvious. A dozen years ago, drug dealing was almost unknown in my constituency; now it goes on blatantly in the streets for all to see. There is a public house in the Longsight area of my constituency to which, at a Sunday lunchtime, parents would bring their babies, sit in the garden and have a drink. Today, overt drug dealing takes place outside that pub, in such a way that respectable citizens will not patronise it any more. That is the kind of thing that is happening today.

Even the most innocent developments affect crime. On one estate in the Gorton area of my constituency, the council has introduced an experimental system—which it is seeking to introduce in other parts of my constituency—for the use of wheelie bins for domestic refuse. People are now unwilling to use them, however, because, if they wheel them out and then go off to work, the bins are on the pavement to tell burglars that houses are vacant and someone can break in.

Crime today is operating in a climate in which it is made to seem routine. Therefore, it is not surprising that more and more young people are succumbing to its temptations. In Greater Manchester, the rate of known crime committed by those aged between 10 and 16—the children of this Conservative Government's society—is 42 per cent. above the national average for boys and 49 per cent. above the national average for girls.

Those figures relate to Greater Manchester, but the figures for C division, which covers my constituency, are inevitably worse. That is not surprising, because, apart from the pestilential amusement arcades, which the Secretary of State for the Environment has forced the planning committee of my city to accept against its wish, there is too little available to occupy the time of young people in my constituency.

We have campaigned for youth facilities on the Anson estate, on which my constituents claim there is too much crime, but the Government offer no assistance. The Victoria swimming baths have closed down, but, despite an excellent campaign by local residents on behalf of themselves and their children, the Government do nothing to help. The Abbey Hey amateur football club, which is run in an area of great deprivation and unemployment, needs new changing rooms, but the Government do nothing. The Trinity Baptist church tries to provide facilities for youth in an area of high unemployment, but the Government do nothing to help.

It is no good the Government saying that Manchester city council should provide the necessary funds, because the Government have made it impossible for that council to do so. They have cut their grant to the council, and they have stopped it raising money not only by borrowing, but through local taxes, which are too high in any case.

The Government have slaughtered the urban aid programme, which could help some of the projects I have mentioned. They have killed off section 11 funding in a multi-ethnic area, where we have case after case after case of racial harassment. Although the Secretary of State has introduced a Bill that contains all kinds of trivial minutiae, he says that he cannot find space in it to create an offence of racial harassment, which many of my constituents ardently demand.

Mr. Howard: The right hon. Gentleman has, possibly inadvertently, entirely misrepresented what I said about racial offences. I said not that there was no room in the Bill for any matter of that kind, but that I had not yet seen any measure put forward which I thought would reinforce the effectiveness of our present laws. The real problem we face with our present laws relating to racial harassment is not that those laws are inadequate but that it is extremely difficult to apprehend and convict those responsible for offences which I deplore as much as the right hon. Gentleman or anyone else.

Mr. Kaufman: The problem with that intervention is that, several years ago, when the present Foreign Secretary was Home Secretary, I tabled an amendment to the then Criminal Justice Bill to create an offence of racial harassment. That right hon. Gentleman opposed it, not because it would not work but because it was only declaratory and was therefore not worth introducing.

In the several years since that Bill went through the House, the Home Secretary and his predecessors have had the opportunity to think about this matter. They have not done so, because if they had, it would be contained in the Bill together with so many trivia, let alone the damaging elements which are contained in it.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kaufman: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not give way, because 40 other hon. Members wish to speak, and I do not want to take up the time of other Back Benchers.

Next week, we shall welcome the Secretary of State for National Heritage to my constituency, to open new facilities at the Bangladesh community centre. He will hear

a positive story about self-help by that community, but what he may not hear, because my Bangladeshi constituents, in common with all my constituents, are extremely courteous, is that we are having to send out begging letters to continue the funding of that centre. I have sent one out myself, just as I now spend a great deal of my time sending begging letters for many worthwhile causes in a constituency of acute deprivation and poverty, which is afflicted with a high crime rate.

That poverty is demonstrated by the fact that Manchester, taking the index of poverty as the receipt of housing benefit, is the most poverty-stricken city in the country, with 52 per cent. of households receiving housing benefit. Last year, during the Olympic bid, the Prime Minister spent a great deal of time proclaiming to the world that Manchester was ahead in so many worthy aspects of activity—as indeed it is. He did not say that Manchester was a national leader in poverty, yet one of the reasons for that is the reign of office of the Government. The poor are the Government's target. The man on £30 income support goes hungry and is pursued, as has happened in my constituency, for alleged misuse of giros, while Mr. Roger Levitt gets community service for swindling the country and the people of millions.

It is not only the physical infrastructure of my constituency which is being undermined. My constituency is No. 32 out of 634 in terms of high unemployment, with a rate of 18·2 per cent. compared with the national average of 9·7 per cent. The unemployment rate for males is 25·4 per cent., compared with the national average of 12·8 per cent.

In my constituency, 37 per cent. of those unemployed are aged under 25—31 per cent. above the national average. Being unemployed does not mean that someone is a criminal. The overwhelming majority of the unemployed would never dream of committing a crime, but unemployment creates a society in which crime is more acceptable. The unemployment rate in my constituency is double the national average, and the Government are responsible, but instead of helping, they have inflicted damage on my constituency every day of the year.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I will not give way, because I am about to finish, and other hon. Members should have the right to make speeches.

What we have before us is a ponderous piece of legislation, accompanied by slick slogans. Neither the legislation nor the slogans will help my constituency. The only hope for my constituency is the kind of approach to values that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield outlined in his speech—a new dedication to an orderly and caring society. We will not get that from this Government or this Bill. We shall have to wait for a new Government.

5.38 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The concern expressed by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about rising crime would be more convincing if he had not voted against every measure of crime prevention that the Government have introduced from the series of Criminal Justice Acts to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Public Order Act 1986 down to the prevention of terrorism Acts. Some people may listen to what he had to say, but if one starts off on the assumption that he is saying something good while consistently voting against practical measures which have been shown to be successful, I am afraid that that is not impressive stuff.

Every law-abiding adult in Britain is concerned about the level of crime. He wants and expects the Government to do something about it and we are doing just that in the Bill, which should be welcomed by everyone. The Labour party is going to abstain. It is all over the place on the subject. It opposes for opposition's sake. If the Opposition want to give the nation the impression that they are not serious about law and order, it is their business but it will not do them much good when they stand at the next general election.

The argument of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that, after 14 years, the need for such legislation shows what a failure the Government have been is arrant nonsense to anyone who thinks about it for a moment. Apart from the trendy liberalisation in the 1960s, which I agree ought to have been reversed sooner, we have spent more taxpayers' money on crime prevention, policing, the courts, lawyers and prisons than would have been possible under Labour and we have given the police more powers and better equipment, training and leaders. All those measures have undoubtedly reduced crime from the level that it would have reached if those measures had not been taken. *[Interruption.]* A moment's common sense and examination of all the statistics will prove that.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield thinks that he is clever to ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary for a commitment that the new measures that we propose will reduce crime. Of course, that is what the measures are likely to do. If we stop some of the 50,000 people on bail from going free to commit more offences, it will reduce crime. It is clear that the stop-and-search measures that the City of London police have introduced has reduced crime, because statistics show a reduction of 18 per cent. over the past year alone.

If the world crime wave continues to grow, we may achieve a cut in the growth of crime, but not a cut in the present figure. We shall simply have to wait and see. A sensible Opposition would realise that there can be no guarantee of bringing the figure down but that action would still be required to do what was likely to reduce crime. In a worldwide crime wave, the measures that we have proposed—*[Laughter.]* It is no use guffawing. The fact is that Britain is still one of the safest countries in the western world in which to walk the streets. Unlikely countries such as Australia, Norway and France have a much higher record of crimes of violence and murder than we have in Britain and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) ought to recognise that.

It is also true——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Sir Ivan Lawrence: If the hon. Gentleman would forgive me, I shall try to get my speech over as quickly as possible.

As was conceded by the hon. Gentleman, it is true that the apparent increase in crime is due to the increased reporting of crime. That is the consequence of more telephones, neighbourhood watch schemes, more police officers, more detection devices and more consumer-friendly police and courts which encourage more women to

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come forward with complaints about offences. That is a substantial improvement for which the Government receive sparse thanks from the Opposition.

But the system is not perfect and it needs constant improvement. The Government have rightly targeted areas where legislation may be expected to improve matters. For example, there are too many persistent, hard core, juvenile offenders who go on and on offending and whom the courts are powerless to stop with existing legislation. In Birmingham, a 13-year-old appeared in court four months ago charged with no fewer than 225 offences of burglary and car crime. A senior Birmingham police officer said that if he could lock up six such offenders, he could reduce crime in the city centre of Birmingham by 18 per cent. and reduce car crime by between 30 and 40 per cent. We are giving the courts the power to do just that.

It is no use saying that giving the same money to local authorities would have the same effect. We have seen in the past few weeks what local authorities do if given money. Too often, they spend it on rewarding juvenile offenders with extravagant holidays overseas. That certainly does nothing to reduce the incidence of crime. In the two years that may be served under the secure training orders on which the Government are legislating, young offenders will be removed from bad influences of family and peer groups and from temptations. They will be educated, trained and disciplined so that they can be reprogrammed away from a life of crime. That seems to be a sensible aim, which looks likely to succeed because it is wrong that we are unable to do that at present. The Opposition cannot make up their mind about it.

In the past year, 50,000 people who were arrested committed offences while on bail. We can stop some of that happening by giving the courts power to refuse bail in more circumstances. We have taken two new steps to reduce bail offences and now we have proposed another five steps. Cannot the Opposition make up their minds on that, either?

There has been a growth of computer pornography, which corrupts children and demeans women, and we are giving the police more powers to deal with it.

Terrorists sometimes slip through the net because of inadequate police powers to stop them. We are strengthening the state's defences by creating two more offences, which already exist in Northern Ireland and are thought to be useful, and we are extending police power to stop and search, as the City of London police have proved is useful. Is the Opposition neutral on that one, too?

People in rural communities are fed up with mass trespassing by ravers, new-age travellers, squatters and hunt saboteurs, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) so eloquently said, so the Government are doing something about that in part V of the Bill, which is widely welcomed—but not by the Opposition.

Mr. Tony Banks: I recognise the hon. and learned Gentleman's senior position as Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, but does not he see that there is some inconsistency in the Bill if protesting against fox hunting on private land is to be made a matter of criminal activity? Why should not it be the case that those hunt protesters have to be told by the owners of the private land that they should not trespass on that land and that if they still do that it will be a civil rather than a criminal offence?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The intention to disrupt must be there, which the hon. Gentleman will see is written into the Bill. That takes the offence out of the civil area into the criminal area, where most people think that it ought to be.

It is all very well to introduce laws that cover every likely offence, to give the courts better authority to deal with crimes and to remove persistent offenders from circulation, but there is also something wrong with a legal system that fails to convict those who have been caught. It would be for other debates to consider what can be the reason for releasing so many offenders with a mere warning or caution that they must not do it again and for failing to prosecute 250,000 offenders a year against whom the police consider they have adequate evidence to proceed. For the moment, the Government are addressing the question of how we can ensure that more people who are guilty of crime are convicted of crime. The greater the likelihood of offenders being convicted and punished, the more that potential offenders are likely to be deterred from committing crimes. Weak responses encourage crime. Tough responses tend to deter it.

It is truly astonishing that 60 per cent. of all those who plead not guilty in Crown courts and magistrates courts are acquitted. Are so many innocent people being arrested, charged and brought to trial? With 30 years of experience in the criminal courts, I do not think that is what is happening. The Government propose to do something positive about convicting more of the guilty, and that is welcomed by everyone except the Labour party.

DNA samples provide almost incontrovertible evidence, if samples can be taken. The Government are extending the right to take samples in some cases and those who are caught will have substantial evidence against them. That includes many rapists. Those who are innocent will be proved to be so by that sensible measure, which I again understand that the Opposition oppose.

Mrs. Golding: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that if, as he says, there is a need for people to be encouraged to go to the courts to give evidence and for people to be able to give evidence freely in cases, children ought to be given greater protection? The report by Judge Pigot recommended that greater protection be given to children. Some progress was made in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, but it is certainly not working.

Children are still shouted at in courts and frightened. They have to meet their accusers. Their addresses are given to the people whom they accuse in court. That is not the way for children to give evidence in court. The Bill ought to include something about that. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that children need further protection in court?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I agree that children need protection. The Government have introduced proposals which give children that greater protection. If it is not available in every case, that may well be the fault of the judge who is presiding, not the fault of the Government. There is a problem with witnesses in cases involving children. If people are not given a fair trial, they may be convicted even though they are innocent. That is why such matters cannot be dealt with in the black and white manner that the hon. Lady suggests. However, I agree that we must

constantly look to make sure that children are properly treated in our courts and adequately protected when they make complaints.

The next matter on which I wish to speak is the right to silence. Now that we have tape-recorded interviews to protect the innocent against miscarriages of justice—particularly those which stemmed from false confessions alleged in the past by the police—the time has come to remove the absurdity of the right to silence, which we retained only because there was no other way of guaranteeing the truth of the confession.

I was pleased and a little surprised to hear the hon. Member for Sedgefield say that he would support the amendment of the right to silence in cases in which the accused refused to give evidence in court. However, the absurdity that someone caught almost red-handed or with marks or substances on him which require some explanation has nothing to say and, at the express direction of the judge, is protected from any adverse conclusion that may be drawn from his silence ought to be removed precisely because it is so absurd. Jeremy Bentham, the 19th century civil libertarian par excellence, thought so. The police think so. Most judges think so. The House should think so if it is serious about stopping the acquittal of the guilty.

After all, there is no great deal about making an adverse comment about a defendant's silence. If there is a legitimate reason for that silence, the defendant can explain it when he gives evidence. The defence counsel can explain it. The judge will have to remind the jury of that explanation when he sums up. The jury may well accept that explanation.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I cannot give way any more. I have given way enough. Please forgive me.

Opposition to abolition of the right to silence is out of date. Its passing should not be mourned any more than it has been in Northern Ireland. In answer to a point made by the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), I would say that of course there may well have to be a change in the ethical rules which bind solicitors. Solicitors should no longer be able to give blanket "make no comment" advice. It would be wrong and misleading to say that to a client in the new circumstances envisaged by the Bill. It would be iniquitous if a solicitor stopped an innocent client from giving an explanation in the first instance that would exonerate him.

In deference to others who wish to speak, I shall not refer to the several other sensible proposals in the Bill. The Bill is not the only piece of legislation that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary intends to introduce to reduce crime. There is now a Bill in the House of Lords aimed at improving the efficiency of the police and the courts. Other Bills will be forthcoming. The Government have been criticised for not including provision for the independent review tribunal in the Bill. However, the longer that we have to think it through in detail, the less likely it is to go wrong. Opposition Members might accept that there is a commitment to introduce it and that we shall perfect it. Other action which does not require legislation on cautioning, victims and other matters has been and will be taken.

It may be that the Bill can be improved in Committee. Several measures will be candidates for inclusion. For example, I believe that the Bill would benefit from the reintroduction of capital punishment. I believe that innocent lives would be saved by that measure. I also believe that action should be taken against television violence, which corrupts our young people. It may well be that some action should be taken against racial attacks and harassment. I hope that before my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary makes a final decision against any such action he will consider the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which is even now considering the matter and may have some positive proposals that will satisfy him.

I do not believe that the Bill would benefit from a reduction in the age of consent for homosexuals. That would encourage the incidence of homosexuality by allowing the proselytism of the young by older homosexuals. I shall not support a reduction if it is suggested in an amendment.

In so far as the Bill goes, there seems to be no earthly reason why it should not be given a Second Reading or why the Opposition should abstain on it. They only make themselves foolish by doing so. I cannot really complain about that. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on taking this firm step against lawlessness and crime so soon after he has taken office. He will have the support of not only Conservative Members but most of Britain.

5.55 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Bill is lengthy and not all of it is uncontroversial. Some of its provisions are sensible and should command the support of the whole House. But, in other respects, it constitutes a seriously retrogressive break with recent reforming penal legislation. Although the Bill is large, I believe that, reviewed in the round, it has missed the mark.

Although the Bill tackles serious problems, they involve small numbers of offenders. It tackles the problem of hard-core juvenile offenders who number perhaps several hundred, of rave parties and of murderers who reoffend, of whom there was only one last year. All those matters are writ large in the Bill. Yet some of the most major and pressing problems such as the thousands of other juvenile offenders who roam our streets committing crime for kicks, the men who burgle hundreds of homes while on bail and the drug pushers will remain largely untouched and uncontrolled.

There are two tests by which the legislation will be judged, although the Home Secretary was loth to admit it. They are its effect in reducing the level of crime and its effect on public confidence in the criminal justice system. The need to restore public confidence was the reason for setting up the royal commission. Our system of criminal justice cannot function effectively until that confidence is restored. The loss of faith in institutions lies at the heart of our general anxiety about the levels of crime that we now suffer.

We face a great problem of increasing crime and disorder and yet declining faith in the ability of the state to combat it and provide our future security. Public confidence in the system of criminal justice has been eroded by past miscarriages of justice and spectacular reversals of convictions based on false confessions and unsound evidence. It has been brought further into

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disrepute by the seeming impotence of the system in the face of rising crime. An ever smaller proportion of crimes are cleared up by the police. An ever larger number of cases are dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service before they reach the doors of the court. In 1992-93, 193,774 Crown cases were discontinued.

Judges, Home Secretaries and the police have been moved to argue in public over aspects of penal and sentencing policy. Most recently, Lord Woolf attacked the present Home Secretary's attitude to prisons. The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, has called the backlog in our courts a national disgrace. Some spokesmen for the police have called for the resignation of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills. It is clear that the different parts of the criminal justice system are not at ease with each other. That is the Home Secretary's problem. It is his responsibility to listen to the concerns and to act to strengthen the system.

The core concern of the royal commission was the prevention of miscarriages of justice. Therefore, it is surprising that the Bill has altogether avoided the issue. I would not have expected the Government to adopt the proposals of the commission without further thought, particularly on matters on which the commission was undecided. However, I expected the Bill to provide new procedures for reviewing serious miscarriages of justice. I am glad that the Bill reflects the conclusion of the royal commission on corroboration of confessions and in particular the need for strong judicial warnings that great care is needed before convicting on the basis of confessional evidence alone.

People sometimes confess to crimes that they did not commit. Often they do so of their own volition to protect others or to achieve notoriety. But others do so against their better judgment because they are too weak in the face of questioning or because they seek an escape from the interview room. Others, unfortunately, have had their confessions written for them.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides comprehensive but not infallible safeguards against false confessions. We need a new body to scrutinise claims by convicted men and women who are innocent of crimes. My party recognises that fact and gave evidence to that effect to the royal commission, and I hope that that will happen quickly.

The better management of trials is also required, but, disappointingly, the Bill fails to make the requisite procedural change—the disclosure of the prosecution case in full to the defence—which can so often result in a guilty plea.

There are many omissions from the Bill and a stack of proposals from the Law Commission is awaiting enactment. I draw attention in particular to its most recent report calling for the reform of the law on personal violence, on which the Bill is largely silent. Perhaps the Government will repair some of those omissions later in the Bill's proceedings.

In its practical effects in reducing crime, there could be some modest gains. The Bill criminalises holding and distributing computer child pornography, a measure that has been made necessary by advances in technology that have outpaced the law. But why does the Home Secretary stop at child pornography? A whole industry is sprouting up, publishing on computer material that would be illegal if it were on paper or video tape. Anyone with a computer and telephone can receive it in their home and the law cannot touch them or those who peddle it.

The proposed creation of a DNA database, a recommendation of the royal commission, could provide a significant new resource for police detectives. It is fingerprinting for the 21st century at a time when one third of all men has a criminal record by the age of 35 and one in four by the age of 21. I am concerned about over-reliance on such evidence, given the large margin for error which forensic scientists have identified in profiling DNA samples. Nevertheless, it is an important step forward.

The changes to the bail system to prevent persons who have offended while on bail from being bailed again and to allow for the reconsideration of bail if new information comes to light will help to reign in some of the bail bandits, so long as they are caught. Bail is a privilege that is too often abused. In one week last November, of 537 suspects arrested as part of Operation Bumblebee in London, 40 per cent. were currently on bail. Some of them had been bailed for other offences 10 or 15 times already in the year.

Improvements in the system of granting bail have been made through bail information schemes, which seem to hold out the best chance of a more rational system in the future. But the Bill will restrict bail automatically only for those accused of serious crimes of violence who have a record for the same offence. They are the least likely to offend while on bail. Those most likely to do so have a recent history of burglary and car theft, and the Bill will not prevent their crimes.

The two most controversial parts of the Bill are the centrepiece proposals on the treatment of younger juvenile offenders and the abolition of the so-called right to silence. I oppose both those sections absolutely. I see no benefit to be gained in either and the danger of much damage arising from both.

The Home Secretary has presented the secure training unit as a tough answer to a tough problem. It will cost the nation some £30 million a year to bring to heel an estimated 200 or so 12, 13 and 14-year-olds. That is £150,000 each per annum—more than it costs to live in the Savoy. Never have a Government cowered so abjectly or lavished such wealth in the face of so few children, while the Bill passes over the juvenile offenders who cause most damage.

This new penal edifice will be no more successful than its predecessors—the borstal and approved school. It may be intended to convince the nation that something is being done—ministerial visits, photocalls and contract signings. I doubt that that will persuade many members of the public. We must be aware that those who, at a young age, are already behaving in that manner are not only young people with a criminal record but children in need of behavioural correction. The public need protection from them not only for the period when the juveniles are held in custody but in the future. Recidivism is the measure of the success of any corrective regime to which offenders are sentenced. That was the failure of the approved schools and it will be the failure of the secure training centres. Such treatment can be provided for the handful of juveniles who will fall into the category defined by the Bill without the creation of a whole new penal edifice.

We already have facilities for treating persistent juvenile offenders and straightforward changes to the law

would enable those under 15 to be dealt with by existing institutions and some measures that are being sought by local authorities, to which reference has already been made. Secure units at local authority care homes have a relatively high success rate in preventing reoffending among their charges. Admittedly, with 60 per cent. not reconvicted within two years of their release, it is far from perfect, but it compares to a reconviction rate of 53 per cent. among former inmates of young offender institutions. The existing system needs to be underpinned, not undermined.

May I call in aid the words of the then Home Office Minister in 1991, now the Secretary of State for Education, who said:

"I think that there is considerable agreement between the political parties that one of the best forms of crime prevention is, if possible, to stop young people going into detention in the first place".—[*Official Report*, 29 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 920.]

It could be argued that the Secretary of State for Education is in a better position to tackle juvenile crime than the Home Secretary appears to be.

If juvenile crime is to be tackled, we must start at the cradle, not at the third conviction as the Bill proposes. It falls to us all—parents, teachers, youth leaders and everyone who comes into contact with the young—to help young people to face up to the responsibilities that they must shoulder as members of society. But the Bill provides no new initiative to strike at even the immediate causes of juvenile offending.

Drugs and alcohol abuse are among the biggest contributors to crime. A report by the British Psychological Society in 1990 found that the average age at which known young offenders start drinking regularly is 14. They drank up to seven pints of beer a night. The more that they drank, the more they used drugs. Typically, they started by sniffing glue at 13, smoking cannabis at 14, and taking cocaine and LSD by 16. It found that 42 per cent. of those convicted of robbery and 23 per cent. of those convicted of car theft were drunk or on drugs when they committed the crimes.

Where is the war on drugs? Where is the programme of research into patterns of drug use and their relationship to crime? Where are the reviews of policy on the treatment of heroin addicts? Where is the programme on drugs education? Nothing in the Bill even strengthens the powers of the police and licensees to prevent the sale of alcohol to young people. I see no sign that the Government are prepared to give as high a priority to tackling drugs and alcohol abuse as they are to cracking down on ticket touts and building prison ships.

My other bone of contention with the Bill is the abolition of the right to silence, which is better termed "the freedom from self incrimination". Some countries protect that right under their constitution. In an earlier incarnation in 1986, speaking in a debate on the Financial Services Act, the Home Secretary described the right to silence as the fundamental principle of the criminal law. It still is, but he made a bombastic pronouncement at the Conservative party conference last year about that ancient principle, which he called "a charade". However, it enshrines the presumption of innocence until proof of guilt.

The principle can be abused but jurors are usually aware of that and it is the best mechanism that we have for putting the onus of proof on the prosecution. If we abolish that requirement, we risk the greatest charade of guilt by innuendo. A criminal conviction relies on positive proof of guilt, not on a lack of proof of innocence. That requires positive facts, such as would be provided by DNA profiling or the evidence of witnesses. An inference drawn from silence is not a fact but an opinion. Mere opinion should have little weight in deciding guilt or innocence.

The slogan that has been used to justify that provision of the Bill is

"the innocent have nothing to hide."

Although that is true, the innocent might have nothing to say to prove their innocence. A man suspected of a crime might have no witness to confirm that he was at home alone when the offence of which he is suspected was committed. Are we to expect him to prove the unprovable? Or are we to continue to leave it to the prosecution to prove that he was not at home but out thieving?

The Bill also contains a number of curious innovations intended to deal with hunt saboteurs and rave parties. Conservative Home Secretaries are generally drawn from the school of thought that holds that most social evils can be purged by creating a new offence. The Bill is a testament to that grand tradition, which visited upon us the legislation on joyriders and on dangerous dogs, neither of which has rid society of those menaces. I shall not oppose a new offence of aggravated trespass but that new offence would not stop hunt saboteurs, whose real concern is with the hunter and not his land. The blood sport issue will go away only if the House chooses to resolve it directly. Until then, the conflict will continue.

A substantial part of the Bill is also taken up with the extension of the prison and courts escort privatisation programme. That saw the light of day in the 1991 Act, even before the Woolf report into the disturbances at Strangeways had been published. I doubt that anyone was surprised that in the 600 or so pages of that report the word "privatisation" did not appear. The main problem facing the country is that privatisation has denied us accountability and openness. We are not even allowed to know the salary of the chaplain at the Wolds prison. The record of Group 4's management speaks for itself.

Prison does not work: for too many it is a temporary halt, an occupational hazard in a career of crime. For others it is the start. Our prisons are not equipped to do the job of correcting offenders, and the support provided for released offenders is nowhere near adequate. The Home Secretary's belief in prisons in inappropriate, and it is not shared by his predecessors or by Lady Thatcher who, when she was Prime Minister, said that the Criminal Justice Bill was designed to ensure that the severity of the sentence matched the seriousness of the crime and the need to protect the public. I entirely agree with that, and it has been the policy of my party since its foundation. In building upon the hasty and stupid abolition of unit fines, the Bill is extremely retrogressive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker has ruled that until 8 o'clock speeches will be confined to 10 minutes.

6.10 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and I waited for some constructive suggestions by the Liberal Democrat party on how to solve the problems that the Bill tries to tackle. Sadly, I listened in vain and was disappointed. As my speech will be limited to 10 minutes, I shall not comment on the speeches of other hon. Members.

[Mr. John Greenway]

I welcome the Bill and wish to speak mainly about juvenile offenders, but at the outset I shall comment on one or two other matters, the first of which is public order. The British Horseracing Board and the Jockey Club warmly welcome the proposals in clauses 52 to 55 which, they believe, will help the police and the racing industry to deal with the sort of incident that occurred at the Grand National in April last year. The fact that those proposals will also deal with the wilful disruption of other sporting activities should not detract in any way from the importance of that.

During the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), there was an intervention about trespass. The Bill makes it plain that disruption must be intentional and not accidental. It would be rather strange for those who wish to argue in favour of people who want to walk in the countryside or ramble or make a peaceful protest to say that it should be the other way round. If trespass and disruption were accidental, a person walking a dog which strayed into a field and chased ewes that were about to lamb could be committing a crime. The Bill has got the matter just right, and I hope that there will be no substantial change on that in Committee.

I should now like to deal with the stop-and-search powers relating to terrorism. There was a moment of great poignancy during my time on the Select Committee on Home Affairs when during an evidence session we asked the former Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir Peter Imbert, whether he felt that he had sufficient powers to deal with terrorism. A note arrived to say that two more bombs had gone off in Oxford street. Sir Peter said, tellingly, that if over the next week or so he set up a number of stop-and-search barriers around the west end of London, people would fully understand why that was being done but that two or three months later public sympathy would begin to wear thin. For a long time there has been a need to clarify police powers to stop and search vehicles in relation to potential terrorist activity. In that context the measures in the Bill are important and welcome.

The third issue with which I should like to deal is ticket touting. I have campaigned for a long time to make the sale of tickets outside football grounds an offence. Lord Justice Taylor, now the Lord Chief Justice, recommended that in his report on the Hillsborough tragedy, and it is essential to do it because of the problems that arise from all our soccer grounds becoming all-seater stadiums. Without such a measure it would become ever more difficult for football clubs to operate crowd segregation which, sadly, remains an important element of reducing or eliminating disorderly and violent conduct in soccer grounds.

The criminal justice reforms are the centrepiece of the Bill, and I have no great difficulty in accepting them. The decision to extend DNA and to treat it, in effect, in the same way as fingerprinting is welcome and is roughly in line with what previous Home Affairs Select Committee reports recommended in the previous Parliament.

The measures to deal with people who commit offences while on bail are important. People will ask whether the measures will reduce crime, and the proposed changes to deal with offending while on bail are the clearest example of how crime can be reduced. Whether they will reduce the overall growth of crime in recent years makes it difficult for Ministers to say categorically that crime figures will go down. However, if the number of offences committed by people who have already been charged with an offence is reduced, the overall level of crime will be lower.

I have no difficulty in accepting the proposals on the right to silence. My view, which I think is shared by most people, was adequately outlined in today's editorial in *The Daily Telegraph*, which states:

> "It is not intended that defendants should be forced to answer."

That is the case. The editorial goes on:

> "But when they refuse to help the police when interrogated or to give evidence in their own defence, a counsel or judge would be allowed to draw the jury's attention to that fact. It is difficult to see how this might increase the chances of the innocent being convicted. Juries are already at liberty to notice an accused's silence and to attach whatever weight to it they like."

If I am disappointed in any way by the Bill, it is that it does not go far enough in implementing some of the royal commission's recommendations. I remain concerned, as do the police, about the number of trials that have collapsed because of the defence requirement for prosecution disclosure, the so-called fishing expeditions. More needs to be done to deal with that, and it lies behind some of the statistics that have been bandied about in the debate as to why so many trials have collapsed.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs has not yet completed its inquiry into computer pornography, but it is clear to us that there is a gap in the law. The Bill's provisions seem to conform to what the police have recommended to strengthen the law.

My substantive comments are on juvenile offending. Last year the Select Committee on Home Affairs published an in-depth report on the issue after looking at the problem from every possible angle. Nothing in the Bill conflicts with what we said in our report. I stand by everything in our report, and nothing in the Government's proposals is at odds with it. On the contrary, the strengthening of custodial sentences available to the courts for teenage offenders was one of our central recommendations, and will be welcomed by the courts and the country.

Secure training orders can be made to work, but it would be wrong and foolish for anyone to claim that they are a panacea for the problem of juvenile delinquency. The problem has plagued generations over many centuries, but only a blind fool would not accept that there is a clear gap in the current provisions for dealing with the hard core of persistent juvenile offenders at whom most of our inquiries to try to find a solution are directed.

During our inquiries we visited Northern Ireland where institutions similar to those that the Government have in mind already exist. The training school at Lisnevin has provision for about 40 youngsters. It provides security, not just for the public against whom youngsters might offend, but gives those youngsters the security of a stable environment that many of them have lacked.

I believe that we can get it right. There is a clear place for challenging activity for youngsters, but it must be set in the right context. Equally, there is a need to avoid turning the secure training units into oppressive borstals or approved schools. What some of those youngsters need is love, care and concern, and that is what has to be provided.

My time is up, so I shall finish by saying that to me it is a tragedy that the issue has become so partisan, with arguments about whether the idea is good or bad. The best people to make the young offenders secure training units work are those in voluntary sector organisations such as the Children's Society and the National Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Children. There is still time and opportunity for the Government and those organisations to reach a consensus on how we should deal with those youngsters in the framework of the new secure units.

6.20 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I intend to deal mainly with clauses 102, 103 and 104, which take away the rights of the Prison Officers Association to take industrial action and give the Home Secretary the power to dictate pay, terms and conditions. Before I do that, I shall deal with the main thrust of the Bill, which, like many Opposition Members, I believe to be misguided. The Bill spends little time on measures for crime prevention, because those would cost money. It also does little about crime detection, because spending more money and strengthening the police force are not within the remit of the Home Secretary—at least, not in connection with the Bill.

The Bill will send more people to prison, which will result in more of the overcrowding and riots that we have seen over the past three years. What the people want to see is more crime prevention and detection. Only after that will they turn to the consequences of sentencing. However, the Bill is less to do with the prevention or detection of crime than with the political future of the Home Secretary. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is more concerned about where he will go next than about whether the measures in the Bill are effective. He hopes that he will be able to deceive many people in the short term and that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) suggested, by the time it is seen that the measures are not working in the long term, he will have departed from the Home Office and taken up some other post.

What will be the consequences of what the Home Secretary is doing—the consequences of the overcrowding and the insanitary conditions? All those trends lead towards riots. Yet the Prison Officers Association has been singled out. In order to prevent it from protesting against the overmanning and overcrowding that will occur, the Government are taking away its rights. All this time the POA has been pleading for better conditions and facilities for prisoners and saying that they should be treated as human beings. It has been pleading for a penal system fit for the 1990s rather than for the 1890s.

I speak as a Member in whose constituency there has been a prison riot—in Risley remand centre. Despite the fact that the local POA and I had said that conditions there would lead sooner or later to increased tension and to a riot, and despite the fact that there had been numerous suicides in the establishment, nothing was done. Yet once the riot had happened there was better provision and Risley was no longer the disastrous remand centre about which many of us had warned.

Despite the improvement in conditions at Risley, the lesson was not learnt elsewhere. To the east of my constituency, in Manchester, there were the Strangeways riots, which occurred precisely because of overcrowding, despite the proposals of Lord Justice Woolf in his report following the riots, who had drawn attention to the difficulties that it caused. He had said what ought to be done and had praised the prison officers for attempting to make intolerable conditions tolerable.

Even then the lessons were not learnt, and this year, to the north of my constituency at Wymott, near Preston, there were similar riots, and much damage was done, because no notice was taken of Judge Tumim's report which said that tension was being caused at the prison and conditions were getting worse, so the situation was becoming confrontational. That message did not get home, despite the warnings given by Her Majesty's inspectorate. Despite all that, there was another, albeit smaller, riot at Whitemoor on 21 December. Again, the POA had warned that alcohol abuse had occurred there and that restrictive measures would probably be needed to deal with the situation, yet nothing happened, and a disturbance turned into a minor riot. Only then were the views that the POA had expressed taken into account. Such events cost the taxpayer an awful lot of money.

We already have prison overcrowding. Local prisons are 122 per cent. overcrowded and the prison population is now increasing by 250 a week. The long-term building of new prisons will not solve the short-term problem of overcrowding. There is no safety valve. We are trying to screw the situation down, but it will probably all go up in the air. If that happens, it will cost an awful lot of money.

Over the past five years in the prison service of the United Kingdom, including Scotland and Northern Ireland, there have been more than 100 riots and concerted acts of indiscipline, which have cost £1 billion. There have been 200 suicides, 12,000 drug incidents and 67 hostage incidents. There have been 1,000 escapees, many of whom are still at large. Yet this is the time when the Home Secretary chooses to take away the prison officers' right to take industrial action. The POA has not been noted for taking industrial action on salaries; it has taken industrial action to draw attention to understaffing and overcrowding. Yet that right is being taken away by a reactionary anti-union Government. Furthermore, the Home Secretary is taking away many of the rights of the POA to free collective bargaining. As clause 104 says, he will determine pay and conditions. Surely that should be the right of any free trade union.

In case Conservative Members say, "Oh, but this is all about the Prison Officers Association", I remind them that, according to the registrar of trade unions, the Prison Governors Association, which could not be termed militant and has not taken action, is also to be covered.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the new prisons being built will be private? No doubt there will be a deliberate attempt to prevent the Prison Officers Association from organising in them.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes. I am glad that my hon. Friend has drawn my attention to that fact. The restrictions on industrial action and the Home Secretary's taking it upon himself to dictate pay and conditions will not apply to private sector prisons. That is not only absurd but unfair.

Since 1980 we have had a succession of anti-trade union Governments who have usually introduced such measures in employment legislation. Now those measures are to be introduced under criminal justice legislation. I say to other workers in the public sector that what is happening to the prison officers today could happen tommorow to civil servants, fire fighters, ambulance and health service workers and teachers. If the Government are allowed to get away with placing shackles on the Prison Officers

[Mr. Hoyle]

Association on the 10th anniversary of their removal of the rights of trade unionists at GCHQ, it will augur ill for trade unionists in the public sector everywhere.

6.30 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I am glad to give my support to the Bill, which will improve many aspects of our criminal justice system and is to be welcomed. However, there is a glaring omission, which I—and various other hon. Members—hope to remedy by tabling an amendment with sponsors from all sides of the House. I hope that, if such an amendment were accepted for debate, we could have a full-day debate with a free vote at the end of it. I refer to something that is clearly a matter not for party dogma but for the individual consciences of hon. Members—the issue of the age of consent for homosexual acts.

In a free society in which individual liberty and freedom of action and thought count for a great deal, the burden of proof and argument is not on those of us who seek equality before the law. The onus is on those who would argue in favour of discrimination to explain how that is in the public interest and how it is in the interests of any of our fellow citizens that the law should intervene to make their activities illegal.

According to the Library, the House has changed the age below which sex with a girl is unlawful only three times in its history. That age was 12 in 1275; it was raised to 13 in 1875 and to 16 in 1885. It has not changed since. The age of consent for homosexual women has, of course, long been 16.

The Sexual Offences Act 1967 made homosexuality legal in England and Wales. Scotland did not follow until 1980, and homosexuality was still banned in Ulster until 1982. That is why we shall seek to cover as much of the United Kingdom as we can in our amendment and, if necessary, ask the Government later to amend other legislation to reflect the will of the House.

The House has not voted since 1967 on the gap that still exists between the heterosexual and homosexual ages of consent. Here is an outmoded law, which touches, at the most conservative estimate, 1 million of our fellow citizens who are gay. Such men pay their taxes and hold down jobs. Their ranks have included distinguished actors, composers, writers and artists—men whom we have been proud to call British—soldiers and politicians. They serve as senior civil servants and police officers. They run banks and businesses at the highest level. Yet in relation to this one topic, their personal judgment is regarded as irrelevant and dangerous and the state decides whom they can and cannot love. Surely that is and always has been absolute nonsense.

Most countries have an equal age of consent, often lower than ours. The United Kingdom age of consent for gay men is the highest among the 28 Council of Europe countries. In Austria and Italy, it is 14. Holland, Greece, France, Poland and Sweden prefer 15, and Norway, Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland 16. The German Government have announced that they will introduce equal age legislation and the Irish Government did so successfully last spring, choosing 17. In none of those sober, intelligent countries did the dire consequences predicted for Britain result. In 1967, when Britain changed its law, it led the rest of the world. Now we are well behind, and that should give us pause for thought.

Some hon. Members hold strong moral views. I do not expect those with religious objections to like or approve of the amendment that we hope to put forward. But, although they—or any of us—may have deep reservations about all sorts of personal behaviour in others, that does not mean that we should try to ban such behaviour by law and thus make the individuals concerned common criminals. It is open to the Churches or anyone else to seek change through persuasion, but I do not believe that any of us has the right to use the courts, the police, the judges and the prisons to harass those who wish to indulge in sexual practices that we do not like. The House should take a common-sense stand on this.

As Oscar Wilde observed a century ago, coercion does not work. We cannot make men moral by law. They will not take any notice. If one asks young people today, one finds that they make their sexual choices absolutely without reference to what the current law says. They think that their personal private behaviour is entirely their own business, and so do I.

There is, however, an important practical argument, which we expect to hear in due course in the debate on the amendment. We must be concerned to protect young men from unwanted approaches, from predatory older people, from being seduced and misled. As an older person, I feel very strongly about that. We are all in favour of such protection. I am in favour of protecting young women, too. Most of the youngsters tell me—whatever I may think of the rightness or wrongness of it—that they feel old enough at 16 to make up their own minds. That aspect of the matter —the general age of consent—was settled in Britain back in Victorian times and it is not on the agenda for change today.

It is perhaps helpful to read into the record comments contained in the Wolfenden report:

"We have made it clear throughout our report that we recognise the need for protecting the young and immature. But this argument can be carried too far: there comes a time when a young man can properly be expected to 'stand on his own feet' in this as in other matters, and we find it hard to believe that he needs to be protected from would-be seducers more carefully than a girl does."

The law as it stands is not helpful to vulnerable young men, however. In fact, it works in exactly the opposite way. If a boy wished to make a complaint about an unwanted homosexual approach today, he would think twice about going to the police. He would immediately be the one who was questioned—the one who was the criminal. He might well face charges, public humiliation or even a prison sentence. He would not receive the consideration or anonymity that a woman would receive if she complained about an alleged rape. I do not feel that that can be right. The prospect of being treated as a criminal himself would be a huge deterrent to a boy seeking to make such a complaint—indeed, it would render it almost impossible for him to do so. The law as it stands is not a shield for the young, but an enforcer of their silence.

Nor do we offer good health education in such circumstances. I am as worried as anyone about AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. I can now share with the House the fact that the Department of Health faced a dilemma when we started the campaign against AIDS in 1986-87. We needed, and we knew that we needed, to warn young gay men of the mortal dangers of promiscuity and

of what some of them were up to. Talking to them about safe sex meant that we had to ask health workers to seek out boys in circumstances where the law was being seriously broken. We had long discussions about that in the Department. We decided to go ahead anyway, for safety's sake. If our AIDS death figures are now better than everyone predicted, and far better than those in many comparable countries, that wise decision must take the credit. How much easier and more effective such health education would be if criminality were not at issue.

For me this is not simply a practical matter but a matter of principle. We should use the criminal law sparingly and only when necessary. Large parts of private behaviour should be nothing to do with the state. We should not permit the continued persecution of large numbers of people. That is not a recipe for a nation "at ease with itself".

We are talking about our voters. We trust their judgment in sending us to this august House. We are talking about our fellow citizens. Gay men are people who we know, work with and like. What they do is not a disease and whether they do it or not is, and should be, entirely a private matter. I believe that the time has come to give those men the equality under the law which the rest of us take for granted. I believe that the choices that they freely make are entitled to be treated with respect. It is now time for change.

6.39 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I hope that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will forgive me if, because of time constraints, I do not follow her down that road. Although I understand that the hon. Lady has not yet tabled her amendment, I hope that her speech will not attract any adverse publicity, or any publicity at all, because I know how she eschews such publicity, whatever the topic.

My colleagues who listened to the Home Secretary will be disappointed by what he had to say. His speech was predictable and rumbustious although largely irrelevant to the enormous increase in crime in this country. Listening to the Home Secretary, one would have thought that the Government had nothing to do with the massive increase in crimes such as burglary, drugs related offences, joy riding, rape and violence. It seemed that all that had appeared suddenly in this country as though inflicted on us by an alien and outside body.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) rightly reminded us, the young people about whom we have largely been concerned in this debate were born, brought up and imbued with the philosophies of Thatcherism. Perhaps we should not be surprised by the massive increase in crime that has occurred under the Conservative Administration.

In addition to the massive increase in crime, we have seen a great deal of publicity about miscarriages of justice. There is a feeling of disappointment on the Opposition Benches—and, I suspect, among some Conservative Members—about the Home Secretary's comments on the abolition of the right of silence.

Injustice and miscarriages of justice are phrases that were rarely heard in this country until comparatively recently. A great deal of concern has rightly been expressed about those well publicised cases. The Home Secretary abuses his office by responding to those expressions of concern in the way he has.

For the sake of obtaining a standing ovation from a previously hostile Tory party conference, the Home Secretary seeks to deprive the accused of one of the traditional safeguards of liberty—the right not to incriminate himself or herself. That is too fundamental a right to be tampered with, particularly by a discredited Administration like the present one.

The Home Secretary knows full well that Lord Runciman's royal commission concluded that there was no evidence that silence in the police station leads to more acquittals or that the right of silence is exceptionally used by professional criminals. We all know that professional criminals know how the law works. They are very good at exploiting loopholes. They do not need to worry too much about the right of silence and they will not do so under the proposals in the Bill. It is the weak, the disadvantaged and the not too bright—innocent as well as guilty—who will be caught under the proposals. For the Government to embark on that course just to achieve a standing ovation at the Tory party conference brings no credit to the Home Secretary or his Ministers.

Over the past few weeks, there has been much publicity about the activities of Ministers. I will not go down that road. However, in passing, I believe that the fibre of this once great nation of ours is in greater danger from fully and elegantly dressed Ministers in their offices than from the activities over the past few weeks of a well publicised few —and nowhere more so than with regard to law and order.

Up to 1979, and for two or three years thereafter, this Government and their supporters blamed the last Labour Administration, and what they termed "socialist policies", for increases in crime in the United Kingdom. Indeed, as recently as a few months ago, the Prime Minister referred to crime in urban areas as though it was something that could be blamed exclusively on the election of Labour councillors. The self-styled party of law and order is responsible for the greatest explosion in crime that this country has ever seen. I do not know what the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) is grinning about. The explosion of crime in my constituency—and, I suggest, in that of the hon. Member for Gravesham—threatens the very fabric of our society.

Over the past few months I have attended three public meetings in my constituency at which hundreds of people have expressed concern about crimes such as burglary, the stealing of and from cars and particularly crimes of violence. Those people and the police officers present at those meetings expressed despair at the Government's failure to tackle crime and its causes adequately.

As a result, like hon. Members on both sides of the House, I am now told continually that people intend to take the law into their own hands if, as they perceive it, the law does not protect them properly. While organisations such as neighbourhood watch have had a positive impact, people are increasingly concerned about the activities of a comparatively small number of young people who are responsible for the great bulk of crimes of the type that I have mentioned which have such an adverse effect on the quality of life of millions of people.

As recently as last Saturday, I was told of the activities of a 14-year-old, whom I shall not name as that would add to his notoriety, on the Yew Tree estate in Walsall in my constituency. That was not by any means the first time that

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the youth's name and activities had been brought to my attention. He and a few of his more easily led cronies swagger around the estate and threaten those vulnerable enough not to be in a position to fight back. A member of staff at a local shop on the estate told me that he and his family have faced threats of physical violence. That person's wife and children had been threatened in their flat via the intercom. The youth recently appeared in court for physically attacking an old age pensioner. However, as he is 14, he was swaggering around the estate once more within days. Only last Saturday, a local shopkeeper on the estate told me of a woman sufferer of Downs syndrome who wept in her shop as she was frightened to go home as a result of the activities of that young person and similarly led people. That is the reality of life on so many estates in this country at the moment and we ignore that reality at our peril.

I have referred to the danger of people taking the law into their own hands. The person who came to see me last Saturday warned me that patience with the group of youths to whom I have referred is at an end. He said that people are now looking for that youth and some of his friends to administer retribution. In spite of all that, the Opposition's proposals for tackling juvenile crime have been ignored year after year by the Conservative party.

Reported crime in the borough of Sandwell in my constituency has risen by more than 150 per cent. since the Conservative party took office. House burglary, the biggest fear of my constituents at the moment, is up by more than 250 per cent. in the borough. Theft of and from motor vehicles is up more than 300 per cent. as is robbery. That is a frightening scenario, but the Conservative party continually boasts that it is the party of law and order. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, only one crime in 50 is now being detected. That is a shame and a scandal, the blame for which should rightly and justly be attached to the Conservative party.

Police officers of all ranks whom I meet regularly frankly despair of ever having the resources, let alone the time, to combat crime in my own and other constituencies. I frequently hear the public say that, although the police do their best, they are losing the battle. It is not just the obvious incompetence of the Prime Minister, the irrelevance of the pronouncements of many of his Ministers or the state of the economy on which the Government will be judged at the next election—it is their palpable failure in respect of law and order which alone should guarantee their defeat.

6.48 pm

Mr. Warren Hawksley (Halesowen and Stourbridge): This is probably the most important debate that we shall have in this Parliament. We fought the last election with the view that our electorate wanted us to act. For too long they had heard people talk about law and order without responding to, or dealing with, the problems.

When I was a member of Shropshire county council in 1972, we set up our social services department which took over the responsibility for young offenders. We got rid of the approved schools and called them community homes. Although I criticised and opposed that at the time, I recall that all parties, in unison, talked of that being an enlightened policy and a good liberal approach to handling young offenders. For 20 years, social services have had their chance, but they have failed to tackle the problems which matter and to reduce the number of young offenders.

In the Adjournment debate on 1 December, I was pleased to discuss the question of young offenders. On that occasion, I quoted the words of my local chief superintendent, John Jasper. He said that, if he could lock up the six most persistent offenders in the Birmingham city centre, he would be able to reduce car offences by up to 40 per cent. and many people would feel very much better for the fact that their cars were not being broken into. In that Adjournment debate, I also referred to the 13-year-old who committed 225 offences, of which 175 were committed while he was awaiting trial in so-called social services secure accommodation.

Those two cases justify part I of the Bill. The public demand action. Police and magistrates demand the power to respond to what the public are asking for. Secure accommodation for 12 to 14-year-olds is essential. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office will tell us when he hopes to have in place some secure accommodation units that could be used by the courts. The public are asking for that to be done very quickly indeed.

I suggest that part I does not go far enough. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, in reply to my Adjournment debate, have rightly expressed shock at holidays on the rates—cruises up the Nile and safaris for young offenders—but nothing in part I actually stops them. Only yesterday, the Bryn Melyn home at Bala was relicensed by the local authority for yet another year. We must assume that it thinks that it will be able to continue such holidays for at least that period. It is not the answer, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health said, to issue new guidelines. The public expect the Government to stop that practice.

The Government believe that such practices should be stopped, according to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, so why do we not have something in this legislation which would take from social services the right to deal with such cases and would make sure that courts rather than social workers decide what happens to young offenders? For example, an amendment along the lines that the decision of a court should be essential before a child is sent abroad might help.

I support the toughening up of bail conditions. Too many people commit offences while on bail.

As a non-lawyer, I believe that the right to silence should go. The Government's proposals are right. People who have nothing to hide will tell a policeman where they have been and what they have been up to. The only people who will keep silent are those who have something to hide. The legislation is adequate to tilt the balance so that those who commit crimes are found guilty.

I was a member of the Committee that considered the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. Under pressure from the police, the Committee agreed to allow intimate body searches. I welcome the modern scientific aids that are available to the police being given legal recognition.

Clause 45 tackles the problem of trespass by new-age travellers. We have seen them cause damage and problems. In Malvern, there was an invasion of 10,000 and in Kerry in Powys they arrive nearly every year. We are withdrawing section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 and

replacing it by clause 45. I am nervous, because section 39 says that if 12 caravans are together the law can be enforced. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is reducing that number to six. That is fine—I do not object to that at all—but I object that section 39 is not being used. I gather that the Association of Chief Police Officers is opposed to it. I gather also that chief constables have instructed officers not to use it. Police constables in Powys and the west midlands have told me that they are instructed to avoid using section 39 if at all possible. I worry that if section 39 is replaced by clause 45, it will still be ignored by the police. I hope that we shall have an assurance that something will be done to make sure that the new legislation is enforced. The police should protect people's property from criminal trespass.

Police powers should be increased. We have seen the harassment of individuals by hunt saboteurs and such people.

I support the Bill, but I would go further. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) talked about capital punishment. I assume that the Bill will provide an opportunity to debate that subject and possibly also corporal punishment. I would support both measures if and when they came before the House.

It is interesting that Labour Members are undecided how to vote on the Government's proposals. Their party will be shown up. It loudly claims to be the party of law and order. Labour Members make a lot of noise, but they are not prepared to do anything. Whenever we have put forward tough legislation, we have been opposed by all the Opposition parties. If Opposition Members want to be taken seriously on the issue, they should vote for the Bill. I look forward to supporting the Bill tonight and opposing the feeble Labour amendment.

6.56 pm

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): At the Labour party conference last year, the deputy leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), predicted that, at the Tory party conference, the sky would be black with Tory chickens coming home to roost. The Bill demonstrates the rightness of what she said. It encapsulates an attempt to deal with the consequences of nearly 15 years of Conservative rule, when we were told that there was no such thing as society: there were only individuals pursuing their own interests. We were told, "There is no person other than me; there is no time other than now."

There is a policy of high unemployment. Twenty-three per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds are jobless. In Barton Hill in my constituency, there is male unemployment of 45 per cent. There is a chronic housing shortage. Bristol city council has the longest waiting lists since the second world war. We have had rocketing homelessness. Bristol has the highest number of homeless people, apart from London. We have inadequate welfare benefits, repossessions and utter disdain by the Government for collective values.

Those factors are bound to cause a breakdown in our social fabric and threaten the family. However, we are suddenly told by the Prime Minister that people should treat each other with respect, except that that this is tempered by the Government exhortation, "Don't do as I do: do as I say."

The Bill gives the Government a unique opportunity to restore confidence in our criminal justice system in the wake of the report of the royal commission chaired by Lord Runciman. That opportunity has been wasted in a host of ways, but I shall focus on only three.

First, there is a need for an independent body to review miscarriages of justice, as recommended by the Runciman commission. That was supported by Lord Justice May in his report on the Maguire Seven, and even by former Conservative Home Secretaries, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the present Foreign Secretary. The Home Secretary alone is to continue to be the court of last resort. That procedure is secretive and undemocratic.

Furthermore, the present Home Secretary's propensity to play to the gallery at Tory party conferences gives little hope to those who have been wrongly convicted. We have only to remember Stefan Kiszko, who died last month after giving up 14 years of his life after being wrongly convicted. He gave the money donated to him by well wishers to Justice, to fight for other people who are victims of miscarriages of justice. Why are people not concerned that the person who murdered that little girl is still scot free?

I now wish to draw the attention of the House to a matter referred to by hon. Members from both sides—the abolition of the right to silence. The right to remain silent in the face of questioning, accusations and interrogation is a fundamental principle that has been in existence for 350 years. It is tragic that police training and procedures have at long last focused attention on investigation methods rather than forcing admissions from those who are presumed guilty. At the same time, the Bill is moving in the opposite direction. Convictions should be based more on evidence, because false confessions are not just the preserve of the vulnerable and inarticulate.

In May 1991, Dr. Dames MacKeith, a psychiatrist, warned:

> "Anyone, including you or I—put under pressure for long enough could confess to a crime, even one as serious as murder. In fact, it would be the odd, unusual, abnormal person who didn't make a false confession under such an extreme degree of pressure."

The abolition of the right to silence would be no threat to hardened criminals, who know the ropes. Abolition is opposed by the Bar Council, so I am astonished that distinguished lawyers such as the right hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the Home Secretary should consider abolishing it. It is also opposed by the Law Society, Liberty, Justice, the National Association of Probation Officers, the Children's Legal Centre and many more.

I shall now deal with the proposals for secure training centres, or "child gaols" as they were described to me by a probation professional. There are already 300 secure unit places in this country run by local authorities. Many are underfunded. The Avon probation service has told me that Avon social services was denied funding just over two years ago for the secure unit in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry). That has left a shortage of places in a unit that is on the doorstep for people in Avon, and has developed the expertise to deal with young people.

Offending behaviour is frequently associated with family breakdown, and sentencing to closed institutions a long way from home will serve only to exacerbate that problem. The policy also reverses 50 years of progressive

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policy with young people. Over the past 12 years, there has been a fall in the number of juveniles involved in crime, and in the total amount of juvenile crime.

Borstals failed. They became schools for crime. The short sharp shock, which was trailed by Lord Whitelaw, was quietly dropped. Other hon. Members referred to the fact that the Lisnevin training centre in Northern Ireland seems to be the model that the Government are using for the new centres. But Lisnevin has reconviction rates of up to 80 per cent. Offenders who enter it are said to do so with low self-esteem, but they emerge confident and with high self-esteem about their criminal behaviour.

I understand that secure units are to be privately financed. Are we seriously entrusting the care of our young people to organisations such as Group 4? The Bill is a shameful use of parliamentary time and a waste of a unique opportunity in the wake of the royal commission report.

Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) and I held a meeting for people living in the south of Bristol. It involved school heads, governors, representatives of tenants' associations, community groups and the police. They expressed their concerns as: crime prevention; community policing; the opposition to the growth in private security provision; better funding for projects such as safer cities, which have been cut in Bristol and which occupy and interest young people; and something to control the alarming increase in drug addiction and abuse, particularly among the very young.

Instead, they have a Bill that is concerned with squatters, hunt saboteurs and travellers. It is simply no solution. It is being pushed through in the face of all informed professional opinion. We should not be surprised by that, as it is par for the course. The Secretary of State for Education has pushed through changes to the education system that everybody said would not work, but the children did at least have parents and professional organisations to stand up for them, and the Government have had to back off.

The problem with the Bill is that the price will be paid by the young, the vulnerable, the inarticulate, the mentally ill and the homeless. The Government do not appear to listen to anyone who is prepared to stand up for those people.

7.5 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The Bill contains important new proposals that will be widely welcomed by my constituents. Many of those proposals will consolidate the considerable success of the Metropolitan police in my area, which arises from Operation Bumblebee and which has resulted in a substantial reduction in crime such as domestic burglary during the past few months. The Bill also commands the full-hearted support of the Police Federation of England and Wales, to which I am a parliamentary adviser. I declare that interest in speaking in the debate.

In a statement on 24 November, the chairman of the federation, Mr. Richard Coyles, said:

"The new Criminal Justice Bill sounds like music to our ears . . ."

Talking about the proposals contained in the Bill, he went on to say:

"They represent the most significant package of measures for thirty years."

He also said:

"We support this Bill, which at least begins to reverse the tide. People are sick to the back teeth with what has been going on. They do not expect their elected representatives to play politics with law and order. Crime victimises the whole nation, and the criminal doesn't ask his victim what his politics are.

It is a great pity that a major criminal justice bill cannot be guaranteed of general support in Parliament."

The chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales is a very experienced police officer. He made those remarks because he felt, as do so many of the 126,000 members of the Police Federation, that the time has come for some very important and profound changes to be made in the law—changes for which they have waited a long time. Crime victimises the whole nation. I therefore believe that the people who sent all of us to this place expect us to take action, to maintain law and order and to vote for the major provisions in the Bill.

One of the most important features of the Bill is that at last it addresses the problem faced by the public resulting from the activities of persistent young offenders. Burglary, the taking away of vehicles without consent and a host of similar offences are committed with impunity by juveniles who believe that they will not be punished. I therefore support very strongly the proposed new sentence—the secure training order—as the most practical way of dealing with those young offenders. Action must be taken. We simply cannot go on as we are. The public expect us to take action and we should do so by supporting that order as part of this very important Bill.

When my right hon. and learned Friend replies this evening, I hope that he will tell the House more about the training that offenders will receive and how their formal education will be undertaken. What, for example, will be the role of local education authorities?

I also welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to allow the independent sector, as well as local authorities, to provide secure accommodation. I do not believe that the public sector has a monopoly of skill in providing such accommodation. The House must address its mind to every way in which it can be provided quickly and efficiently, and be properly run. I hope that the Minister will also tell the House how long it will take to provide new places, and what resources will be devoted to the programme. The need for secure places is urgent. The public, the courts and the police cannot accept undue delay before they are available.

I shall deal now with the provisions of the Bill relating to the granting of bail, which are strongly supported by the police. At last, the scandal of the so-called bail bandits is to come to an end. The Bill rightly removes the right to bail for someone charged with an offence allegedly committed on bail. That should stop the so-called revolving door, by which persons are arrested, charged with an offence and granted bail and then offend again and again. My hon. Friends have given a number of specific examples of that, and have made the point well.

Clause 24 gives a constable the important power to arrest, without a warrant, any person who, having been previously released on bail, fails to attend a police station at the appointed time. That welcome change demonstrates how closely my right hon. and learned Friend the Home

Secretary has listened to the representations that he has received on the matter from the police, who have first-hand experience of dealing with that serious problem.

The Bill makes changes to the taking of intimate and non-intimate samples for DNA testing. Perhaps the greatest advance in tackling serious crime in recent years has been the advent of DNA testing. Part IV recognises that by allowing the police to take intimate samples from a person who is not in police detention but from whom, in the course of investigation of an offence, two or more non-intimate samples suitable for the same means of analysis have been taken, but proved to be insufficient. Here, the protection for an individual is that such samples can be taken only if a police officer of the rank of superintendent authorises it, and if the appropriate consent is given.

Clause 43 also extends the powers of the police to take non-intimate samples without the appropriate consent if a person has been charged with a recordable offence. Those and other provisions permitting the taking of such samples will greatly assist the police in the course of their investigations of serious offences.

The Bill also contains provisions relating to obscenity, pornography and videos. Any hon. Members who attended the exhibition organised by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) last year, which was given by the police in the Jubilee Room, could not fail to support those provisions. As one of those who attended, I must say that I was deeply shocked and saddened by what I saw.

Therefore, I strongly support the introduction of new offences, including those on the use of computer graphics, and the increased penalties, including imprisonment for a period of up to three months for the possession of an indecent photograph of a child. Child pornographers and those who make indecent or obscene telephone calls should take note that, this evening, the House is determined that their disgusting and corrupting behaviour should no longer be tolerated.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shersby: I shall give way briefly.

Mrs. Roche: Will the hon. Gentleman also accept the evidence presented by many senior police officers that one of the problems is that those reprehensible individuals making huge sums of money from child pornography are using sophisticated computer technology? Could not the Bill be amended so that, if such individuals were convicted, their equipment could be confiscated and given to the police officers investigating that disgusting practice?

Mr. Shersby: The short answer is yes.

Some members of the legal profession and the judiciary consider that the most contentious part of the Bill is the provision in clauses 27 to 30 that allows a court to draw inferences from a suspect's failure to answer police questions or his refusal to give evidence in court. The Police Federation feels that the provision in those clauses should be supported and——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member but his time is up.

7.15 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I agree with the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) that we should debate the Bill not as a party political issue but on its merits, as an attempt to deal with serious crime. On that basis, I and my colleagues welcome many of the Bill's provisions, particularly those dealing with matters such as persistent juvenile offenders, secure training units and bail.

However, I agree with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) that some of the Bill's provisions will not achieve much. It contains many useful measures, but they are modest measures. It would be a mistake for the Home Secretary to talk up the Bill as if it were a major measure that will radically change the situation. It is not, but we welcome its useful provisions.

I agree with what the hon. Member for Uxbridge said about child pornography and the use of sophisticated computer techniques. It is a matter of considerable regret to me and my colleagues that those provisions—contained in clauses 64, 65 and 66—do not extend to Northern Ireland, whereas the immediately following clauses, 67 and 68, dealing with indecent telephone calls and video recordings, do extend to Northern Ireland.

Can the Minister explain why some of the obscenity provisions are extended to Northern Ireland while others are not? If it is thought appropriate to extend some to Northern Ireland, why not all? The problem exists there too, and it should be appreciated that obscene material circulating in England and Wales can, and often does, circulate in Northern Ireland as well.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): And in Scotland.

Mr. Trimble: And in Scotland. We need a more comprehensive approach.

I shall concentrate on the provisions that have Northern Ireland implications. My first subject is prisons. Here, I notice the reference to the possibility of privatising the prison escort service. Representatives of the Prison Officers Association in Northern Ireland have told me that they have been told that that service will be put out for contract in April. That is remarkably soon. It would also be remarkable if, as a result, Group 4 was to escort some of the prisoners we have in Northern Ireland. Given its record in England and Wales, it would be very much against the public interest to take that measure.

I am surprised that no effort has been made to introduce or extend to Northern Ireland the offence of prison mutiny, which was introduced in England and Wales in 1992. We do not have an equivalent in Northern Ireland, but we have serious problems in the prisons that should be addressed, and that offence would help.

Part VI, which deals with the prevention of terrorism, is also welcome. It extends to England and Wales some of the provisions in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, and not before time. The police, particularly in London, have been fortunate that they have not had difficulties because of the lack of legal basis for some of their operations.

I am glad to see that the provisions are being extended; that reinforces a point that we have often made. There ought to be uniform legislation on terrorism throughout the United Kingdom, because the problem extends throughout the United Kingdom.

We also need a uniform practice, and I turn briefly to the matter of sentencing where there are serious problems. I

[Mr. Trimble]

intervened during the Home Secretary's speech to ask what the Government's position might be with regard to amnesties and early release programmes. I was disappointed by his failure to deal with early release. I hope very much that that does not mean that the Home Secretary intends to introduce some form of special early release provisions. There are difficulties because of the differences in practice in England compared with Northern Ireland. That leads to difficulties—for example, with regard to the possible transfer of prisoners.

Many people feel that persons from Northern Ireland who have been convicted of offences in England and Wales could and should be allowed to serve their sentences in Northern Ireland. It would be a simple humanitarian gesture, but it cannot be done, because of the differences in practice. In England and Wales, there is the practice—of which I approve in principle—of ensuring that persons who are responsible for terrorist murders are kept in prison for 25 years, whereas in Northern Ireland the average time is 13 to 14 years. Obviously, where there is a difference in practice, there are problems.

We should have a uniform practice throughout the United Kingdom. Perhaps something similar to the regime which exists in England and Wales would be appropriate. It would also be of benefit to England and Wales to adopt the release procedures which work quite successfully in Northern Ireland.

There has been discussion of part III, which deals with inferences from silence. I will make a few points in connection with that. The first is an important point on which a number of hon. Members have made a mistake during the debate. The part of the Bill which allows a court in some circumstances to draw an inference from silence does not abolish the right to silence. It is quite inaccurate for hon. Members to suggest that the right to silence is being abolished.

There are circumstances in which the right to silence has been abolished. Some 20 different circumstances and offences have been created in various pieces of legislation where there is no right to silence, and where people can be convicted as a result of being silent. Those include offences in connection with customs and excise and with regard to VAT and income tax, and they are largely economic offences.

It was interesting to hear the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) say that the anti-terrorist squad in England and Wales was particularly anxious that something should be done on that front. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the provisions in the Bill will not make a great difference. It would not make a difference if the right to silence were to be removed in some circumstances.

The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary suggested when introducing his annual report last spring that legislation be introduced to make it an offence to refuse to answer questions in certain circumstances. Unfortunately, neither the Home Office nor the Northern Ireland Office have got round to responding.

Mr. Allason: I merely made the point that the head of the anti-terrorist branch in London stated that that was the single measure which would enable him to execute his duties far more efficiently. He wanted to draw the attention of a jury to the fact that a particular suspect had absolutely refused all co-operation, and had refused in some cases even to give his name. That obviously was an important inference for a jury to draw.

Mr. Trimble: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. However, based on the experience of Northern Ireland, the provisions in the Bill will make some difference, but not the sort of difference that the hon. Gentleman's interlocutor suggested. Adopting the provisions suggested by the Chief Constable of the RUC would make a significant difference, but those provisions will not.

When the royal commission report came out, I turned to the provisions dealing with inferences from silence. I was surprised to discover that the royal commission discussed the issue without any reference to the five years' experience of the legislation in Northern Ireland. I find that truly astonishing, particularly when one turned the page to the next section of the report, which referred to cases and experience in Australia. The report was able to refer to experience there, but not to experience in Northern Ireland, even though the report's terms of reference clearly directed it in that way. That is particularly astonishing in view of the comments at the time of the introduction of the Northern Ireland legislation in 1988 that the Government intended to extend the measure to England and Wales.

The provisions are modest, and they do not abolish the right to silence. They do not abolish the requirement of the prosecution to prove their case beyond a reasonable doubt. A person will not be convicted because he is silent. Conviction can only apply in cases where there is already a prima facie case.

In circumstances where silence is merely excluding the possibility of an innocent explanation, or where the facts call for an innocent explanation, or where that explanation is not given, the court may draw the inference that there is no innocent explanation. However, inferences which can be drawn will be based on common sense.

No one is suggesting that juries in the past and at present have not exercised common sense. All that the legislation allows is for the court to make reference to it. We hope that there will be an opportunity later to discuss the Northern Ireland experience in greater detail——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.26 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Crime and the fear of crime is a blight on all our lives. My constituents are sick and tired of a society in which, in some places, the elderly fear to venture out alone, in which individuals going about their lawful business face attack, assault and robbery, in which burglary and vandalism are rife and in which parents fear for the safety of their children.

The time has come to call a halt, and to call it in loud, clear and ringing tones. That is what the Bill is about. It sends a clear message to young offenders in particular that, if they are caught, they will be punished appropriately, and it tightens bail conditions to prevent reoffending.

There are welcome measures to deal with public order offences, and to tackle those hooligans, thugs, vandals and anarchists who, disguising their malice and anti-social tendencies with a thin cloak of compassion for animal welfare, delight in bringing havoc, injury and fear to the many law-abiding citizens who seek to exercise their right to participate in field and country sports. That is a welcome step in the right direction.

There are new measures to help the police deal with offences and searching suspects, and I welcome the improvements in the range of practical deterrents to terrorist activities. However, it would be timely to express my concern, which is widely shared in the House and outside, about a number of guiding principles and fundamental issues which need to be addressed, to which we must turn our attention during the coming debates on the remaining stages of the Bill.

Let us be clear that the last bastion of a disintegrating society is the family unit. Within such a unit, we are best able to nurture in our young a sense of responsibility and an active conscience enabling them to exercise self-discipline. It is with bitter regret that I must observe that, after such a prolonged period in office, the Government have repeatedly failed to appreciate that point. They have failed to pay anything other than lip service to the concept of supporting the family and strengthening the bond of marriage which is its very foundation.

Divorce laws have been relaxed, homosexuality is actively promoted, Government-funded agencies peddle powerful contraceptives to young children, and sex education classes for primary school children and upwards concentrate on a mechanistic and unnecessarily explicit interpretation of sexuality.

Children are inculcated with the libertarian view, and are not encouraged to understand and willingly accept those moral values and standards which have stood civilised society in good stead for so long. Sexual mechanics and materialism are no substitute for morality and compassion. The House might also reflect that 4 million abortions have done nothing to encourage respect for human life. In addition, bleating agnostic bishops have bitterly failed their flocks by giving no clear lead on moral matters.

Teachers, social workers, the media, the Church, Ministers and some parents have failed generations of our children and the time has come to reverse that trend. If "back to basics" is to be anything other than a snappy sound bite, it must mean, first and foremost, a return to the acceptance and reflection in public policy of those Judaeo-Christian moral standards which for so many years have bound society together, and which have proved so practical as well as so spiritually preferable.

Only when public policy and the law are based, and seen to be based, on objective moral standards can we expect them to be respected. The Government must have the courage to say that certain practices and activities are fundamentally and objectively wrong. Unless they accept that principle and distance themselves from the outdated liberal nostrums that have underpinned public policy since the 1960s, the tide of crime will continue to rise until it rots the very heart of our society.

I was very encouraged to hear that the Government have included in the Bill a section devoted to tightening the law on obscenity and pornography, as there are significant weaknesses in the law in that area. The changes proposed in clauses 64 to 68 are most welcome. They deal with enforcement problems, and clarify the position on computer-generated images of naked children.

The Minister will not be surprised to hear that I welcome those measures, since I have been pressing him for action for some time. A year ago, we invited officers of the obscene publications squad at New Scotland Yard to mount a private exhibition at the Palace, which was attended by a staggering 200 or more colleagues from both Houses, and through which we were able to demonstrate the very real problems that exist in that area of the law and its implementation, some of which have now been tackled by the Bill.

However, my welcome for those aspects of the Bill is tempered by my extreme disappointment that the Government have failed to grasp the central nettle. They have failed to replace the outdated, discredited and unworkable test of obscenity that lies at the heart of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 with something more suited to the flood of pornographic material with which the police are now forced to deal. It is about three years since the present head of the obscene publications squad had the courage to highlight the fact that the law needs clarification and the courts are inconsistent in their decisions.

I realised the nonsense of the present law when the Crown Prosecution Service, supported by the Attorney-General, refused to sanction action against the book "Juliette" by the Marquis de Sade. Hon. Members on both sides of the House joined me to express revulsion and disbelief at that decision. Given the catalogue of violent sexual acts against children that the book not only records but positively advocates, we called for a Government review of the law. Instead of a proper review, and despite clear sympathy from the Prime Minister for what we were seeking to achieve, we had a poor civil service patch-up job.

Ministers can claim to be taking action through the Bill on relatively minor matters, but the most important issue has been either overlooked or ignored. As a result, I shall seek to table amendments to the Bill to deal with the problem. That is no substitute for a thorough Government review of the law, but in the absence of any meaningful action by the Government, we have to do what we can to ensure that the foundations of our obscenity law are secure, so that the few new pieces of brickwork proposed by the Bill will be worth while.

May I also be clear about the fact that the House has a duty to oppose any moves that may be made later in our debates to lower the age of consent for male homosexual acts. Present law strikes a reasonable balance between the need to protect youngsters from harm and the so-called rights of adults to indulge in deviant sexual practices of their choice.

In short, the House must have the courage to accept basic moral teachings, and to reflect them in its decisions. That is why I hope that we shall once again have the opportunity to consider and to decide on the need to restore to our courts the option of the death penalty for certain categories of murder—for those who abduct and murder young children, commit terrorist murders, murder serving police and prison officers, and kill during an armed robbery. Those are heinous crimes that are viewed with repugnance by the overwhelming majority of people. It is right that the courts should be able to impose sentences which reflect that repugnance.

In these few words, I have sought to tackle head on several controversial issues. They are, however, extremely important issues, and I hope that the Home Secretary will give them the most careful consideration during the further stages of the Bill in the coming weeks and months.

7.35 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I declare an interest as a practising barrister; I also declare an interest in society, as someone who likes to see the villain caught, brought to justice and properly sentenced.

I listened to the Home Secretary's announcement about the 27 points and to the Minister of State's recent attack on lawyers as one of the problems in tackling crime. I have also listened to comment after comment—often ill-informed—from Conservative Members on how to deal with crime and who was to blame. One-parent families, the unemployed—you name it—everyone is to blame, but they never consider the real cure for crime.

In one capacity or another, including my time as a student, I have been in practice for the best part of 30 years, and I shall never forget a comment that an inspector made to me in the late 1960s. That was before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and before many modern devices, at a time when we employed enough police officers, paid them and equipped them. The inspector said, "Gerry, when I arrest someone, I don't need to interview them; I've already got the evidence." *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) may giggle like a child on the back row, but he does not realise that the knowledge that one will be caught is the only deterrent to crime. As a boy or girl at school, one knew that, if one stepped out of line, one would be caught and punished, and that deterred one from doing so.

How do we set about catching criminals? Our recent track record is somewhat poor. Only one in 50 of all crimes ends with a court case and a sentence. It is pathetic. We caution thousands of people. I question the need to caution that many. I also question the need to discontinue as many cases as we do.

Fear of capture and punishment is the deterrent to crime. How do we start to capture people? How do we ensure that a burglar is brought to justice, whether he or she is young or old? The simple answer is this—provide society with the police force that it deserves. We should not keep cutting police authorities. The police force in Merseyside has been cut time and again. The Home Secretary is shaking his head, but there is a little demon out there called the Treasury, and it has been squeezing the Home Office for the past 10 or 15 years—it has been squeezing every Department—as it sought to spend its money elsewhere.

We need officers on the beat, and we need officers who are equipped with the latest equipment. They need resources which are better than those possessed by the villains of today, who are very well equipped. The Home Secretary again shakes his head. I have spent my life looking at such people. I shall give way to him with the greatest pleasure.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. We are spending 80 per cent. more in real terms on the police than we spent in 1979; we have 17,000 more police officers than in 1979; and we have 16,000 more civilians supporting the police than in 1979. The hon. Gentleman's arguments would carry a trifle more weight if they were not so remote from the facts.

Mr. Bermingham: If the Home Secretary was not so remote from reality, he would realise that the crime rate has doubled and tripled since 1979—[HON. MEMBERS: "A different point."] Of course it is not a different point. If the crime rate goes up, one needs more police officers and more people to defeat the crime wave. It is all very well for the Home Secretary to tinker with the system. His predecessor tinkered with it in 1991, and Opposition Members told him that section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 would not work. Even some Conservative Members told him that. Within a year——

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman was not here, so he would not know—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Seated interventions are not helpful.

Mr. Bermingham: Let us see whether we can stir up a few more Conservative Members.

We told the Home Secretary's predecessor that section 29 would not work. We told him that section 1(2) would not work.

Mr. Clappison *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. If he had sat in Committee, he would have heard what I told his predecessor. Never mind. So we go on.

Let us be realistic. What does the Bill do to catch villains? It does not provide any more policemen, although we have a rising crime wave. The Home Secretary says that he has increased the number of police officers by 80 per cent. I do not dispute his figures in real terms. The trouble is that the crime rate has overtaken him. Unless we capture the criminals, we shall never start to make the spiral go the other way.

Let us be realistic about how we deal with criminals once we have caught them. The Bill tinkers with the right to silence, which is a breach of the European convention on human rights, but never mind that. Saunders *v.* the United Kingdom is the most recent case, and it deals with the Companies Acts. No doubt we shall increase our record of bad behaviour before the European Court, and no doubt we shall have more and more convictions against us. What will tinkering with the right to silence do? Will it capture anyone?

Mr. Howard *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bermingham: The Home Secretary shakes his head again. The reality is that we may convict more of the people we prosecute, but shall we have convicted people properly or fairly? Those of us who have been in the trade for a little while noticed throughout the 1960s and the 1970s the problems of wrongful conviction.

We have seen a number of such cases, not just the big cases about which we have all heard, such as the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, but the little cases involving little crimes and ordinary people, who were convicted on the old basis of verballing, which we had before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and which raises the question of confession and other matters.

It has been said by psychiatrist after psychiatrist that, if one puts a person in a police station, one automatically puts him or her under pressure, and there is then a risk.

Mr. Allason: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bermingham: No, because I am limited in time tonight.

There is the further risk that, when the person being asked the questions does not know what the evidence is, he

cannot answer the questions, which may appear to be speculative. People never take that point into consideration.

Anyone who has observed an interview should remember that, no matter how fair the interview is, the police officer, in asking the questions, has the advantage of the knowledge that he or she is said to have. How are people supposed to know what the questions mean? Often, the trick question or the ambiguous question can lead to a miscarriage of justice. I am sure that, when the general election comes and the Labour party comes to power, one of the first things it will do is restore the right to silence, so that we shall be in line with the other European nations.

The earlier clauses deal with juveniles. In 1986—you will remember this, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you toured the United States with the rest of the Select Committee—we looked at the Massachusetts experiment and the question of containment.

The Bill does not even begin to address the problem of the juvenile tearaway. The only solution is to identify them young enough, and then to contain them and put them into a regime—I am not talking about incarceration or imprisonment—that is rehabilitative and provides training. If that process takes six months, 12 months, 18 months or two years, so be it. At the end of the day, that child must be rehabilitated so that he can take his place in society and can play a useful part. That would be positive thinking.

As was the case with borstals and detention centres, the Bill does not even begin really to address the problem. I tell the Home Secretary as kindly as I can that we want crime to be beaten, but that we shall achieve that only by making people realise that, if they commit a crime, they will be detected and brought speedily before the courts for punishment.

If we identify someone who is clearly likely to be a persistent problem in our society, we must have mechanisms to enable that child to be dealt with in a caring yet containing way, so that the problems he faces can be adjusted and addressed. That will enable that child to be reintroduced into society at the earliest possible moment, and in a way that does not encourage him or her to commit further crimes. We must make our streets safe, simply by catching villians.

7.45 pm

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). I now know what it must be like to be on a jury that he is addressing. I fear that he will not get the verdict that he seeks.

Nobody who has visited the elderly victim of a burglary or an assault can doubt the seriousness of the problem that we face. If the offender has been arrested and then bailed, or convicted and then released back on to the streets, the auguish and the sheer terror is appalling to see. We must always remember that the criminal justice system does not exist to serve offenders or those employed in it. It exists to serve, to uphold and to enforce the rule of law on which we all depend for the opportunity to lead civilised lives and it exists to serve and to protect the public—every child, woman and man in this country.

The ultimate aim of our criminal justice system, like any other, and of punishment in particular, is the control of crime. I believe that the Bill has the potential to advance that aim and to do so significantly. It is sad to hear again the fallacious argument that, because crime is rising in this country and because not all criminals are caught, our policies must be wrong and should be abandoned. Crime is rising throughout the developed world. Does that mean that everyone has wrong policies? While listening to previous Opposition speakers, I began to think that Mrs. Thatcher had been in power throughout the developed world and was therefore personally responsible for every crime committed since 1979. That is absurd. Logically, such argument would lead us to disband the whole criminal justice system and to give up the fight against crime. We cannot do that, so let us not waste too much time on such arguments.

Our people are not looking for more excuses for crime or for criminals; they are looking for a tough and effective policy for the years ahead. The Bill takes us one more step —it may not be large enough—towards achieving that. Let us approach the matter in a more useful way. All our constituents are affected by the fear of crime, so all of us should respond in a positive search for solutions.

There is actually only one cause of crime—an individual's decision to commit an offence. There is no other cause of crime. That individual decision, repeated and replicated by criminals throughout the country, is the basis of offending. An understanding of why that decision is made must inform our approach to criminal justice and public order. It follows that we must seek to know why the decision is being made, and to change the conditions and way of thinking that lead to it.

We must consider whether the criminal is deciding to break a known system of mores and proper conduct or whether he has no idea that there is such a thing. Has he been taught what is acceptable and what is not or, in the terms in which most of us were brought up, what is right and what is wrong, and what he can and what he cannot do? Has he decided to offend for money?

The Select Committee on Home Affairs was told robustly by one police officer, who became exasperated by much of the talk he was hearing, that we must understand that juveniles commit offences because they like to have £200 or £300 in cash in their back pockets, and that nothing else offers them that. Is that the reason, or has the criminal decided to commit the offence for excitement? Has he committed the offence in response to peer group pressure or for some other reason? We need to know. Can he be made fundamentally to come to a different decision? Can his friends come to a different decision, if necessary as a result of the fear of being caught and of what will happen to them? The hon. Member for St. Helens, South at first seemed to repeat the old catechism that it is the fear of being apprehended, and nothing else, that prevents crime. He then corrected himself, very properly, and said that it was the fear of being apprehended and of being punished that prevents the initial decision to commit an offence.

I welcome the central funding of measures to prevent crime or to reduce the fear of crime, to which the Bill refers. However, it is not enough just to tell people to fit better locks. It is necessary also to contradict at every stage the pervasive message from the entertainment media to our young people that crime is exciting and even amusing, that there are never any victims and that criminals are heroes. Crime does create victims. There are no innocent criminals; there are only innocent victims. It is those victims who seek—nay, demand—to be our first priority. We must now begin to treat them as such.

[Mr. Peter Butler]

It is not sufficient merely to express disapproval of crime. We must catch, convict and sentence adequately those who deliberately choose to create victims out of citizens who themselves obey the law and who look to us to secure that same obedience from others. This Bill and other legislation will assist the detection, conviction and proper punishment of criminals.

The proposal on the right to silence has been much spoken of; it is a catchy cliche. The innocent rarely use that right; they have no need of it. It is a shield for the guilty and now its use is being properly curtailed, but not abolished. I am surprised to find myself in support of that curtailment. Before working in the criminal justice system, I would have defended the right to silence. In my many years as a criminal lawyer, however, I have advised many hundreds of clients under questioning and I cannot recall a single instance when an innocent man or woman exercised that right. It is not a cliche to say that innocence demands the right to speak. It is guilt and a guilty conscience that demands the right to silence. There will still be cases where the proper legal advice must be to remain silent under questioning. If lawyers have been giving that advice too frequently as the easy option, they will now have to stop and think. That is a good thing.

It is important to remember that when courts deal with juvenile offenders, they are still dealing with offenders. It does not make any difference to the victim of a burglary, assault or car theft whether that crime was committed by a juvenile. The courts should have available all the powers necessary to further the basic purpose of criminal punishment—to deter, to put into custody those who would otherwise continue to offend, to punish justly, and to rehabilitate. I would like to see further powers given to courts in due course to have the discretion to treat juveniles as adults, as exists in other jurisdictions. If a criminal commits a number of serious offences, why should his age alone give him the right to retain his liberty and to continue his offending?

I welcome not just the principle of secure treatment centres, but their availability to the courts as quickly as possible. I believe that that welcome will be shared by everyone who has suffered from juvenile offenders.

I also welcome what I hope will prove in retrospect to have been the tentative first steps towards a law of criminal trespass. It should be an offence knowingly to enter or remain on land or building belonging to another person without consent. Trespassers really should be prosecuted.

Among the many other welcome changes, the power for the police to grant conditional bail will reduce unnecessary remand court hearings. The Bill represents the first step to changing the right to bail for those to whom being on bail is something to joke about on the way to the next burglary or while they are driving the next stolen car. The proposal, as drafted, may not quite achieve that aim since the allegation that the offence has been committed on bail is already taken into account when deciding on the likelihood of the commission of further offences. No doubt that proposal can be polished in Committee.

I also regret that clause 21 is applicable only to indictable or either way offences. Might not a better test be any offence punishable by imprisonment, because summary offences are not always petty offences to the victim?

I also welcome the proposals relating to the intimidation of witnesses. The rebuttable presumption of specific intent in clause 38 is a good demonstration of the fact that the Bill is essentially a practical one. Its purpose is not theoretical. It will achieve the results.

I reject totally the Opposition's view, which seems to be that if one cannot achieve everything it is not worth trying to do anything, least of all should one dare to vote in favour of anything. I welcome the Bill as a step, if I may coin a phrase, back to basics—the basic right to live in a law-abiding society without the constant fear of becoming a victim of crime. Of course one Bill cannot achieve that, but as part of an integrated, firm but fair approach to an appalling problem, the Bill should surely commend itself to us all.

7.53 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Bill is complex legislation and obviously it is difficult to discuss all its aspects. I will therefore restrict my remarks to the issues that affect Scotland. I am glad that the Home Secretary is present to listen to my specific points.

As the House will be aware, chapter II of part VIII and part IX refer specifically to Scotland, but the Bill has 117 clauses and 10 schedules, so Scotland has been demoted to a small part of it. That is an insult to the separate Scottish legal system and to the various reports that have been published by the Scottish Law Commission and by other organisations such as the Law Society of Scotland. They are concerned about the criminal procedures observed in Scotland and want improvements to be made to them.

The vital interests of Scotland have been downgraded in the Bill because it ignores these important reports, many of which have been gathering dust inside the Scottish Office for some considerable time. The Bill ignores the need to improve the procedures observed in the sheriff courts in Scotland—police officers and witnesses are kept hanging around all day in the hope that the relevant case will be called so that evidence can be submitted. That delay undermines the process of law; who would want to be a witness if he or she is taken from work for a day and is then not called as a witness? The way in which our sheriff courts operate is in desperate need of attention.

I am extremely disappointed that the Bill ignores specific aspects of Scottish law because, after the general election, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that he would take stock of how Scottish legislation is dealt with in the House. If the Bill is an example of that exercise, all I can say is that he has made a fine boorach of the whole thing. If the Home Secretary does not understand that good Scots word, I should add that it means that his right hon. Friend has made a fine mess of it.

Today's debate has not paid sufficient attention to drugs. Many of us who are studying what is happening to law and order in our society are conscious of the fact that many criminal offences are drug related. This is not a party-political issue and the problem must be addressed seriously by all hon. Members. I am certainly looking forward to receiving the report of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, which has studied the problem.

Drug-related offences in Scotland rose from 1,297 in 1981 to 5,459 in 1991. That represents an annual average increase of 15 per cent. Surely that must worry all of us. I

speak to the local representatives of the police force regularly about it and they are studying the problem closely.

During the 10 years in which there has been a massive increase in drug-related offences, only 96 Scottish police officers have been dedicated specifically to drug duties. The Home Secretary and the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is also present, should note that many of us would have been much more impressed with the attack on crime if ring-fenced funding had been given directly to our police forces to ensure that additional members of staff could be employed for the detection of drug offences, and to remedy the problem.

The same could be said in relation to the funding of Customs and Excise and prison officers. Last week's incident at Glenochil in Scotland was also drug-related. Our prison officers must deal with that problem at the tough end and they deserve our support. Although I welcome the recent projects initiated by the Scottish Office to educate young people about drugs, a great deal more needs to be done. Much of it will involve funding and I therefore ask the Home Secretary to ensure that ring-fenced funding is provided, specifically targeted at dealing with the problems caused by drugs in society.

The prison service in Scotland is dealt with by the Bill and I must plead a special interest in it. The Under-Secretary is aware that my elder brother is a tutor at the Scottish prison college at Polmont and that my nephew is a prison officer at Shotts. I therefore have a specific personal interest as well as a general one in this matter. The funding of our prison services is also at stake. It seems that the Bill is paving the way for the privatisation of the Scottish prison service. That was echoed most effectively by the leaked memo from Sir Russell Hillhouse, the permanent under-secretary of state at the Scottish Office, Scotland's senior civil servant, in articles that appeared in *The Scotsman* and the *Herald* earlier in the year. In those articles, it was made clear by Sir Russell Hillhouse that the expenditure plans projected by the Scottish Office were such that staffing levels must be significantly reduced in our Scottish prisons and that the process would entail some risk to order and security in prison.

I do not believe that the prison service or the escort of prisoners should be privatised. If the state takes upon itself the right to sentence, it must also accept the responsibility to ensure that that sentence is put into effect and that the state which has decreed that sentence does not wash its hands of what is ultimately its responsibility. The state cannot privatise those responsibilities or put them out to tender. The state has taken the decision and therefore must see it through. The privatisation of our prison service or escort service would be a dereliction of duty—a view echoed by the representatives of the prison service in Scotland.

The right of access, which has been addressed by various hon. Members, will be seriously eroded by the proposed legislation. The Government would be well advised to consider the Scandinavian system, in which there is a clear and universal right for citizens to roam wherever they please. I have considered what the Rights of Way Society has said, especially in Scotland. It has made clear statements about the responsibilities of people who have access to land.

I was born and bred in a rural community and I represent a rural community. The vast majority of people wish to have the right of access to land for hill walking, for climbing or for whatever sport that they wish to follow. It is a fundamental right. Most of those people have accepted the responsibility of regarding the land as a precious part of their inheritance and heritage. The Government are taking a sledge hammer to that right, preventing many people from roaming and enjoying access to the land.

If we observed the various codes that have been laid down by various societies such as the Rights of Way Society, people would not be facing the denial of their right to climb the Munro mountains in Scotland. They would have the right to wander wherever they wanted and to enjoy the beauties of the landscape while at the same time observing the needs of farmers. Both communities can work in harmony.

The Bill is destroying what many of us in Scotland have seen as a basic right. There has always been an argument about trespass law and sometimes it has been interpreted too liberally. I believe that the vast majority of people want to see the right of access retained. Yet we shall see it eroded by forestry legislation and by the Bill. I hope that the Under-Secretary and others who are involved in the matter will give serious consideration to ensuring the right of access while clearly observing the rights of farmers.

I made it clear there were many aspects of the Bill on which I could not touch because they did not specifically relate to Scotland. However, there is one aspect which the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and others have mentioned and which I too want to refer to: the issue of obscene publications and pornography. I have been involved in the campaign to try to change the legislation in that sphere. Like others, I saw the exhibition mounted by the Metropolitan police in the Jubilee Room. I felt physically sick when I saw exactly what was happening. I hope that any severe penalties that are introduced will apply not only to England and Wales, but to Scotland, because that obscene trade must be stamped out at all costs. We cannot allow our youngsters and our society to be undermined in that fashion and I hope all pornography legislation will be applicable throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): We have come to the end of the period in which speeches were limited to 10 minutes, but I remind the House that Madam Speaker appealed to hon. Members who were called outside that period to bear in mind that there are still many right hon. and hon. Members hoping to catch my eye.

8.4 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I welcome the proposals relating to the creation of a DNA database and certainly applaud the measures to be introduced to prevent bail bandits from abusing the temporary freedom that they have been granted. I shall turn later to the abuse of the so-called right to silence, but my principal preoccupation, about which I went to see the Under-Secretary, is the problem of persistent young offenders between 12 and 15 years old who are in considerable need of the secure training orders proposed by the Bill.

The position for those who have to look after those young offenders is extremely difficult because of the Children Act 1989. I have been involved in dealing with young offenders for some time and I have talked to the Under-Secretary in relation to adventure training, which is considerably misunderstood, and about Operation Raleigh,

[Mr. Rupert Allason]

which is an extremely effective system of overseas adventure training, but one that is certainly not for 12 to 15-year-olds.

It is all too easy to give an off-the-cuff reaction to the journalist who rings to complain that a young offender has been taken abroad. My constituents would rather see a young offender spend two or three weeks before the mast in the North sea than terrorise a neighbourhood in Torquay, which is exactly what has been happening because of a flaw in the present legislation that the Bill will address.

Under the current legislation there are unsuitable homes in unsuitable places which, if they have fewer than three children, are not required to be registered as children's homes. In one case, in my constituency, considerable anxiety has been expressed in the neighbourhood where there are two homes that accommodate young offenders. I use the term "accommodate" in the loosest possible sense because, under the Children Act 1989, no action can be taken to restrain the young offender who decides to leave the premises. Even grasping him by the shoulder may be considered to be an assault.

The police tell me that on one occasion an offender who had been arrested for a criminal offence was released into the custody of the owner of such an establishment and police officers on the shame shift, a few hours later, were required to arrest the young offender who was in possession of a stolen car.

It is too easy to say that such young offenders are some kind of mindless hooligans who have to be locked up to protect society. I believe that society has a right to protection from the youngsters, but the young offender of today will be a hardened criminal when he is a youth and adult. Therefore, any money spent on addressing that problem and ensuring that there is strong supervision, a constant regime of training and, of course, security for the individual and for the public must not be wasted.

I find it churlish and remarkable of the Liberal Democrats, who are allegedly entering 1994 with law and order as their major battle banner, that for almost the entire debate no Liberal Democrat Members have been present on the Liberal Benches and that the one Liberal Democrat Member who has spoken has said that too much money is being spent on dealing with young offenders. Such offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime. They create absolute mayhem.

Where such premises are located in unsuitable neighbourhoods—that has certainly happened in Torquay—the youngsters can create a veritable crime wave. I have spent some time with the youngsters and I am sympathetic to the dedication of the staff who are obliged to look after them. I should like to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the case of David—a youngster in an emergency care and respite home in my constituency. His family history is that as a youngster he was difficult to handle. His mother, who was separated from his father, passed him over to his father's custody. His father found him difficult to deal with and, therefore, he went into a home where he was looked after for the first time by foster parents who really cared for him.

Unfortunately, Avon social services made only a temporary placement and David was moved from the first home to a second foster home. He absconded from the second foster home because he loved the first foster parents. He was then considered a trouble maker and was placed in a children's home. He absconded from that home and went back to the first foster parents, who were the only people who had showed him any love, care or security in his entire life.

By the time that David came down to my constituency, where there is a home that looks after two or three extremely difficult youngsters, he was considered to be beyond any form of control. In the first week that he was in Torquay he was caught on the M5 motorway four times in stolen cars trying to get back to Bristol, where his first foster parents lived. When I interviewed the young man he had not seen a teacher in 10 months. As far as I know, any parent who was responsible for such an individual would be up before the courts because the child had not been to school. Yet Avon social services seem to have got away with it. Worse than that, some social services departments claim praise for the way in which they deal with their youngsters.

I was appalled to see the "Panorama" programme on the way in which Kent county council deals with such youngsters. The programme explained what a success rate it had in dealing with so-called persistent young offenders. Part of the reason why Kent's statistics look so good—I have personal experience of this—is that it sends its worse hardened cases to Torquay. They drop out of the Kent statistics. Therefore, the "Panorama" programme was bogus. It misrepresented the position completely.

There is considerable difficulty when one meets a 14-year-old who says that his main interest in life is driving cars and driving them fast on the motorway. If we can tackle the problem with secure training orders, we shall do a favour to society in the future. It will be money well spent. Such youngsters are a menace, but it is all too easy to criticise the dedicated staff who have to look after them, sometimes in difficult conditions.

One particular youngster springs to mind. She was aged 12 and she was in care. The reason why she originally offended and went into care was that she was having trouble with her pimp. That was a child aged 12. Similar youngsters have come to Torquay because, in an unsuitable neighbourhood, two or three residential homes have been established in which staff are available to look after them. However, under the existing legislation the youngsters are not cared for in the security that is required to protect the public.

Drawing inferences from silence is an extremely important issue. I have already made some interventions on the subject during the debate. I hope that when the matter is debated in the House there will be a full opportunity to sweep away some of the myth surrounding the way in which terrorist suspects are dealt with and the way in which they evade their interrogation. So often none of them or few of them are prosecuted because they exercise the right to silence. That prevents the police in some cases even from determining their names, addresses and the reasons for their possession of a particular vehicle.

While we are on the subject of dismissing myths and getting down to the facts on an emotive subject, Miss Emma Thompson, the actress, gave an interview at the weekend in New York promoting her film on the Guildford Four, in which she made some staggeringly inaccurate allegations and remarks. In particular, she alleged that there were widespread abuses of the prevention of terrorism Act. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of

State has noted those remarks and will expect a letter from Miss Emma Thompson giving chapter and verse of the alleged abuses.

Similarly, I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is not here this evening. On the last day before the Christmas recess he made a speech in the Chamber in which he made allegations about Fred Holroyd in Northern Ireland. On that occasion he alleged that Fred Holroyd gave important evidence in a terrorism extradition case in the United States. The reality is that in that case Fred Holroyd declined to be cross-examined by the Crown. That would have been an opportunity to dismiss many of the myths that have sullied the reputation of Britain abroad, particularly in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I think that the hon. Gentleman has made a mistake. I was in the Chamber listening to that speech and it was not made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). It was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who happens to have the name of the constituency which the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Allason: If that is the case, I apologise. I have a copy of *Hansard* for that day with me, but I shall not detain the House by reading it out. If that correction is right, that is fine. My point was that Fred Holroyd declined to be cross-examined by the Crown and that all the allegations made in the House on that day were wholly unfounded.

I shall support the Bill. For the sake of my constituents, I hope that the secure accommodation and training orders will be introduced as quickly as possible. I hope that there will be no delay in the Committee stage. My constituents want relief from the young offenders as quickly as possible and preferably by June. That is not to say that the establishments should be in any way harsh. They should be a regime which will provide security for not only the youngsters but the public at large. The accommodation should not be supervised by the county councils. It should be placed in the private sector but only where the accommodation can be provided in a suitable environment —preferably a considerable distance from Torquay.

8.17 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): I begin by declaring an interest. I am the adviser to the Police Federation, which provides resources used to pay a research assistant.

I wish to raise several matters in the debate. Some relate to policing but primarily they are issues of concern to my constituents. I shall raise matters mainly on their behalf. The Bill before the House is a strange assortment of proposals, some of which are good and which I could support and others which are bad and which I could not support. The Bill moves from amendments to the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967 to provisions to enable the Home Secretary to designate as a prison any building or floating structure.

We know of the worries about a return to prison hulks. The Police Federation seeks an assurance that police stations will not be so designated. I ask the Minister to clarify that point—when he has a moment and listens—in his reply. I am sure that someone will pass that on to him.

I welcome some provisions in the Bill. In 1993, during the Committee stage of the Criminal Justice Bill, I called for the police to be able to identify through the courts a juvenile offender accused of serious offences who has escaped and is at large. The present law prevents that. The Minister of State said that he would make a change at the first opportunity. I am pleased that he has been able to do so in clause 37 of the Bill.

The central issue is whether the Bill will cut crime. Even the Home Secretary seemed to have doubts on that point. He refused to reply to the challenges from my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

Crime in Warwickshire has trebled since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, promising to reduce it. Burglaries and car thefts have quadrupled. When I talk to the people in North Warwickshire, they are rightfully fearful of rising crime, critical of the Government's failure to deal with it, outraged that after 14 years of Conservative Government a pathetic one in 50 crimes results in a conviction, and rightly cynical at the Government's attempts to manipulate the issue to get, as the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) said, "three days of good headlines" without tackling the long-term fundamental causes of crime.

The Bill ignores 98 per cent. of the crime that affects ordinary people and attempts to deal only with the 2 per cent. of criminals who are caught, convicted and can be punished. Locking away a few offenders for one or two years does not, of itself, deal with cause and prevention, which must be dealt with if we are to tackle the other 98 per cent. of crime.

The Bill's sister Bill, which is starting in another place—together, they form the basis of the Government's policy on crime—will undermine the whole process of catching criminals by politicising the police, with the direct Home Office appointment of the chairman and members of police authorities and by moving towards more privatisation. The general secretary of the Police Federation told hon. Members at the all-party police group that that Bill would create the basis for a cut in manpower from the current 128,000 police officers to 80,000 by the end of the decade, at a time when the public are crying out for more police.

Even now, Warwickshire's chief constable, Mr. Peter Joslin, is concerned that the effect of the Government's policy will cause a 2 per cent. cut in his budget next year, which may force him to delay recruitment and promotion prospects for officers, hitting both numbers and morale.

Everyone knows that the Bill has more to do with tackling the Government's unpopularity than with tackling crime. Ministers keep talking about the trendy liberal ideas of the 1960s and 1970s, but under Mrs. Thatcher we experienced the greatest period of liberalism and leniency in history. That is not just my view but the view of Mr. Andrew Rutherford, chairman of the Howard League for Penal Reform, when he gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee last year.

The Tories started with a short sharp shock, but it did not work. When the offenders came out of their boot camps they reoffended at a higher rate as soon as the discipline was removed. They had been taught nothing. Brutal prison regimes just brutalise young people and then release them into the community.

The Government then decided to try to deal with young people through community schemes. During the latter part of the 1980s, that had begun to work and recidivism rates were coming under control. The problem was that the crime rate was not falling because new offenders were

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constantly feeding into the system. The supply side—the causes of juvenile crime—was not being dealt with. In fact, the Government's policy of taking 16 and 17-year-olds off the dole, creating unemployment, homelessness and deprivation, was feeding the crime rate.

Instead of tackling the causes, the Government now seem to have decided to return to where they started. They never learned the lesson that we cannot stop crime by punishment alone. Only 2 per cent. of crimes result in punishment. Unless we deal with the causes of all crimes, the crime rate will continue to rise inexorably. That is why no Minister can tell my constituents that he will cut crime to the level that the Conservatives inherited. The Government can do so neither through this Bill, nor through any aspect of their other policies.

The provisions relating to the right to silence form a key part of the Bill. They are supposed to illustrate the Government's "back to basics" theme. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister is now in trouble with "back to basics". A Prime Minister really is in trouble when the people begin to laugh at him, especially when he tells them that they must understand a little more and condemn a little less when it comes to his colleagues' indiscretions. A question of competence hangs over the Government's proposals to end the right to silence. It is not just the silly theatre that they want to create in the courts, with judges supposedly demanding that defendants go into the dock and the defendant probably just standing there, making everyone look a little silly. It also concerns what is proposed to happen in the police station.

The Government said that they wanted to end the professional criminals' right to silence so as to help ordinary citizens, but the Bill does not remove privileged communication between solicitors and clients. If it is passed, the professional criminal who wants to say nothing in interview simply calls his solicitor, who tells him to say nothing. When giving evidence in court, the defendant will simply say that he acted on legal advice in saying nothing. The reasons for that advice cannot be inquired into; they remain privileged. The only inference that can be drawn from that is that the defendant is a prudent man who, in interview, takes legal advice. But the ordinary citizen who is arrested for the first time, brought to the police station and does not ask for a solicitor, has no right to silence, and an adverse inference can be drawn. He is most likely to be a victim of the very injustice that the Runciman inquiry was set up to prevent.

The Bill will create a two-tier system. It will not inconvenience professional criminals, but will create potential injustice for ordinary citizens. I put that matter to Lord Runciman when he appeared before the Select Committee on Home Affairs and he agreed that that was the case. Even the minority in the Runciman report who accepted the argument for the removal of the right to silence in police stations demanded safeguards. Those safeguards are not present in the Bill, which is why it is a recipe for injustice.

The Bill contains some good points but fundamentally fails to deal with the central problems that are causing the rising crime rate. It does not deal with the causes of crime or seek fundamentally to change the behaviour of those juvenile offenders who offend regularly. It does not seriously address as a whole the problem of rising crime in our society. That is why I cannot support the Bill. I shall support the Opposition's reasoned amendment because it seeks to set in a wider context the needs and requirements of our society at least to begin the long fight that we must all undertake to reduce the appalling crime rate over which the Government have presided for so long.

8.27 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on his new consultancy. I hope that he will serve our police as well, as efficiently and as honourably as does my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

It is high time that the myth first perpetrated by that brilliant old fraudster, Bernard Shaw—that crime was a direct result of poverty—was dispelled. It is not true and is an insult to the poor, as it is an excuse to the rich. We must consider the fact that crime has been rising inexorably since the war in every country, under Governments of every complexion, in good times and bad. Until we accept that fact, we shall not achieve the right results.

I welcome this immensely important Bill, which is probably the most important measure for the Government to take in this Session.

In Cambridge city there has been a welcome 10 per cent. reduction in crime in the past year, but what has happened outside is much more disturbing. There has been a great and worrying increase in rural crime in places and villages in my constituency which did not suffer from the experiences that are all too common in our cities. People living in those places will welcome the firm measures in the Bill. I shall not deal with all of them, but I should like to mention two in particular.

I welcome the alterations in the bail provisions. In that context I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) who, as a new Member, latched on to the inadequacy of the law and fought hard to get the reforms that are now to be enacted.

I attach great importance to part V of the Bill, which proposes changes in the law of trespass. People in rural areas are fed up to the back teeth with the nuisance and annoyance caused by so-called travellers and by ghastly raves. The provisions to tighten up the law on those matters are long overdue and welcome.

I hope that that part of the Bill will deal with another pest in my constituency—the practice of illegal hare coursing. It involves disreputable people with vast sums of money and they come a long way to Cambridgeshire, some from as far away as Wales and the west country. Illegal hare coursing causes absolute chaos and will undoubtedly end in violence involving my farmer constituents unless we are careful. Perhaps the Minister will confirm—if not now, at some later time—that this undesirable practice will be covered by the Bill.

For the next part of my speech I declare an interest as president of the Guild of Experienced Motorists. I have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the biggest increase in crime relates to cars, and that it is nearly all due to youngsters and juveniles. It has also gone up faster than any other crime and leads not just to inconvenience and annoyance to car owners, but all too often to death and disability and the horrifying consequences about which we all know.

Much more needs to be done to tackle car crime and I am not sure that the Bill goes far enough. The Government must take the matter seriously. There is no reason why all cars should not be fitted with an effective security system, of which many are available cheaply, that enables stolen cars to be located and people apprehended immediately. Such modern technological systems are well known to the Minister of Transport, but there needs to be a determination to make use of them. The Government should tackle motor manufacturers and insurers to try to have such systems automatically fitted to all vehicles. Only in that way will we reduce the curse of car crime.

I discovered that the effect of new tax regulations on company cars is that an employee who fits a car alarm at a cost of £500 will have to pay between £45 and £70 extra in tax each year. That is an extraordinary effect of taxation by a Government dedicated to curbing crime. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps Opposition Members would like to intervene, but I should like to make progress.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury said that the new system would ensure that all car accessories were dealt with even-handedly. That is not satisfactory because for tax purposes a security system on a car should not be treated in the same way as a radio, a video or air conditioning. If the Home Office is serious about tackling car crime, I hope that it will take that matter up with the Treasury.

We hear much about the need for more and better police. I have persistently nagged on behalf of Cambridgeshire, which has fewer police per head of population than any other county although it is the fastest growing county in the country. That is not right. I was pleased to discover that we receive a welcome revenue support grant for the police of £1·5 million. However, I also discovered with some horror that the Lib-Lab county council regime allocated only £105,000 of that money for police resources and tried to salt the rest away in other expenditure. It was only when the Conservatives on the county council twigged that, moved an amendment and forced a vote that the allocation was raised to £340,000.

There is no point in the Government handing out money if local authorities cannot decide how to allocate it to the police in their areas. I agree that the police should have the best resources and that there should be bobbies on the beat, but it is up to local authorities to give the police the priority that they deserve.

I welcome the Bill and so do my constituents. It is an attempt to tackle a major curse and a cause of great anxiety among our people. The change of attitude expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is right because they have anticipated that people are much more concerned to see the punishment reflect the crime rather than the character of the criminal. People are outraged by some types of crime more than they are concerned about the psychiatric background, childhood or terms and conditions of the perpetrator. To recognise that fact is to return to a basic concept which strikes a chord with our people.

My constituents and those elsewhere will welcome the Bill, which I am happy to support. They will regard Opposition abstention as half-baked and wishy-washy. As a result, the Opposition will get from the people the contempt that they so richly deserve.

8.37 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): On new year's eve, an incident in my constituency revealed all too starkly to many of my constituents the depths of lawlessness to which the country has sunk. A man in his early 30s was gunned down and died a few hours later. The murder occurred on a busy high street in Wallsend, and the weapon was a firearm.

It is little wonder that many of our people live in a climate of fear and are so afraid that they will not go outside their doors in the evening. Many people have lost confidence in our criminal justice system and are crying out for a criminal justice Bill. However, it is a matter of deep regret that the Bill before the House is not the one for which they are crying out.

Many of our people live under a self-imposed curfew. Women will not drive their cars after dark. Education authorities have to move well-established evening classes to the hours of daylight. In my constituency, even Church organisations have to stage many of their events and functions during the day. Law-abiding people are prisoners in their own homes, and they look to the House for positive proposals to solve such problems.

Politicians have a tendency to come up with simple answers to complex questions. In criminal justice, there are certainly complex questions that need to be tackled. But it is not good enough to blame everything on the liberal 1960s, or to say that there is a worldwide crime wave that affects us all. Things are far more complicated than that. Yet the Government are looking for simple solutions to those complex questions. That is why the Bill is so misguided.

The Government make no attempt to identify the reasons why people offend. We must make it clear that there can be no excuse for criminal activities, but only if we can identify why people offend do we have a chance of finding the correct solutions. Part of that process is to acknowledge, as the Government must, that they bear a heavy responsibility.

During their 14 years in office they have presided over record increases in the crime rate, and have created a climate that promotes criminal activity and allows it to prosper. The individual is seen to be paramount, and we are told that there is no such thing as society. Those ideas are fundamentally flawed; those are the ingredients that lead people into criminal activity.

The Bill fails to address those issues. It is a ragbag of measures with no clear or coherent strategy, and nothing to tackle the causes of crime. It ignores the needs of the victim, and does little to prevent crime. The Bill is inadequate for many reasons, and is also dangerous. We have already heard many reasons why it is unsatisfactory, and I shall touch briefly on two—the position of the victim of crime, and the important role played by the Treasury in reducing the amount of money available for the criminal justice system.

It is a matter for deep regret that the Bill has little to say about the victims of crime. In his opening speech, the Home Secretary said that he had encouraged the Crown Prosecution Service to consult victims about the way in which the service deals with the accused. However, fine words are not enough. Many of us do not have confidence in the ability of the Crown Prosecution Service to involve

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victims in a proper and responsible way. The arrangement must be put on a statutory footing, and that is what the Labour party's reasoned amendment seeks to do.

At present, there is no one to safeguard the position of the victim. The defence is there to help the accused; the prosecution is there, in an even-handed way, to speak on behalf of the state, and of society as a whole. No one is charged with the responsibility of representing the interests of the victim. That must change.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): That fact has recently been brought home to me forcibly, because I have been dealing with the family of a young man who was murdered, and they felt as my hon. Friend has described. They were ignored by the system, they could not obtain information from the Crown Prosecution Service, and they were treated in the most appalling way in court. Victims' families are forced to queue for places in the public gallery, and have to sit near people related to the defendant.

The problem, which I hope that my hon. Friend will take on board, is that, although the family were not the direct victims of the crime—in that case, the crime was murder, so the victim was no longer alive—they clearly felt themselves to be victims, and they were totally ignored by the system.

Mr. Byers: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, because there is a great danger that we may underestimate the sense of anger, frustration and injustice that many victims and their families feel about the way in which the system operates. That issue must be addressed, so if we are unsuccessful in pressing our reasoned amendment, I hope that further consideration will be given to the matter in Committee.

Victims are often not informed that someone has been charged, or of the date of a court appearance, or of the outcome at the end of the court process. Cosy deals are often negotiated between the CPS and the defence, and it is the victim who feels offended against, because of the way in which the system has treated him or her. We must bring an end to such cosy arrangements.

Such arrangements and deals are often negotiated partly because the CPS knows the pressure on court time. The Treasury has reduced the amount of money available, and as a result our courts are sitting for fewer days, although the crime rate is increasing dramatically. Our courts are not allowed to sit as often as they would like to.

All is revealed in a confidential memo sent to the Bar Council at a national level by Heather Hallett QC, director of public affairs of the south-east Bar Council, pointing out that, between 1991 and 1992, sitting days were reduced by 6,000, from 88,000 to 82,000. The memo continued:

"courts are being closed, sittings of recorders are being cancelled often at the last minute".

explaining that, in Sussex and Kent, three courts had been closed, and that cases that should be dealt with in January 1994—that is, now—were being put back into the next financial year.

That situation is totally unacceptable. The cost-cutting aspirations of the Treasury are being put first, and as a result criminals are allowed to go free on our streets. The average delay between someone being charged and the case coming before the Crown court is three and a half months—a delay that increased by 11 per cent. between 1991 and 1992. Such delays simply provide further opportunities for criminals to commit more offences. That is unacceptable.

The Bill rightly deals with bail, but if we are worried about criminals going free, our principal objective must be to ensure that they are tried speedily and efficiently, and that is simply not happening.

We should be debating a Bill that would ensure that the guilty were convicted and the innocent acquitted, that crime was prevented and real rights were given to victims. The Bill fails because it does not tackle any of those issues. The Home Secretary must know that, although platitudes and prejudice may deliver a standing ovation at the Tory party conference, they do not constitute a framework for a criminal justice system. The Bill does not serve the interests of the House or of the country. Our people deserve better.

8.48 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): For the past 30 years, we in Britain have been experimenting with libertarian attitudes to crime. Those attitudes have been tried and have been proved an abject failure. It has been pointed out several times during the debate that the Conservative party has been in government for nearly 15 years. During that time, there has been a massive increase in the resources devoted to the police, to crime prevention and to the fight against crime in general. Anyone who believes that, had the Labour party been in power for the past 15 years, anything like those resources could or would have been made available will believe anything. The problem is not so much that the police do not catch the criminals; it is that we, the politicians, let them out again, either on bail or after much too short a time in prison.

I fear that, over the past 15 years, we have listened too much to the left-wing social reformers and not enough to our constituents, to the police and to the magistrates. But I have no doubt at all that, if either of the two socialist parties—I see that the Liberal Democrats are as usual conspicuous by their absence from this important debate—had been in power, matters would have been a great deal worse.

This Bill is the third step in this Parliament towards the restoration of common sense to Britain's criminal justice system, and I welcome it. *[Laughter.]* I am surprised that Opposition Members appear to find that funny. This is a very serious matter for all our constituents.

The first step was the amendment of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to restore the power of the courts to sentence a criminal on the basis of his whole criminal record. The second was my 10-minute Bill, which was supported by 110 Members of all parties—I wish publicly to thank all of them for their support—which reached the statute book in July as the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993, and which gives the prosecution a right of appeal against the decision of magistrates to grant bail. I have been informed by my hon. Friend the Minister that he expects to make a commencement order early in the new year. I hope that my hon. Friend will be more specific about that when he winds up, because that measure is badly needed and wanted by our constituents.

There is no simple answer to the question "What causes crime?" During this debate, Labour Members have repeatedly posed the rhetorical question, and I have been waiting for an answer—but answer came there none. There

have always been criminals, and there always will be, and the situation throughout the western world is not at all encouraging.

Of course we must manage the economy as best we can so as to provide everyone with a decent home and a good job. During the past 20 months or so, I have listened to the Labour party and Liberal Democrats in economic debates and have heard nothing from them which suggests to me that the management of the economy would be any better in their hands—quite the reverse.

Over the past 15 years, there have been tremendous improvements in the standard of living of our people, but no Government has ever been able to provide a job for everyone who wants one, and I do not suppose that any Government ever will. There is certainly no crock of gold —I sometimes think that Opposition Members think there is—out of which all the projects that all of us want to see can be financed.

A great many criminals have jobs, and a great majority of the poor and unemployed do not commit crime—indeed, they are most often the victims of crime. We must keep faith with them and make it clear to potential criminals that poverty or unemployment will never be accepted as an excuse for crime. How, in any event, could poverty or unemployment be accepted as an excuse for rape or for smashing a glass in someone's face?

Much of the crime can be traced to the breakdown of respect, which I—and I am sure most hon. Members present—saw happening throughout the 1960s. I noticed a breakdown of respect between men and women and between parents and children, a breakdown of respect for religion, for the elderly and for all forms of authority. Sadly, Western society has abandoned all the traditional constraints upon human behaviour, and we are left only with the criminal law. It is not an adequate defence. The breakdown of respect to which I have referred began in the 1960s, long before Baroness Thatcher became Prime Minister.

There is another problem which has been referred to once or twice in the debate—the terrible scourge of drugs, which is affecting the entire developed world. I have listened carefully to this debate and others, and have heard the problem identified many times by Opposition Members and by my hon. Friends. I have yet to hear a solution. All we got from the Liberal Democrats at their party conference was the suggestion that we might legalise drugs —which would turn London into the drugs capital of the world.

Television has a lot to answer for. Anyone who doubts that that is the most powerful medium ever invented for moulding ideas and attitudes should look at the thousands of pounds that people are prepared to pay for a few minutes of advertising time.

I believe that child-centred educational methods have a lot to answer for, too. They have taught them a lot about their rights but precious little about their responsibilities.

The great majority of crimes are committed by people between the ages of 15 and 21. Many of those young people respond to non-custodial sentences. We must all welcome that. All forms of non-custodial treatment that work must be used, but we would be foolish if we shut our eyes to the fact that there is a hard core of young offenders who simply cannot be reformed and cannot be deterred. They simply have to be locked up, so that they can be physically prevented from burgling our constituents' houses, stealing their cars and engaging in other forms of anti-social behaviour.

I thoroughly welcome the proposal in the Bill to establish secure training centres, but I should prefer it if they were called secure schools. If a young person qualifies for custodial treatment, he is in need not of punishment but of a rescue operation.

Such establishments should principally be schools that happen to have a fence around them, not prisons that happen to have a few teachers inside them. Sadly, also, there are youngsters of the age of 10 and 11 who commit serious and persistent crime. Fortunately, there are not very many of them, but I feel that the Bill should be amended in Committee to provide that, if a court thinks it appropriate, it can send someone aged 10 or 11 to a secure school.

It is said that there was a high rate of reoffending from borstals, but let us not forget that we are dealing with the hard core of young criminals. Part of the problem was that they were there for too short a time. Very soon after going in, they were let out to continue their criminal careers. That is the wrong approach.

Such children should be educated in secure schools for as long as needed. It is no good sending them in for a few months. If necessary, and if the headmaster is of that opinion, it should be possible for them to be detained in that school until they reach their normal school leaving age. I see no reason at all why the headmaster should not have the right to use the cane on boys in appropriate circumstances in those schools; nor do I see why the headmaster of any school should be prohibited by law from using the cane on boys.

There are also youngsters between the ages of 16 and 18 who need custodial treatment, and it is no good throwing them into a young offenders' institution or "sin bin" and then forgetting about them. We are all aware of the terrible tragedies that have occurred in young offenders' institutions. The concept of the secure school must be extended to the 16-to-18 age group, but there the emphasis must be on training for work.

Of course all that is expensive. However, what are the costs of allowing those youngsters to remain at liberty, running wild and committing offences every day? Those costs are enormous. It is said that the schools to which I have referred would be universities of crime, but I do not accept that argument. The real universities of crime are the housing estates and even the homes where those young people live. It is sometimes said that it would be wrong to take those young people from their parents, but in the case of some youngsters, that is precisely what is required. The parents may be criminals themselves, and a negative influence on their children.

I believe that hostels should be provided for children when they leave secure schools, to ease their transition back into the real world and to help them obtain jobs, but nothing has been said about that so far. There should certainly be no trips to the Nile or to the Caribbean. Whatever may be the therapeutic effect of such trips, they are deeply offensive to our constituents who cannot afford to send their own children, who have committed no offences, to such places.

With regard to bail, I generally welcome part II. However, I believe that the right approach is that set out in clause 2 of my Bail (Amendment) Bill, which clause I sadly had to drop in Committee because of the lack of

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parliamentary time. That approach would have focused on people who had committed serious offences before. If a question arose whether such a person should have bail in future, the onus should be on that person to prove that he or she should have bail. It should not be for the prosecution to prove that that person should not have bail. That is a better approach than the automatic exclusion of bail.

I welcome the provisions for privatisation. I had an opportunity to visit the Wolds prison a few weeks ago. It is doing an excellent job. The argument that it is wrong to make a profit out of custody is quite ridiculous. Opposition Members might just as well say that we should close all the undertakers because it is wrong to make a profit out of bereavement. That is a ridiculous argument.

We should perhaps reconsider the stop-and-search powers of the police, and consider whether they are adequate. We should also consider whether it is necessary for every trifling traffic offence to go through the hands of the Crown Prosecution Service. Why should they not be dealt with by the police officer in the case?

I am aware of clause 38. However, it is wrong for defence lawyers to be able to extract the names of witnesses during proceedings. It should be at the judge's discretion whether the names of witnesses should be disclosed. What on earth is the point of offering a £5,000 reward if people know that, if they come forward with information, the criminals and their relatives will soon have their names and probably their addresses?

The question of anonymity in rape cases should be addressed. It is quite right that the anonymity of women should be protected, but similarly, a man accused of rape should be entitled to his anonymity unless and until he is convicted.

With regard to compensation for victims, I welcome the very large sum of additional money that the Government are making available to the victim support organisations. However, once the Child Support Agency has concluded its excellent task of chasing fathers who do not pay maintenance, its attention, or that of a similar organisation with the necessary resources, should be devoted to collecting compensation on behalf of the victims of crime. At the moment, criminals are not paying that compensation. The courts do not have the resources and are not adapted to perform that task.

I welcome the provisions on squatters and travellers, because they are a serious problem in my county of West Sussex. Clause 50 provides that the sound equipment used at raves can be forfeited. However, there is no corresponding provision for the forfeiture of vehicles used by new age travellers who commit mass trespass.

Many of our constituents find it grossly offensive to see vast sums of money paid to criminals who sell their stories to newspapers, and that practice should be outlawed forthwith.

With regard to sentencing, it is for the elected representatives of the people assembled here in Parliament, and not for Her Majesty's judges, to decide whether prison works. It is the function of judges to apply the law to the facts. If Parliament says that a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment should be imposed for a particular crime, we expect to see 10 years imposed for the most serious examples of that crime, and not the six or seven years that judges are accustomed to imposing. Some years ago, I published a pamphlet urging appeals against over-lenient sentences. That was enacted as section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

One reason why there are so many lenient sentences —I know this because I practised in the criminal courts for nearly 15 years—is that the defence counsel makes a speech in mitigation and tells the court what a wonderful man his client really is and how out of character it was that he thrust the broken bottle into the poor victim's face. During that time, the prosecuting counsel sits down and says nothing, except, in a rather formal way, to draw attention to the man's criminal record. Prosecuting counsel should be under a duty to draw the court's attention to anything which suggests a more serious punishment.

We must also reconsider remission. A man who is sentenced to six years' imprisonment will probably serve only three. That is a fraud on the public. I have actually heard professionals in the criminal justice business say that it does not matter what the public think. That is a breathtaking piece of arrogance. Sentences should mean what they say, and there should be no remission for good behaviour. Our constituents do not have a reduction in their council tax for good behaviour, because good behaviour is to be expected. Bad behaviour in prison should be punished by an increase in sentence. Life imprisonment should mean life.

I welcome part VII, to take action against pornographers. We must take the profit out of pornography and use the powers in the Obscene Publications Act 1959 to seize pornographic material. That could be done on the balance of probabilities, not on the criminal burden of proof. That is the key. The police must be assisted by private contractors who can find warehouses where filth is being stored and bring it before the courts, and pornographers should pay the costs of that.

I welcome clause 68. Sex lines should not be controlled; they should be banned. The public telephone system is no place for pornographic conversations.

The Foreign Office must renegotiate with our European partners the laws on pornography. It is quite unacceptable to our constituents for Euro filth to be beamed by satellite into British homes.

I welcome clause 27 on the right of silence. As the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) said, we are not abolishing the right of silence. We are not suggesting that the thumbscrews be brought back and that people be forced to speak. It is rather odd that, if a man is accused of drink-driving, he has to incriminate himself by giving a sample of blood or urine, and he is treated as though guilty if he does not do so. However, if someone is suspected of rape or murder, he can sit with his arms folded and say, "Prove it—if you can." One hon. Member has pointed out that we need to go further.

Under the current law, when asked at the trial, "Why did you not answer the policeman's question?" an accused person will say, "Because my lawyer told me not to." Therefore, we must place all lawyers under an obligation, when they tell their clients that they need not say anything, to tell their clients also that, if they do not speak, the jury will be able to form such view of their refusal to speak as seems appropriate to them.

This is an excellent Bill. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on bringing it forward, but there is still much more to be done.

9.8 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I do not know about other hon. Members, but I am fed up with naive comments, typified by some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen). He suggested that one simply has to agree with the Government or be labelled pro-criminal. That is nonsense and it is no way to conduct an important debate.

I do not believe that the public are aware of the seriousness of some of the problems facing us or of how thin the blue line is. We must add to that the standards of behaviour and the moral values that are espoused by the Conservative party—"Me first, and to hell with the rest of society." It is no wonder there is increasing criminality. Our current problems are bound to follow.

The causes of crime are not dealt with by the Bill. Despite the opportunity of nearly 15 years to address the causes of crime, the only opportunities that exist as a result of the Government's actions are opportunities for the criminal. I remember the various poster campaigns for general elections since 1979. The first mischievous one of 1979 was that of the dole queue, and the lies associated with that, through to the most recent one about the "double whammy". I can imagine the campaign slogan for posters in the next general election. There will be the same innuendoes, but they will say, "Vote Tory and avoid crime." I think that that will be aimed at the criminal, not at the rest of society.

I recently spent a whole night shift with my local police force and saw some of the evidence of the problems that face us—a handful of young people with total disregard for the policeman or policewoman. I discussed at length the causes of that behaviour with the officers with whom I was assigned. They referred to a number of areas, all of which have a common link: an offender's confidence that he will not be caught; even if he is, it will be pretty difficult to pursue the case because of the problems faced by the Crown Prosecution Service and the under-resourcing of magistrates courts. I shall refer to those matters in more detail in a moment.

I can adequately demonstrate that point by a case from my constituency, where the CPS is not prepared to pursue a violent offender who knocked down somebody with a vehicle and who has been witnessed committing violent crimes. The CPS is not prepared to pursue the case because of the difficulties associated with what it sees as a small-scale criminal. I see that person as a serious risk to society. It reflects the fact that the CPS takes the view that it cannot go any further because there is a greater need for more collection of evidence; that comes back to the resources available to the police.

The magistrates in my constituency recently released a violent offender on bail into the local community simply because the Home Secretary failed to provide local magistrates with the necessary facilities to remedy that situation. We hear all sorts of promises, but no action. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) referred to the number of court hours available. I know, from my wife's experience as chair of a bench in a district in Cheshire, of the cuts that have been imposed on the magistracy in that area.

The shortage of police was illustrated by my night out with the police force. The four villages of Neston, Parkgate, Burton and Willaston, comprising more than 100,000 people, had no direct cover from within the borough on that night while the officers with whom I was assigned were investigating a school break-in. I do not see that as a good enough response to the needs of my community.

For the rest of the night in the town of Ellesmere Port there were only five police officers on the streets. When I was involved in the arrest of three young men—I shall not refer to the matter in great detail because of the sub judice rule—there was no cover because all the police had to converge on the one spot. What happens in such a case? Is that really a good enough response to the needs of the community? The system around us is cracking. Public confidence is being eroded. Police, magistrates and the CPS have low morale. Indeed, in my view, it is at an all time low.

Let us look at some of the mistakes that have been made. I stress that it is no wonder that spectacular mistakes are made by the system, because shortcuts have been made. For example, I refer to the case of Paul Malone, to which I have referred several times before. He has now spent his eighth Christmas in gaol for offences that he could not have committed. I am not the only one to express that view. I have before me a sworn statement by a highly qualified forensic scientist who has been used on many occasions by the Home Office, for issues such as the shoot-to-kill policy. He is highly regarded. He has calculated, from the evidence that he has seen, that the height of the person who committed the crime does not correspond with the height of the person in gaol. In addition, the principal prosecution document has been shown to be fabricated.

The compounding of errors gets even worse. The first inquiry failed to bother to look at transcripts of the court hearing. The officer in charge retired mid-stream. The current inquiry is on its third lead officer. That level of incompetence and bad management goes back to the person at the top of the tree. The responsibility for it—the buck stops with him—belongs to the Home Secretary and nobody else.

The common thread in all the issues—the problems that I referred to earlier and the serious issue of the imprisonment of somebody in such circumstances—is the Government's unwillingness properly to resource criminal justice. We need to identify and tackle the causes of crime in a proper and positive manner and, when necessary, be tough—I mean tough—on proven offenders.

The Bill deals with some of the matters in which I have a particular interest, such as the use of science and technology. Those aspects of it are interesting and worthy of serious examination. However, it fails to address the fundamental issues on which I have touched. Therefore, I join my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in urging the House to accept the reasoned amendment and to take the debate forward much more positively.

9.16 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is clear from the debate that we are dealing with a poor Bill, ill planned and poorly drafted, which fails to deal with crime and miscarriages of justice. Those are two scandalous omissions.

The Bill's proposals fall into two categories. Some are helpful and capable of constructive amendment, and we shall try to achieve just that in Committee. Others try to address a real issue but offer wrong-minded or ineffective

[Mr. Alun Michael]

solutions, rather like a doctor diagnosing an illness and insisting on applying leeches when laser technology is available and more appropriate. With 15 Acts in 14 years dealing with criminal justice and many minor measures, why will not the Government take a balanced approach to such serious issues?

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) for acknowledging the co-operation between Conservative Back Benchers and Labour Front Benchers that helped the 1993 Bail (Amendment) Bill through its stages in the House when the then Minister had geared himself up to kill it off. We now have the prospect that the prosecution will be able to appeal against the granting of bail when there is clear evidence that a mistake has been made.

We shall take an equally responsible approach to straightening out the confused proposals in the Bill. I share the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Shoreham that the Government have delayed implementation of that Act, when these measures already apply in Scotland. There are no excuses for delay and I hope that the Minister will assure us that it will be implemented immediately.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Shoreham said that not enough money was available to pay for all the steps that we would like to take to prevent crime when people were already paying a tax for crime. Some people are paying up to 30 per cent. more for their car insurance and between 20 and 30 per cent. more for their home insurance because of the effects of crimes that the Government have failed to prevent—that is for those who have insurance, or who can afford it. The suffering, as well as the taxation that is, in effect, provided by the failure to tackle crime, is a serious issue.

I share the concern of the hon. Member for Shoreham about the failure to tackle drug abuse and I published my own analysis last year, warning of the growing size of the problem. I agree that legalising drugs would be a diversion and that we need to tackle crack trafficking. It is crazy to end drug education projects and to cut the treatment of drug addicts in the community, steps which can diminish this scourge in our community, and all the other work that we need to do to avoid the individual, family and community breakdown which the threat of drugs offers us. Why are the Government undertaking those stupid actions at the present time?

With regret, I see little sign that we will have such a constructive approach from the Government Benches as was achieved during the debate on the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 on some of the issues with which we are dealing today. The Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), was at his sycophantic best today. One would almost think as he spoke that he regarded rising crime as evidence of Conservative success.

Not from him came a word on the Government's failings. Indeed, there was not the sort of care which the hon. and learned Gentleman used to show, for instance, in 1988 when the right of silence was dealt with far more carefully by Ministers in respect of Northern Ireland. At that time, the hon. and learned Gentleman said:

> "for all its thinness and ruined state, the right to silence is still one of the significant linchpins of an accusatorial system and we should be cautious about abolishing it."—[*Official Report*, 8 November 1988; Vol. 140, c. 212.]

The hon. and learned Gentleman also criticised the Government at that time for rushing through "an ill-considered measure." What do we have today but an ill-considered measure? The Home Secretary irresponsibly has thrown aside the evidence and the conclusions of a royal commission, instead of taking the sensible conclusions which it had offered after careful and extended thought.

We ought to see more balance from other Government Members. If the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) is so concerned about bail bandits, why did he and the Government not support Labour party proposals on Report? Those measures could now have been in place had the hon. Gentleman and the Government not voted against them. If the hon. Gentleman is serious in his declarations of support for the police, he must be more willing to put pressure on the Home Secretary and to be less partisan in his rhetoric. The hon. Gentleman also referred to computer graphics, and he should remember that he is supporting an initiative which is sponsored on an all-party basis by seven hon. Members.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), who took the lead among other hon. Members to bring that matter to general attention. Those concerns are shared, the problem is enormous and we need to work together to defeat that threat to decency. We seek to improve that part of the Bill and to include the proposal of confiscation which was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) during the debate.

Against that background, it was incredible that the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) had the foolhardy audacity to criticise the Labour party's record. The hon. Gentleman justified part I by referring to the lack of places to send young people. Why did not he criticise the Government for undermining the system of community homes with education on the premises? Why did not the hon. Gentleman criticise the Government for the fact that therapeutic facilities like Peperharow, which succeeded in working with some of the most difficult young people, are now closed?

The hon. Gentleman asked when the places dealt with under part I will be available. He is right to do that, as it is an important question which the Home Secretary failed to answer. Before becoming a Member, I campaigned for secure places to end the scandal of young people being held in adult prisons because there was nowhere else for them to go. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) campaigned vigorously after the suicide of a constituent in prison. Eventually, the Home Office Minister, who is now the Secretary of State for Education, promised the necessary places, although he would not say when those places would be made available. That promise was made in February 1991, during debates on one of the many Criminal Justice Bills. Not one of those places has yet been provided. It is right to ask the Minister to tell us when those places are to be made available. Let us not have the prevarication that we have had from Ministers at the time of the last announcement.

Reference was made earlier in the debate to the availability of secure places. During the period from 1 August 1993 to the end of October 1993, there were 475 requests for secure places. During that time, 113 vacancies arose. That is the scale of difficulty that was referred to by my hon. Friends during the debate—so much for the

Government's determination to provide what is needed to check youngsters when they need to be in secure accommodation.

The Government could do many other things. At about 6 o'clock in the morning during the Consolidated Fund debate just before Christmas we discussed a problem that has been highlighted by police officers throughout the country, from constables and sergeants to chief constables, who are angry and frustrated at being let down—as they see it—when the Crown Prosecution Service fails to take a prosecution through to success. That is happening at a time when reported crime is up 124 per cent. while, under this Government, there has also been a staggering 15 per cent. drop in the number of cases coming before Crown courts in the past year.

Yes, there is plenty that the Government could do if they had the determination, and it would not even require legislation for them to get on with the job and make many of the changes, but they have failed to do so.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to offences committed by those "imbued" by the values of the Government—people who were brought up during the Government's time in office. He is absolutely right; those offences have led to the burdens on police to which he referred.

The Government's impact, in undermining initiatives undertaken by local authorities, is enormous. For the past few years, the Conservative party has been slaughtering the youth service, which used to help young people to adjust to the society in which they were growing up.

Reports written during the second world war, the first world war and even the last years of the 19th century all emphasised the need for a youth service that was able to work with young people so that they could be brought up with values that would enable them to take a full part in society.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that in the past 10 years the growth in violent crime and theft has been greater in France than in the United Kingdom. As France had a socialist Government until early last year, would he say that socialism has failed the youth of France in the same way?

Mr. Michael: Opposition Members have been waiting all evening to contribute to this debate, yet a Member like that can wander in off the street and make that sort of inept and stupid contribution. The Government who are responsible in this country should be tackling crime in this country. I must tell the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that you can confirm that I have been present throughout much of the debate and that my name was on the list to speak. Therefore, would you ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his rather pathetic remark and to answer the question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that my observations are confirmed by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. That is the sort of diversion that we are coming to expect from the Conservatives. They—not least the Home Secretary—are afraid of debating crime and of facing up to their responsibilities——

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman does not want to be diverted, why does he not give a straight answer to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin)? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Mr. Michael: I did not answer because I was interrupted by a point of order and I naturally respected the Chair's need to respond to it. Conservative Members have made a fatuous attempt to say that crime has risen more in other countries, which has been disproved and challenged.

Let us come to the real issues in the debate. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said, the problem is that most criminals are not caught. The Home Secretary fails to recognise that the Government preside over a system in which only 2 per cent., or one in 50, of the crimes committed end up with someone being punished by a court. Yet the Home Secretary concentrates all his efforts on what happens in court.

The Opposition have made it clear time and time again —we have contributed constructively to amendments to the law—that we want those who are brought to justice to be dealt with properly. We also, as the reasoned amendment makes clear, want crime to be prevented. Ministers have continually failed to look at the facts and to understand what is happening. What can we expect when even the Prime Minister wants to "understand a little less"?

A year ago, the Home Office told the Home Affairs Select Committee that youth crime was going down. Eventually, it revised that opinion because Labour's analysis showed what Labour Members, local communities and the police knew all along—that youth crime had been rising, especially in relation to burglary and car crime. I am glad to have the support of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) in this endeavour. Technology and protection can help in tackling the problem of car crime. However, the causes of crime need to be tackled as well. Burglary and car crime now comprise 53 per cent. of crime in England and Wales. Yet those are the very crimes, which take up so much time of the police, that would be cut if the Home Secretary accepted our advice and the propositions in our reasoned amendment.

Why will the Home Secretary not take measures that would stop people becoming victims? He made the spurious claim of being interested in the victims of crime. We have already embarrassed him into increasing his low level of support for Victim Support. He said earlier that he was proud of providing £10 million a year. He knows that £16 million a year is necessary to provide a comprehensive victim support service in every part of England and Wales, as well as a witness support scheme in the Crown courts. Only the Crown courts are covered, so it is not an over-ambitious aspiration. By the end of 1997, the Home Secretary will still only have reached the level of £11·7 million, which is not good enough. With the penny-pinching attitude that causes the Government continually to undervalue volunteers, the capacity to give adequate training and back-up is not being provided.

Then there is the criminal injuries compensation scheme. As was rightly said by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the proposals are an insult to the victims of crime. They replace a proper scheme of compensation with a system of fixed payments

[Mr. Michael]

which take no account of the individual circumstances of the victim and which will fail miserably to compensate those who miss work for weeks or months as a result of violent injury. Rape victims, those who have been most seriously hurt and thousands of others will lose out under the proposals. The proposals have little support anywhere within the criminal justice system.

Another way in which to help victims would be to speed up our courts system, which we propose in the reasoned amendment and which we shall pursue in Committee. The Home Office has told those who have sought to help it that amendments to speed up the criminal justice system are not included in the Bill because there is not room. What a ridiculous proposition, especially when a working party has spent months getting proposals ready.

I put it this way. Each of us accepts that if we punish or correct our own children, we do so today. We do not wait until tomorrow or for many months. We could improve matters simply with a legal framework for cautioning plus, which ends up with rapid intervention for youngsters who start getting involved in trouble. We could help by having pre-trial reviews and by speeding up, with great clarity and transparency, the system in the courts. We advanced those propositions in the Committee stage of the previous Criminal Justice Bill. They were voted down by the Conservatives only six months ago. Will they support us in the endeavour this time, as the Home Secretary seems to think that he might consider those ideas?

During the debate on the previous Criminal Justice Bill, we made a more comprehensive proposal to deal with ticket touts. The Conservatives voted it down. We shall seek to improve the propositions before the House this time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) referred to the low clear-up rates. I pay tribute to the Metropolitan police and to a number of police forces throughout the country for recognising the need for the local partnership approach that we recommend in the reasoned amendment, which would hand back local communities to the people who live in them. On more than one occasion, we have proposed such a legal framework, which would be welcomed by the police and by local authorities, and which would give real strength to such local partnerships. I wish that the Home Secretary would take that proposal seriously. That is part of the strength and depth of the reasoned amendment on which the House will vote later.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Is the hon. Gentleman familiar with the response to my right hon. and learned Friend's 27-point programme, announced at the Conservative party conference, from Richard Coyles, the chairman of the Police Federation? He said:

"My message to the Home Secretary is what you have proposed is first-class. It will help tremendously in the fight against crime."

Is the chairman of the Police Federation right or wrong?

Mr. Michael: I have spent a considerable time talking to police representatives, including the chairman of the Police Federation, and I believe that the hon. Gentleman will find that second thoughts led to less enthusiasm being expressed. The chairman of the Police Federation said that he was extremely concerned about what the Home Secretary was not doing. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) has fallen upon the sword by seeking support from the police. They are suspicious of the Home Secretary's weak approach and the fact that he has gone for headlines rather than reality.

It is not surprising that the Home Secretary has failed to answer the simple question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield, who asked whether he believed that any of the measures in the Bill would cut crime. The answer is that the Home Secretary does not believe it himself. How can he inspire confidence?

The Home Secretary said that he had been out with a local watch scheme to walk around its area. It is nice for the Home Secretary to go out at night and I offer him another opportunity to go out with the South Wales police, as I have done, on to the streets of the capital city of Wales on a weekend night. He will see exactly how thin the blue line is drawn. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should contemplate the fact that that problem is faced by other police forces in cities and towns throughout the country.

The chief constable of South Wales police has said that he needs extra finance next year above the 5·5 per cent. that the Home Office says is necessary. The Secretary of State for Wales has, however, limited the capacity of Welsh local authorities to provide above a 1·75 per cent. increase in contributions. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Wales are refusing to sit down with the local authorities and the police authority to discuss the chief constable's proposition. That refusal will lead to a crisis in policing in south Wales and the closure of police stations. That is an absolute scandal. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Secretary of State for Wales must face up to their responsibility for that. I am referring to a specific example, but I know that other right hon. and hon. Friends, who represent every town and city, will be able to cite similar examples in coming months. Conservative Members will also have to face similar problems in their communities.

The Home Secretary has tried to say that he is interested in supporting the police, but his record is appalling. He has reneged on the Conservativea' election promise to increase police numbers by 1,000 this year; instead, he has delivered a cut of 224 in that number. He has promised a Mickey Mouse figure of 3,000 extra police by cutting paperwork, but the police have ridiculed that figure, because they know that he will not give the cash for the new technology which is the starting point for cutting that paperwork. That means jam tomorrow and no action on crime today.

I hope that when the Minister of State replies to the debate he will apologise for his recent disgraceful behaviour. Last week the Prime Minister said that "back to basics" was not about personal morality but about public policy. That is a welcome change from the emphasis placed on that policy by the Minister at the recent launch of the report on juvenile justice by the Children's Society. The Minister turned up too late to hear the introduction to that report or to listen to the deep concern expressed on behalf of the society by the Bishop of Worcester. He brushed aside all that the report said about the need for the Government to take a positive constructive initiative on juvenile justice and he attacked the Church for not preaching individual morality.

In fact, individual morality is preached about every Sunday in every church in the land, but that is not news. What is news is that the Church, like the police, has identified a deep malaise in our society which arises from

the break-up of our community on which I have commented. What is news is that the Church, the police, the Labour party and many other commentators share the view that we need to balance individual responsibility with the responsibility of the Government to create the right framework of incentives, of rewards and of punishments that effectively create a contract between the individual and society. Unless we get that balance right, the malaise will deepen. While Ministers may continue to blame everyone but themselves, their pronouncements will be of no use or benefit to the victims of crime or to the community at large.

The real test tonight is whether Conservative Members will stop treating crime as a political football and welcome our constructive proposals, or turn them down again. If they vote against our reasoned amendment, they will reject a statutory framework for crime prevention, effective measures to prevent crime, measures to create safer communities in a safer Britain, measures to tackle youth crime, steps to tackle drugs and drug-related crime, steps to tackle truancy, new laws to tackle racial harassment and violence and measures that will put the victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. They will reject measures to limit access to dangerous weapons, the independent judicial appointments commission and an independent authority to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice. That is what the Minister and the Home Secretary will vote against if they reject our reasoned amendment tonight.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): The Bill is the centrepiece of the Government's legislative programme for this Session. It carries into action the lion's share of the extensive proposals which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced in October, and it will achieve a criminal justice system that protects the public and not the criminal.

There have been two clear messages from the debate today—first, that there is widespread and genuine concern about crime levels, not just in the House but across the country; and, secondly, that it is only on this side of the House that there are positive and effective ideas for reform.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) says that the Labour party is prepared to get tough on crime and criminals, but where is the evidence? The hon. Gentleman has not produced one policy proposal to get tough on crime. Perhaps he thinks that if he tells us often enough we will all believe that it will come true. It takes a lot more than that to convince the House and the country.

Today, the hon. Gentleman told us of his new, decisive approach. Faced with this important and comprehensive Bill, what will he do tonight? He will abstain. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary called the hon. Gentleman a weathervane. He is wrong: at least a weathervane ends up pointing somewhere. Watching the Opposition Front Bench——

Mr. Blair: Why does not the hon. Gentleman resolve the matter by accepting our reasoned amendment, which contains perfectly reasonable measures, and then we can reach agreement?

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend has made the point that it is a feeble amendment and is a load of rubbish that adds nothing to the Bill.

Watching the Opposition Front Bench this afternoon reminded me of the three vultures in Walt Disney's "Jungle Book", sitting there with eyes open and talons out.

"Hey Flaps, what are we going to do?"

"I dunno, what d'ya want to do?"

"OK, so what are we going to do?"

"Dunno."

That is what we have seen from the Opposition Front Bench today. I loved that Walt Disney classic, but I did not think that I would see it again so soon. What a typical Labour party shambles. Labour Members do not know which way to turn.

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman says that we do not know what way to turn. I have told him that if he supports our reasoned amendment we shall deliver the Bill through Second Reading. Why will not he support it?

Mr. Maclean: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that we consider the points in the reasoned amendment to be practically worthless and that it contains nothing to deal with the essential issues facing the House or the country. The question is whether the hon. Gentleman will still abstain if his reasoned amendment is defeated tonight. Will he and his party sit there not able to vote against the Bill but scared to vote for it because the lobby groups will hound him?

At least the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), in his quick rattle through the Bill, covered all the points and said why he was in favour of some and against others. He asked where was the Criminal Cases Review Authority. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has told the House that we are committed to the measure and will produce a consultation paper setting out the issues. The solutions that we propose and any practical problems that need to be settled will be in that paper.

A great deal of work is needed, for example, to establish the proposed authority's constitutional position, its relationship with the courts, the police service and others, its powers and proceedings and its criteria for selecting cases for investigation and referral to the Court of Appeal. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland also asked about the Law Commission report——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No. If the Opposition spokesman had left me the appropriate amount of time to respond, I would be able to take more interventions.

It is unrealistic of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland to expect the Bill to include proposals from the Law Commission's report on personal violence, which was published just before Christmas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) raised points about the law of consent. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) raised points about capital punishment. The House will be interested to know that the Government consider those matters to be issues of individual conscience. If amendments are selected, the Government will permit free votes on the Government side on both matters. We propose that both debates should take place on the Floor of the House. Time will be made available for any such debates at a relatively early stage in the

[Mr. Maclean]

Committee proceedings. Any debate on capital punishment will be taken by the Government to be the once-per-Parliament debate.

Three clear principles run through the Bill. First, protection of the public is the first duty of the Government. It must come before anything else. Secondly, the police should have all the powers that they need to prevent crime and to catch criminals. Thirdly, the balance of the criminal justice system must be tilted further against criminals and in favour of protecting the public.

The Bill covers wide ground. It is not purely about courts, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) suggested. It is about combating terrorism, juvenile crime and rural crime. Of course it is about court powers and procedures, too. But it is also about bail, police powers, the treatment of witnesses and the laws governing pornography.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that the Bill contained trivial minutiae. They might be trivial minutiae to the Labour party, but all the matters that I have just mentioned are vitally important to all the constituents of Conservative Members. On every one of those matters the balance has been shifted to ensure that the public receive the protection that they need and deserve.

Mr. Kaufman: To my constituents, a rise of 265 per cent. in the rate of crime since the Government came to office is not trivial. It is not trivial that my constituents are afraid to go on to the street, open their doors or drive their cars. What will the Minister say to my constituents who are suffering the worst crime rate in Britain's history?

Mr. Maclean: Exactly. So the right hon. Gentleman should vote for the Bill. He should have voted for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which introduced the power to review lenient sentences, and countless prevention of terrorism measures, which Opposition Members refused to support. In every one of the matters that I have mentioned, the balance has been shifted to ensure that the public receive the protection that they need and deserve. On every one of those matters our position is crystal clear and Labour cannot say whether it agrees or disagrees. Thank goodness for my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who has put on record the strong support of the Police Federation for the Bill and the measures that we are introducing.

Some hon. Members have referred to juvenile crime. Current laws clearly fail to protect the public. There is clearly a problem with persistent juvenile offenders, as many of my hon. Friends have pointed out. A few persistent offenders can be responsible for a vast amount of crime and the police and the courts must have the powers to stop them.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No. I have many points to pick up from the debate and I must go on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) made some interesting points. I welcome his suggestion that the voluntary sector should work with us on secure training units. I have met members of that sector and am keen to encourage them.

The description by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) of young hooligans running riot on housing estates in his constituency was the best argument for the Bill that I have heard from the Opposition. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join the Government in the Lobby tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) welcomed secure units. We want them built as soon as possible, but I cannot give my hon. Friend a firm timetable as it depends on the Bill's pace through the House. I have also noted what my hon. Friend said about foreign trips. We have asked councils responsible for such trips to show common sense. We shall watch carefully and take suitable action if common sense does not prevail.

We do not want laws to be ignored by anyone and clause 45 will be enforced.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): My hon. Friend will be aware that my local authority, Gloucestershire county council, has been involved in two of the most sensational cases of sending young offenders on trips abroad. Does he agree that such action is totally unacceptable to my constituents who have committed no crime whatever and that it will not deter young offenders from committing crimes in the future?

Mr. Maclean: I look forward to the county council elections and my hon. Friend's constituents getting rid of councillors who have no common sense.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No. I have already given way four times and I have a lot of ground to cover.

The secure training centres will not be for children who have scrumped farmers' apples or stolen a few sweets from the local shop. Nor will they be for first-time offenders. They will be for offenders with at least three convictions who have breached a supervision order or offended during the period of a supervision order. We need to put in place a steady hierarchy of punishment, from a caution at the bottom to custody at the top, to show those youngsters that their behaviour will be dealt with seriously and that a life of crime simply does not pay.

As a recent survey in *The Times* explained, 60 per cent. of youths aged between 13 and 17 said that one reason for juvenile crime was the belief that offenders would be let off with a caution. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is already dealing with excessive cautioning at the lower end of the scale of punishment. The Bill will put in place the necessary sentencing framework at the top end of the scale.

The Bill also takes important steps to deal with rural crime. That was widely welcomed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale and for Halesowen and Stourbridge. It is intolerable that local communities should live in fear of invasions from trespassers who have no regard for the rights of others. We shall provide the police with further powers to deal with that menace, allowing the speedy removal of trespassers and their vehicles from land. We shall also introduce new powers to prevent the appalling distress caused by unlicensed night-time raves on open land. Their incessant noise can keep residents for miles around awake all night.

The Bill will also create the new offence of aggravated trespass against those who try to disrupt perfectly legal activities. Those who oppose such activities, whether it is a race meeting at Aintree or an angling match in Essex, have a perfect right to try to change the law to ban such activities, but no one has the right to wreck lawful activities and disrupt people going about their legitimate business.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking asked about gipsy sites. I shall happily respond to his points in Committee. On animal rights terrorists, we already have sufficient legislation to deal with all forms of terrorism. The Bill provides new powers to deal with disruption and intimidation on private land in the open air.

My right hon. Friend also asked about self defence and the review carried out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. In a written reply on 14 December, my right hon. and learned Friend said:

"I am satisfied that the individual should always be able to defend himself, his family and his property, as long as he only uses force that is both reasonable and necessary. I am not currently persuaded that there is a need to change the law. However, I intend to study the Law Commission's recent report on offences against the person very carefully and will be interested in the public reaction to its recommendations."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 537.]

The Bill makes important changes to our criminal justice procedures. The most significant change that has been commented on by hon. Members tonight is the proposal to curtail the so-called right to silence. It is nonsense for the Opposition to suggest that that would endanger fundamental civil liberties, as the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) rightly pointed out. As the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) rightly said, the defendant will still be able to choose whether to answer police questions or to give evidence in court. All we propose is the removal of the artificial restriction that prevents a court from drawing its own conclusions from all the facts of the case, including what the defendant has to say for himself. If someone decides to keep quiet until the day of trial and then offers an explanation that he could perfectly well have given to the police, why should not the court know that and draw its own conclusions? The present rules are a charter for experienced crooks.

The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) let the cat out of the bag. We now know why Labour is in a pickle. It knows that even the poll in *The Independent* showed that over 88 per cent. of the public, and I think 87 per cent. of Labour supporters, supported the Home Secretary giving new powers to the police. The Opposition know that they cannot vote against the Bill, but nor can they offend their pressure and lobby groups. They normally jump through hoops to lap up their trendy theories.

The House has had the ridiculous spectacle of the neutral Her Majesty's loyal Opposition. It reminded me of a sheep on the fells with its horns stuck in a fence. It cannot go forward and it cannot go back, it cannot turn left and it will not turn right. It can only stay stuck, noisily bleating and waiting for something to turn up.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield has said in the past that the 27 measures announced by the Home Secretary were gimmicks. In the debate today he said that there was just one gimmick—our proposal to prevent those charged with rape, manslaughter or murder and who have a previous conviction for those offences from getting bail. He said that such cases are rare. Of course they are rare, but just one rape or one murder committed by someone who has already been convicted of those crimes is one too many. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is a gimmick, he should think again and think of the victims and say that he is wrong. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) that we will implement his Act as soon as possible.

Part VII of the Bill contains important changes to the law on pornography. They were welcomed by my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge, for Ryedale and for Congleton and by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton that Governments have traditionally held that a change in the legal definition of obscenity should be a matter for the conscience of hon. Members. However, we have made it clear that we are prepared to help any attempt to change the law, provided it seems to us to be workable, likely to command support and be an improvement on the existing definition. I look forward to my hon. Friend's proposals.

The Bill is a key part of our strategy to attack crime, but it should be considered alongside all the other actions that we are taking to make life more difficult for criminals and easier for law-abiding citizens. We are reforming the police service, making sure that it is better managed and organised. We are introducing performance pay. Two measures alone—the abolition of two middle ranks and cutting paperwork—could, over time, free the equivalent of about 5,000 officers for front-line work. We want to make sure that for the rest of this decade and into the next century we have the most effective and efficient police service possible.

The Bill also comes on top of what we have done in the past 14 years to ensure a tough response to crime. Crime prevention schemes have been pioneered and spread across the country.

The Opposition's attack on the Government has been completely hollow, and that just about sums up Labour's attitude to law breaking. The Opposition's only offering is a hollow response, and their response to the Bill has been pathetic. The Bill seeks fundamental changes, but the Opposition cannot decide whether to support them. On changes to bail, they just do not know; on longer sentences for criminals, they just do not know; on more powers for the police to deal with terrorists, they just do not know. Well, the police and the public know. They know that they want those changes, and they know that we shall make them. They also know that they can never trust the Labour party—a party that is soft on crime and soft on criminals.

The Bill introduces tough measures right across the board. It gives the police the powers that they need to catch criminals, and the courts the power to punish them. It gives the public the protection that they want and deserve. It represents justice for victims, punishment for criminals, and protection for the public. Those principles run right through the Bill, and that is why my hon. Friends should join me in the Lobby tonight.

Question put, That the amendment be made:——

The House divided: Ayes 275, Noes 319.

Division No. 58] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*

Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.)

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill ("the Bill"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State—
  (a) for making grants—
  (i) in connection with measures intended to prevent crime or reduce the fear of crime;
  (ii) towards security costs incurred in relation to party conferences in Great Britain;
  (b) for making payments under contracts made by him with other persons for the provision by those other persons of premises, services or the discharge of functions for or in relation to offenders and other persons;
  (c) in respect of administrative expenses incurred by him under the Act;
  (d) for defraying the expenses of members of lay panels of observers charged with duties in relation to offenders transported or held in pursuance of escort arrangements made by him under the Act; and
(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money provided by Parliament.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.18 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We should not let this motion be passed on the nod. Although the sums contained in the clause dealing with the financial effects of the Bill are not astronomical, some questions should be asked. For a start, clauses 1 to 15 relate to the design and building of secure training centres. It is made clear that no cost is expected because such centres are to be built by the private sector. However, it is made clear also that the costs in relation to the provision of secure training centres and the cost of care in the community will be about £30 million minimum.

That is not a sum that we can lightly ignore and I would like the Minister to give me the information as to what proportion of the estimated £30 million a year—the paragraph makes it clear that it is in excess of that amount —will be devoted to servicing the private construction of the secure training centres. Clearly, the private sector will build secure training centres not because of its concern for the huge rise in crime levels under the Conservative Government but because the investment will have some sort of return.

I assume that the return will be paid for from the £30 million mentioned in the first paragraph, dealing with clauses 1 to 15 under the financial effects of the Bill. We should know what sort of investment and reward there will be in private secure training centres. Will it be calculated on the basis of an annual return of, say, 5, 6 or 7 per cent.? What proportion of the £30 million-plus per year which is authorised in the money resolution will be paid to the private sector by the taxpayer?

As the Government are placing such emphasis not only on clauses 1 to 15 but on others, I should have thought that they would provide the House with information about such expenditure. We should know just how much of the taxpayer's money authorised under the money resolution is available as rich pickings for the private sector.

I do not want to stray down different roads, but there have been controversial revelations about abuse of legislation by wealthy Tory Members of Parliament, and we want to see that the expenditure is authorised by the House in as cast iron a way as possible. We expect the Government to have made very precise calculations so that they can place them before the House before we agree to the money resolution.

My second point relates to clauses 52 and 53, which deal with aggravated trespass. This is a new set of powers and I understand perfectly well that the Government may have some difficulty in making precise calculations. In the paragraph they say that it is difficult to predict the costs and that the best available estimate, apparently, will be of the order of £300,000. What concerns me is the fact that—there is universal agreement about this—police forces are badly stretched and very much in need of every possible allocation of money to stem the rising tide of Tory crime.

Under clauses 52 and 53, expenditure is estimated at around £300,000, but it could be more and is likely to be more. Those powers have never been exercisable by the police before and the costs will come out of existing resources. It is expected that they are to be met from existing resources. What will happen under the money resolution?

The West Yorkshire police authority needs to put more bobbies on the beat, but the allocation of resources to it by central Government does not permit that. The cuts in central Government funding prevent the police having a presence on the streets, the highways and byways and the estates.

If the police say to the Minister that the exercise of the powers has been such that expenditure cannot be contained within the estimates of the Home Office because the Home Office has got it wrong—that would come as no great shock—will he use his powers to give them an additional grant so that other areas are not deprived of police services because of that Home Office miscalculation? It would be ironic if that happened.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is possible to get the money needed because in 1984, during the miners' strike, the Government decided that they needed more police, on more overtime, in all the coalfield areas. The police arrested 9,000 miners. That cost a small fortune, but the Government found the money. Now the Government are refusing the Labour-controlled Derbyshire county council an extra 112 police officers to combat crime. Finding the money is a matter of political will. The Government did it before when it served their purpose to try to smash the National Union of Mineworkers. They could do it now.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. I am asking the Minister whether the additional finances will be available and authorised under the money resolution. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is sitting below the Gangway, will recall that he brought a money resolution before the House and some of us raised some criticisms of it, which he brushed aside. Later on, he had to come back to the House for another money resolution because some of the activities resulting from the Bill were not covered by the first one. As I recall, he also served in the Home Office, which is now the subject of the money resolution.

That is why I am asking the Minister to assure us first that any additional funds which should be paid to police

authorities under that clause are authorised and secondly that he will provide the political will so that police forces are not handicapped by these additional responsibilities.

On clauses 54 and 55, which deal with mass trespass, the Home Office draftsmen use the same phraseology. They cannot make an accurate estimate because it is difficult to estimate the number of additional operations that might be mounted, but they say that the combined cost of 10 operations per annum is expected to be about £300,000. That is £600,000 in two parts of the Bill which will be expected to come from existing resources.

Will the funding of the provisions on mass trespass come from own resources or additional funding? I see here my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) and for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), who were with me at a meeting of the West Yorkshire police authority. It was said that resources for the police authority are stretched to the utmost and that it needs more money, rather than more obligations which will simply make policing much less effective.

I know that others wish to speak—I welcome proper examination and deliberation of money motions and I hope that this new trend will continue—but I wish to refer to the provision for contracting out prison services in England, Wales and Scotland and prisoner escorts in Northern Ireland. The Government say that this will introduce competition, thus reducing costs in the long run. I find that surprising. Does the motion cover the possibility of additional expenditure?

If those services are contracted out, will the prison officers and prisoner escorts who are currently employed —and who, so far as I know, are doing a perfectly good job —be made redundant? If so, will redundancy payments be made? Given the smug scale suggested by the paragraphs covering clauses 69 to 77, 78 to 93 and 94 to 101, there may well be a significant number of redundancies.

Will people who are currently doing routine, decent, law-abiding jobs be put on the scrap heap, or will they receive the sort of redundancy pay that Ministers have received—under House of Commons legislation—when they have been kicked out of the Government for whatever reason? Whether they have been kicked out because their faces do not fit any more, because they have fallen out with the Prime Minister or because they have not accurately revealed the background of relationships in which they have indulged, they have received money.

The motion should have provided that those who are made redundant as a result of the Government's ideological obsession with sacking people in the public service and handing over the work to their friends in the private sector should receive adequate compensation and not just the legal minimum. If they are to be kicked out, why should the Government not give them a fair deal? Why should the Government not give them enhanced redundancy pay to ensure that they can deal with the uphill task of finding a new job in difficult circumstances? I want the Minister to give a guarantee that there will be no redundancies: the motion would then not need to cover the question of extra payments.

If people are made redundant, however, they will have a job finding new employment. Beneath this facade—which will cost between £40 million and £50 million a year, and which we are being asked to authorise—is the underlying corruption: the Government's failure to produce an economic policy that will provide full employment. Study after study now demonstrates the clear link between the cancer of unemployment and the rising tide of crime—and the Government have made no effort to solve that problem.

10.33 pm

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): None of the Government's legislation has ever been backed by sufficient money to make it workable or effective. Clauses 1 to 15 deal with the financial consequences of providing secure training places. Is the Minister aware of the current cost of secure accommodation? It costs approximately £2,000 a week per child. At the end of March 1992, 238 children were in secure accommodation, at a cost of £2,000 a week: the total cost was nearly £25 million a year.

The cornerstone of the Government's fight against juvenile crime is plainly to increase the number of children in secure accommodation/training centres. Doubling the number of children in secure training centres will cost about £50 million a year. That is far in excess of the £30 million that the Government say will cover the costs of secure training centres. I refer here to the revenue costs, not the capital costs; the private sector may build the centres, but someone will have to pay for the places in them. And the private sector is not averse to putting the revenue costs sky high so as to recoup the capital costs incurred.

Will the Government regulate the revenue costs of these centres? If not, they will find themselves paying a mammoth bill to the private sector for secure places. The same thing happens in the private rented sector—landlords charge far more than the market rents assessed by the rent officers, and the taxpayers pick up the bill. Again and again, public money is ploughed into the private sector. The private sector is bleeding the public services dry, and the same will happen again with this legislation.

Who will pay for after-care and supervision? After-care demands social work time and often it demands special educational provision, because these young people frequently cannot be accommodated in local schools. Such extra provision is costly. Will local authorities have the money to pay for it? We should remember that the Government have in effect capped every local authority in the land, so what authorities spend on one item, they cannot spend on another. Will this legislation further bleed local authorities of their finance so that they cannot put money into genuinely needed preventive measures to stop the cycle—

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am interested in the line that my hon. Friend is taking. As I read the Bill, the Government are saying that they are not too sure how much is involved. They give a rough estimate of £30 million, but my hon. Friend suggests that they do not intend to pay all the costs. Surely the Minister intends to meet all the costs implicit in the range of services and after-care that will be involved. It would be scandalous if the Minister did not intend to provide all the necessary finance for the implications, as well as the direct costs, of this Bill.

Ms Coffey: My hon. Friend hits the nail on the head. At present, local authorities pay for secure accommodation. In Stockport there are four children in such accommodation, at a cost to the social services budget of £500,000 a year. Surely the Minister does not expect local authorities to

[Ms Coffey]

carry such costs. I hope that the Home Office will pay the full costs of providing training places. I hope for an assurance to that effect from the Minister tonight.

Perhaps the figures that the Minister has provided are naive; perhaps not. Perhaps this is just the latest example of a recurring phenomenon: legislation burdening local authorities with more and more costs. I remind the Minister that cost cutting has already led to valuable crime prevention measures not being introduced. Because of the overwhelming rise in the tide of crime, the police can no longer put time into crime prevention activities, or speak to informal groups, or get involved in the valuable work of drawing the community into a partnership with them. Owing to a lack of money, street lighting programmes, which the evidence shows reduce both crime and the fear of crime, have been stopped by many local authorities.

I was horrified to learn of the consequences of another cost-cutting exercise. I have been told that, from time to time, the prison service considers it financially inappropriate to produce a prisoner at court. There was a recent example when a prison outside Greater Manchester considered that it was not cost-effective to produce a defendant at court because the likely sentence would not materially affect the sentence that he was currently serving. Clearly, the prison was exercising a judgment about justice on cost-cutting grounds.

We have heard today about the Government's commitment to justice and to bringing criminals to book for the offences which they commit. Do they not understand that their own legislation and meanness, and their failure and refusal to put resources into the criminal justice system, have caused the crime which is rampant on our streets? It is not acceptable for the prison service to make a judgment that somebody should not be produced at court because of the cost. People should appear at court to be charged with the offences they commit, and the public are concerned about that.

Never mind the justice system—half the offences committed are not detected, and people are not charged. That is not surprising if the prison service will not take them to court because it is concerned about the cost. The Government must seriously look at the money that they are prepared to provide, and they must give the House an assurance that they will provide finance for secure training centres for after-care and the supervision for preventive measures.

The legislation will mean that money will be taken out of the preventive services. I would hate to see local authorities being unable to provide pre-school education or nursery education because they had to provide extra costs for special education for young offenders, necessary though that may be. Everybody knows that there is a link between pre-school and nursery education and later offending. A child's failure within the education system is a significant factor in his later patterns of behaviour.

If we had universal education for the under-fives—I believe that the Prime Minister supports that—we would have fewer children failing in the system, and fewer children who were being disruptive as young offenders. If the legislation goes through, and if the Government do not provide the money to local authorities, we will not see the preventive measures which are necessary. I ask the Minister again for assurances on who is providing the costs for training centres.

10.43 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): My remarks will follow along the same lines as the speech of the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) but will relate to a part of the country that I know well.

Mr. Skinner: Tower Hamlets?

Mr. Hughes: I have spent rather a lot of time dealing with Tower Hamlets in recent months, but tonight I shall concentrate on Southwark, which in many respects has some of the same attributes as Stockport.

I want to relate specifically to the part of the money resolution which allows the Chancellor or the Financial Secretary to pay money provided by us for making grants specifically

"in connection with measures intended to prevent crime or reduce the fear of crime."

I intended to cite the figures, but in tonight's edition of the *Evening Standard* there is a small news item which states that 14 boroughs in London are among the poorest in the country. The item quotes a survey carried out by the Association of London Authorities which shows that the borough of Southwark is the second most deprived borough in England. It also shows that under the new local government allocations for the coming financial year the borough's funding will be reduced by 1·4 per cent. to £3·5 million. I should add in fairness that the article makes a similar point about other local authorities, and Newham is the local authority at the top of the list.

I represent one third of the borough of Southwark. One of the things which a borough such as ours suffers from as part of its deprivation is high unemployment. It gives me no pleasure to represent a borough with one of the 10 highest unemployment rates in the United Kingdom. The Government always contend that crime and unemployment are not related, but it does not look that way to people who live in areas where there is high unemployment and who see from the figures that there is a high incidence of crime.

On Friday 7 January another study, which was reported in *The Guardian* and carried out by Cambridge economist David Dickinson, suggested—it is not the first survey to do so—that rising unemployment means rising burglary, which by definition clearly means rising crime.

The local community, in collaboration with the police——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he seems to be going rather wide of the money order. He must relate his remarks more closely to it.

Mr. Hughes: I hope that you will understand that I am not going wide of the subject, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I am seeking to make a bid for money for Southwark for schemes to reduce the fear of crime and to prevent crime. I was merely explaining why that is especially important in a borough such as ours because we have such high crime levels and such high unemployment. That was the background, but it is also right to concentrate on the foreground and on the schemes that I have in mind.

Mr. Michael: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it should be our aspiration not to put things right in the odd borough here and there but to plan comprehensively for safer communities in every town and city and in every part of every city in England and Wales?

Mr. Hughes: Of course it should. The hon. Gentleman knows that I would agree with that, but he should also understand that I am speaking in support of my community, which has particularly high unemployment and crime levels.

I am asking the Minister to deal with a request that comes not only from me but from the community consultative group of the Metropolitan police, the local authority and the other forums that have been set up. We face the prospect that significant amounts of funding will be withdrawn from Southwark. The money for the North Peckham task force is to be withdrawn at the end of March. We had a lock-fitting service for pensioners, disabled people, single parents and victims of crimes—3,000 locks have been fitted in three years—but that service will come to an end.

Under the money order, the Government have the power to grant money to reduce the fear of crime and to prevent crime. One obvious way to do that must be by enabling people to have securely locked homes and by protecting the victims of crime. The figures clearly suggest that about 80 per cent. of crimes are committed where there has previously been a crime. Someone burgles a house, looks around and goes back for more, so the victims of crime are the most vulnerable. We cannot have a situation in which a borough with a particularly high crime rate and fear of crime does not get the money that it needs.

I should be grateful if the Minister could tell us whether, if this provision is approved by the House, Southwark's high crime level and the fear of crime there will be recognised. Will money be granted to reimburse the Metropolitan police, who are about to carry out a £10,000 survey, which they are paying for, to detect the causes of the fear of crime? Will he ensure that boroughs such as mine and the police do not end up out of pocket? They have to put more of their resources into our area, but that is not reflected in the assessed requirements of a community such as mine.

One of the schemes that has been set up is a three-month pilot project for personal alarms in the homes of victims of violent crime who are still at risk from their attackers, whether the attacks involve domestic violence, racial harassment or other crime. If that pilot project is seen to work, as many people believe that it will be, will it and similar projects be able to be the subject of a bid under the Bill and under the money resolution? Will they allow the funding of such initiatives, which will hugely improve the quality of life in inner-city boroughs such as mine? It is no use the Government dealing with generalities unless they also ensure that things are fair area by area, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) argued. On behalf of the people of Southwark and the people of Bermondsey, I want to know whether we shall get some money specifically to achieve the objectives of the money resolution—to reduce the fear of crime and to prevent the amount of crime from which many of my constituents now suffer.

10.50 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I shall be brief because I realise that other hon. Members wish to speak and that we are short of time. I shall refer to two points on the money resolution, both of which have been referred to by previous speakers. The first concerns clauses 1 to 15, and the design and build of secure training centres and their operation being put out to private tender—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but there are too many private conversations taking place—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—on both sides of the House: I repeat, on both sides of the House.

Mr. Gerrard: Leaving aside the issue of who in the private sector will be interested in taking on such work and why, it is not just the design and build, but the operation that is being put out to tender. I recall what happened when a decision was made, under money resolutions, to put out to private tender the operation of prisons.

A consequence is that, when hon. Members try to obtain information about what is happening inside those prisons, they are told, "You cannot have that information. It is the subject of commercial confidentiality. Because it has been put out to tender, it is now commercially confidential." Can the Minister tell us whether we shall face exactly the same problems when trying to find out what is going on in the secure training centres when they are being operated by a private tenderer?

The other issue is grants, to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred. The point has been made many times about the need for measures to prevent crime. The power for grants to reduce the fear of crime is contained in clause 114. I should include within that the making of grants for victim support schemes. At present, we have a victim support scheme that rests on volunteers, which is funded to the tune of £10 million a year.

The Minister should consider seriously whether it is time for us to look to much more professionally run and professionally funded victim support schemes, especially schemes that can give long-term advice to people, such as the families of murder victims, who need it. How much money, specifically, will be made available?

The explanatory and financial memorandum outlines the financial effects of the Bill and concludes:

"No other provisions of the Bill are expected to have significant financial effects."

Clause 114 relates to the provision of grants to prevent crime and to reduce the fear of it, but it is not mentioned under the section dealing with the Bill's financial effects. Can we therefore assume that that clause will not have any significant financial effect and that no significant money will be found under the Bill to prevent crime and to reduce the fear of it?

10.54 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I am aware of the time constraint, so I will be extremely brief.

I spent election day 1992 waiting for the police to come to investigate a burglary at my constituency home. Since then, I have been the victim of crime seven times. I have suffered two other burglaries, two car thefts and three instances of vandalism. I would therefore greatly welcome

[Mr. John Gunnell]

any measures that contained crime, given that I have suffered so much as a victim of it in the short time since I was elected.

Has sufficient money been provided under the Bill to finance the measures necessary to cope with young people? The Government have not told us why the arrangement in Leeds, whereby a certain capital sum was accepted to cover an extra 10 secure places, has not been followed up. Why are Ministers unwilling to come clean on the fact that the bed bureau in Leeds has revealed that there is a grave shortage of local authority secure accommodation? Will money be made available to provide the necessary local accommodation? That is a major issue.

Mr. Michael: I notice that the Minister is silent. He is even yawning, because he does not seem to be interested in such issues. According to the figures in the money resolution, it appears that there will be only just enough money, at a minimum level, to cover the servicing of the capital costs—the payment of interest—plus running costs, also a minimum level, for ordinary secure accommondation. No adequate provision has been made for profit on top of those costs. Therefore, no money will be available to cover all the other issues contained in the Bill. The Minister should come clean and answer my hon. Friend's question. He should also say whether what I have said is an accurate calculation.

Mr. Gunnell: It is obvious that the clauses on trespass will create a new class of law breakers. The time and resources that the police will devote to dealing with them will therefore detract from the current use of police resources.

Under clause 61, the number of genuine camping sites for gipsies will be reduced. I helped to provide the capital for two such sites, but they will no longer receive any Government grant towards their maintenance. That means that fewer sites will be available and that those who use them will lose their current stability. They will be found parking illegally because of that shortage of legal sites, and will be moved on by the police. That often creates conditions that are distressing to local residents, and I am afraid that the incidence of such illegal parking is bound to increase, because those who have travelled for years will be unable to find a genuine site on which to stay.

Clause 76(2)(b) provides for private contracting for prison ships. Can the Minister tell me what discussions led to the introduction of that clause? Clearly, we would not be providing for a prison ship unless there was some definitive proposal in mind. One would like to know what sums of money are being talked about for contracting out in such an arrangement.

Evidence from abroad suggests that prison ships are not that secure. In view of the record of the private sector so far in fulfilling the remit given to it by the Home Office, an insecure prison ship would be a recipe for great distress for those who lived anywhere near the coastline where the ship was moored. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what discussions have taken place, what costs have been spoken of and what are the value-for-money implications of a prison ship as opposed to other forms of centre.

11 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I have listened carefully to this short debate, and I shall respond in a few moments to the particular points raised by hon. Members. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is a big piece of legislation. It takes forward most of the 27 measures that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced at the conference in October. It underlines the Government's commitment to take firm action against crime and to protect the public. As one would expect from such a large and significant package of measures, and as the money resolution makes clear, the Bill will create new charges on public funds.

The money resolution makes it clear that some of the provisions in the Bill will, in effect, be delivered by the private sector entering into a contractual relationship with the Government. We are proud of the link that is developing between the public and the private sectors, and there is no reason why the two should not work together closely to their mutual benefit.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: I have one minute left to answer the debate; I shall not give way.

There are certainly lessons that the public sector can learn from the private sector in terms of providing services efficiently, effectively and economically. Equally, there is much that the private sector can learn from the public sector.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked about secure training centres. Those centres and related services will be provided after a period of competitive tendering. Of course we cannot declare in advance our precise estimates of the likely contract cost. The financial memorandum to the Bill states the overall cost, including supervision in the community following the secure part of the order. We recognise that the cost is likely to be just in excess of £30 million.

The framework for involving providers will comply to contracts. The contracts will be entered into following a tendering process between the Home Office and a private sector company for the design, construction, financing, operation and maintenance of the centre. On the basis of that contract——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business):—*

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 111.

Division No. 59] **[11.02 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Aitken, Jonathan	Baldry, Tony
Alexander, Richard	Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*	Bates, Michael
Alton, David	Batiste, Spencer
Amess, David	Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Ancram, Michael	Bellingham, Henry
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bendall, Vivian
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Beresford, Sir Paul
Aspinwall, Jack	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Atkins, Robert	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Body, Sir Richard
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas

Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob

Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bill Olner and
Mr. George Mudie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill ("the Bill"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State—
  (a) for making grants—
  (i) in connection with measures intended to prevent crime or reduce the fear of crime;
  (ii) towards security costs incurred in relation to party conferences in Great Britain;
  (b) for making payments under contracts made by him with other persons for the provision by those other persons of premises, services or the discharge of functions for or in relation to offenders and other persons;
  (c) in respect of administrative expenses incurred by him under the Act;
  (d) for defraying the expenses of members of lay panels of observers charged with duties in relation to offenders transported or held in pursuance of escort arrangements made by him under the Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money provided by Parliament.

Non-Domestic Rating Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

11.15 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

The Non-Domestic Rating Bill includes provision that requires the Secretary of State to make good the reductions in contributions paid by authorities into the non-domestic rating pool arising from changes made by the Bill. The Bill would directly reduce business rate payments in 1994-95 by limiting the increases for properties under the non-domestic rating transitional arrangements for those years.

Properties that, without those measures, would face increases of as much as 20 per cent. in real terms would now pay no more than 10 per cent. extra after allowing for inflation. Smaller properties that would otherwise face real increases of as much as 15 per cent. would have their increases limited to 7·5 per cent. in real terms. Small part domestic and part non-domestic property would face no real rate increases next year.

Clearly those measures reduce the income that would otherwise have been available to the pool of business rates, and the cost of making good the shortfall in the non-domestic rating pool for England is estimated to be about £90 million in 1994-95. In Wales, which has a separate pooling arrangement, the cost would be about £5 million. The Bill would require the Secretaries of State to add those sums to the amounts paid to billing authorities out of the non-domestic rating pool for their respective countries in 1995-96.

The Government already have powers under existing legislation to introduce fresh transitional arrangements to phase in changes in rates liability brought about by the 1995 and subsequent revaluations. We shall need to consider carefully whether and how to use those powers once firm information on the likely effect of the 1995 revaluation becomes available in the spring. We shall certainly use the powers if the circumstances warrant. However, the Bill would allow us greater flexibility in making any such arrangement.

In particular, it would enable the Government to make arrangements that were not self-financing. We would therefore be able to devise rules that would reduce the increases in the rates burden for businesses adversely affected by that revaluation, without requiring other businesses to pay more. If we chose to do that, we should be able to make up the loss of rates yield by making further Exchequer contributions to the non-domestic rating pools in subsequent years.

We would decide whether or when to exercise those powers in the light of the economic circumstances of the time. The regulations governing the transitional arrangements are subject to the approval of both Houses of Parliament, so any decision on the extent of any Government subsidy for the arrangement would be subject to further parliamentary scrutiny at the time, by affirmative resolution. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Before the House is an unusual and, I believe, unacceptable procedure. We are being asked to approve a money resolution—in other words, to approve the amount of money that will be spent for purposes arising out of proposed legislation—before the House has had an opportunity to consider in principle, on Second Reading, the contents of the Bill concerned. Such a procedure makes an outrageous presumption about the intentions of the House, amounting to a contempt of the House.

If I were a question master and I asked the House when such a procedure was last used, I believe that I would have to give out a lot of first prizes. It will come as no surprise to hon. Members on both sides of the House that the only other occasion on which this procedure has been used in the past five years was during our proceedings on the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991. That was the last time that the Conservative Government were presumptuous enough to come to the House with a money resolution before hearing hon. Members' views on the principles involved. That tells the House a lot, not only about some of the Government's intentions in the Bill, which will be discussed later this week, but about the current state of the Government in general.

The House will recall the procedure that was adopted last year. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that it was a sweetheart agreement. It was not a sweetheart agreement. It was an understanding between hon. Members on both sides of the House about how a matter affecting many businesses throughout the country could be dealt with in a reasonable, objective and reasonably sensitive way.

The Second Reading of last year's Bill, which froze business rate increases, was dealt with in late April. A fortnight later—after people had had the opportunity to consider the general principles involved—the rest of the stages of the Bill were dealt with on the Floor of the House. That was acceptable to everyone concerned. Hon. Members who wished to receive representations from interested bodies were able to do so, and to make those views known to the House. The Bill could then be expedited. That was a reasonably acceptable way of dealing with such business.

I may say that the Opposition have no argument with the Government about the general timing of such debates. In previous years, Bills limiting the increase in rates for business properties were introduced after the Budget—in May or June. The problem was that the effect of such legislation had to be retrospective so councils had to adjust their business rate bills and many businesses up and down the country could not make cost projections because they did not know what business rate liability they might face. I am not defending that structure; that was not the best way in which to conduct business.

Yet what the Government are doing tonight—and I believe what they are to do later this week—is equally unacceptable. They are asking the House to curtail a parliamentary procedure. The Government will try to get the House to give the Bill a Second Reading tomorrow evening—and I believe that that may be the appropriate time for a Second Reading debate. What is not appropriate is what the Government intend to do after that, which is to curtail parliamentary procedures—not giving democracy a chance in the House—by forcing through the rest of the Bill at the beginning of January. Presumably we will hear arguments later today, and almost certainly tomorrow, that that is necessary in order to counteract the difficulties that arose last year because the legislation had to be retrospective.

What the Government propose is not acceptable and is not a practical solution to the problem. It might have been practical to consider Second Reading tomorrow and then to deal with the issues on the Floor of the House or in Committee—that matter could have been subject to discussion. I should have thought that it would not have been beyond the ability of the House and the other place to have expedited all the business by the end of February or March and to have given Royal Assent to any necessary legislation. But that is not what the Government propose and that is not their intention in the money resolution.

This year's procedure is not so acceptable as that adopted last year. There are other reasons—in addition to those that I have sought to draw to the attention of the House—why the Government's procedure is unacceptable. This year's Bill is not as straightforward as last year's was. Last year's Bill basically said that many businesses throughout the country face enormous economic problems because of the recession and cannot cope with the full effect of the rates increases that they face. With the Opposition's support, the Government said that there should be an abatement to help those businesses and that the increases should be restricted to the level of inflation. That fairly straightforward Bill only affected the position last year.

This year's Bill is quite different. There is no freeze in this Bill. As the Minister said, even with the Government's abatement, some businesses will still face increases in their business rates of up to 10 per cent. That is a major difference between last year's Bill and this year's Bill.

This year's Bill incorporates a complete change in principle for the future determination of business rates. Last year and in the previous year, the Government said that some businesses should be given relief on their business rates, but that where that relief was given the Government would top up the aggregate rating pool so that the amount of money allocated to local authorities—and I will not argue whether that was the right amount—would still be given to the local authorities. That provision was included in regulations that came before this House.

When the Non-Domestic Rating Bill receives its Second Reading tomorrow, it will be clear that the clauses that cover the provisions to which I have just referred will no longer apply. It will be entirely at the Government's discretion to decide whether any transitional relief will be given to businesses in 1995. We all have businesses in our constituencies. Many of our constituencies will tell us that their business premises will be revalued for 1995. Unless there is some transitional provision, they may face substantial hikes in their business rates.

The problem will not go away. A future Government of any colour will have to consider the transitional arrangements for changes in business rates. The difference between this year's Bill and earlier legislation is not just that there is no commitment that that will be done. Even if the commitment is given and businesses receive relief, there is no requirement in future for the Government to top up the business rate pool. Therefore, the total amount of money allocated to local authorities could be reduced substantially. That is a major change and departure from the legislation which has been considered in this House over recent years and which has been accepted to a degree by businesses.

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

There are several procedural problems in relation to the money resolution and the subsequent stages of the legislation. As I have said, the House will be asked to vote on financial matters that will depend on discussions on structures that have not yet taken place. Hon. Members will be asked to decide whether the Government have allocated an appropriate amount of money for the Bill. Hon. Members are being asked to make that decision without knowing the future structure and whether the Secretary of State will make good losses to the aggregate rating pool that arise from the transitional relief that is provided.

When making a judgment on this year's legislation and when deciding whether the amount of relief given to businesses this year is appropriate, many hon. Members will want to make that judgment in the context of what is happening this year and in relation to what will happen to businesses in their constituencies in future. That will depend very much on our discussions of the principles of the Bill on Second Reading. It is wrong of the Government to ask Conservative Members to make a decision before they have had a chance to express their strong views or those held by their constituents.

We should address the costs of the changes that might take place. Interested parties may want to ask the Secretary of State many questions about the Bill and those questions may have major implications for the costs of the legislation. The business community will want to make representations. It is unreasonable and unacceptable that the business community will have no opportunity after Second Reading to make its views known to hon. Members or to make representations about amendments or changes to the Bill. That is unacceptable when, in 1993, 57,000 businesses went bankrupt, compared with 28,000 in 1990. A serious situation is affecting businesses. Many businesses will want to consider whether that 50 per cent. relief is acceptable in the context of the climate that they face.

Many people in the business community will want to know the regional impact of the Government's proposals and which parts of the country, which industries and which aspects of commerce will be the winners and which will be the losers. Many businesses will want to know the effects on different businesses. Many speculative representations have been made to me, and many businesses throughout the country are extremely concerned about the impact upon them. They consider the possible impacts on industrial and commercial premises. I have received many representations from companies in the retail sector, especially in the south, which are extremely concerned about the impact on their business.

All such businesses, in a democratic parliamentary system, have the right to make known their views before legislation is dealt with in detail. They do not even have the chance to consider the principles involved on Second Reading before hon. Members decide the amount of money involved. That will not be satisfactory to organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry which have always had firm views on business rating. They would want to make known their representations on many of the details in the Bill. In procedural terms, organisations such as the Institute of Directors will not find acceptable what the Government propose. I have received representations from that institute also, but at the moment they seem to have escaped me. Howeve, I suspect that there will be many other opportunities during our considerion of the Bill for the important views of the Institute of Directors to be made known. Bearing in mind the time, it is just as well that I was not immediately able to put my hands on the views of the Institute of Directors.

However, the House will be pleased to know that I have before me the views of two typical chambers of commerce which have very firm views on this important matter which affects their affiliates and businesses in their communities. There are many other chambers of commerce that I could have chosen, but, for the purposes of this debate, I refer to only one, Southampton chamber of commerce, and an affiliated organisation called Lyon Pilcher, chartered accountants. A representative of that firm chaired the business rates sub-committee of Southampton chamber of commerce. That firm wrote to me on 6 January to make known some of its strongly held views about this matter. The letter has a strong bearing on the debate. I shall quote briefly——

Mr. Curry: Read it all.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister is urging me to quote the whole letter, but I am much more restrained than that. I shall restrict myself to the salient points of the letter. If the Minister cares to tempt me on another occasion this week, I might be able to oblige.

That firm of chartered accountants in Southampton says:

"The revaluation in 1990 produced greater increases in gross rateable values in the South than in other parts of the country. The abolition of rating boundaries by the NNDR has meant that the actual rates paid by properties in the South have increased significantly (particularly in the Retail sector) in order to pay for the downward movement in other parts of the country."

In other words, that chamber of commerce has a much worse deal than many of its counterparts. It continued:

"This has hit the South particularly badly at a time when it was probably suffering the effect of the Recession worse than other parts of the country in any event.

Our Survey indicated that Office and Industrial space in Southampton had not suffered under the NNDR as badly as had Retail."

Those are points that the Southampton chamber of commerce would have wanted to make in the context of whether this year's regulations are acceptable. That is the sort of important representation that bodies have not been able to make, unless by chance they have got in touch with hon. Members. They will not be able to consider the matter in cost terms after hearing what the Government have to say on the principles.

Just to show that there are no common views throughout the country, I shall quote the Barnsley chamber of commerce and industry, which is terse but salient in its view. It says:

"transitional arrangements can be unfair to owners in northerly or depressed areas where rateable values are low, relative to owners in southerly, wealthy areas. Unfortunately, the latter shouted the loudest and to a greater extent got relief."

Clearly, there is no unanimity among the chambers of commerce. Had I had more time, I would have been pleased to inform the House of some of the other differing views. I never believe in having too much of good thing. I am tempted to make another remark on those lines. Those views show that there is strong feeling, and that people have not had the chance to make known their opinions. The

TUC has similar views that it would have liked to make known to the House, after having heard the issues of principle set out in the Second Reading debate.

Local government is another interest group that will be extremely anxious about the contents of the Bill, which will affect all local government. It has a clear interest in the size of the overall rating pool, which is then distributed on a basis that we can sometimes agree, though not always. If there is no guarantee that what is called in technical terms the aggregate external financing limit will take account of the need for the Government to replace moneys that have been lost by relief, local government will be extremely concerned about many of the clauses in the Bill.

In making a judgment about whether this year's limit will be acceptable, local authorities of all colours in all parts of the country will be looking at what the impact will be on their finances in later years because of the other structural parts of the Bill. If there are no guarantees on the aggregate external financing limit or on the size of the rating pool, local government, and indirectly many other people, could suffer seriously because of the impact.

Hon. Members who have taken a keen interest in local government matters will know that last year was a difficult year. Many local authorities have to make deep cuts in their services. Many jobs in local government were lost. There are arguments about how many, but few would deviate from an estimate of 50,000. Most of them were lost because of the reduction in the resources available to local government. This year, the situation is a little better, and there are again estimates of the exact impact of the Government's financial statement on local government. I believe that there will be a debate on that soon. Local government is clear that it will in all likelihood face great difficulties this year.

Like business, local authorities will not have the same view. Among the local government interest groups there will be many differing views because the impact of the Bill will not be the same in all parts of the country and in all types of local government. London boroughs will have a specific view that they will want to put to the House, although they will not be able to do so because of the lack of opportunity to make representations after the Second Reading. Counties and districts will want to make their views known, and they may also have differing views depending on which parts of the country they represent.

Given the differing regional impact of much of the legislation, a wide spectrum of regional organisations will want to make representation about how they expect business rate relief and other proposals in the Bill to affect them. That spectrum will include regional business organisations, regional workers' representatives' organisations and regional local government organisations: they will all want to make their views known.

I believe that the timing of the legislation constitutes an abuse of the House. It prevents representations from being made to the Government before the Committee stage; it prevents many representations from being made to hon. Members on both sides of the House who take a keen interest in the matter and would like to contribute to the debate. There is a presumption that the House can consider the amount of money involved before considering the content and principles of the Bill.

The move deviates from the relatively satisfactory procedure adopted last year. Worst of all, perhaps, it establishes a new pattern of contempt for workable, tried and tested and in my view sensible procedures and for the assumption that it is wise for the House to debate principle before committing itself to expenditure.

This rush is not necessary. It would have been entirely possible to debate Second Reading this week, and to time debate of the money motion appropriately. It would have been entirely possible to begin the Committee stage, either on the Floor of the House or in Standing Committee, two weeks or so after Second Reading and for the House to complete consideration of the Bill in time for Royal Assent to be given before the end of February. That would have been four months earlier than Royal Assent was given to similar legislation last year. Instead, however, we are discussing a motion on a costing that we have still not debated.

I have no doubt that all sorts of bodies around the country will accuse Parliament of acting in undue haste. There will be complaints that organisations have had no time to consult their members before making representations to various interested parties. Inevitably, hon. Members have had to table hurriedly the amendments that they consider necessary to raise points of principle and detail and to request clarification in Committee. I believe that this is an abuse of parliamentary procedure.

11.42 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) describe last year's system as relatively satisfactory. He admitted that, last year, local government sent out one set of bills to commercial ratepayers and then sent out a second set; he forgot to tell the House that that involved a cost to the local authorities—*[Interruption.]* Of course it involved a cost.

Mr. Henderson: I did say that a cost was involved in last year's procedure.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman said that the procedure had been relatively satisfactory. I do not know how he can say that it is relatively satisfactory to indulge in the unnecessary cost involved in sending out two bills when one would suffice. He admitted that a cost to local authorities was involved in sending out two bills when only one should have been sent out.

Moreover, there is a cost to industry in such cases. If an industry receives a statement from the local authority in March saying, "This is what your rates bill will be for the next 12 months," it will plan accordingly. Who knows? If that is higher than the bill that it will eventually have to pay, it may get rid of employees to try to make a workable budget. It certainly will not help that industry to plan if it receives one bill first and another in a few weeks' time. Last year's system was not satisfactory for business, jobs or economic confidence and it was bad for local government, because it involved unnecessary duplication. We had quite a lot of that earlier this evening.

We are also told that the Bill is bad because it does not deal with the consequences of the 1995 revaluation. I do not see how a Minister can be expected to come to the House and deal with those consequences when we do not yet know what the figures will be. We do not know what the reductions in London will be. I suspect that when the 1995 revaluation is handed down, shopkeepers in Hendon will get a reduction. I note that my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) is in his

[Mr. Marshall]

place; I am sure that shopkeepers in his constituency are looking forward to reductions, too. I would have expected a measure of support from the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman for a Bill that reduces the burden on industry by £95 million. That is surely worthy of commendation, not the pettifogging criticisms that we have heard this evening.

We have also been told that there has been no time for representations to be made against the proposal. Has the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North been asleep since 30 November? The proposals were announced in the Budget. I cannot remember, but I do not think that the hon. Gentleman led his troops into the Lobby against the proposals then. Industry has known since 30 November what the proposals were, therefore, and has had nearly seven weeks in which to make representations. I have not received a single representation, and I am sure that very few hon. Members have.

The Bill was published three and a half weeks ago, so there has been longer between publication and Second Reading than is usually granted in the House. This evening, we have listened to a load of synthetic indignation from the Opposition. Having spent many years in local government, including four years as chairman of a finance committee, I can assure the House that what the Bill proposes is for the convenience of local government and of ratepayers, and it is about time Opposition Members admitted as much and stopped engaging in the party games that have been going on late at night in the House for the past few weeks.

11.46 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): I have only one major point to make tonight—to ask the Minister to respond to the question about why the money resolution is necessary at this stage. When the new non-domestic rating system was introduced, a certain number of transitional arrangements had to be included because the revaluation of business premises that had been due to take place every five years since 1973 did not actually take place until 1988. By that time several business premises' valuations had changed remarkably, particularly compared with business premises in other parts of the country.

Because business rates had got so far out of step with one another, certain businesses were then faced with enormous increases, while others were lucky enough to enjoy decreases. Because the increases could, to some extent, be offset against the decreases, there was an opportunity to make the transitional arrangements self-financing. That indeed occurred during the first few years, while the NDR system worked as it was originally supposed to.

The Government then encountered two problems. First, they hit the problems of the recession, when a number of businesses faced the possibility of bankruptcy, not least as a result of large increases in their NDR. The Government were also facing a general election, which they thought they might lose. They therefore changed the transitional arrangements and introduced a system under which all the benefits suddenly accrued to those whose rates were due to decrease, while the increases were not put in place for those whose rates were due to increase. That inevitably caused a problem; it meant that money had to be found from somewhere else.

It is thus purely as a result of the Government's attempt to bribe the electorate before the 1992 election that the need for these money provisions has become evident today, as it has been over the past few years, when the transitional relief has been changed from the original system brought in back in 1990. Does the Minister agree that it is as a result of that change just before the general election that we need the Bill today? Is not he thoroughly ashamed of himself and of the Government, in that their chickens are very much coming home to roost?

11.51 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The aspect of the motion on which I want to comment refers to the issue of the discretion which is available to the Secretary of State. I have no objection to the powers which are given for revaluations, and indeed I have been critical in the past of the Government's failure to order revaluations where appropriate.

I do not object to transitional arrangements. I think it is right and proper in certain circumstances to protect people from substantial changes coming from revaluations. The likelihood is that Secretaries of State, when faced with transitional arrangements, will look more favourably at those arrangements which cap increases in the rates to be paid by businesses. On the other hand, they will not put in restrictions on reductions in rates to be paid by other businesses. The potential impact of the arrangements for the year 1994-95 could be that those transitional arrangements will not be self-funding. That would then leave a gap in the amount of business rate collected which of course would pose serious problems for local authorities.

The motion implies that, while the Secretary of State may have the power to make up a shortfall in any business rates resulting from transitional arrangements which he chooses to bring in, either next year or in the future, he does not have a requirement so to do. There can be a shortfall in funding to local government which has no bearing on the needs as assessed by the Government or of the requirement of local government to provide services.

It is simply down to an arbitrary juxtaposition between the impact of the revaluation, which of itself is determined not by the Government but by independent valuers within the Inland Revenue, and the transitional arrangements which the Secretary of State has brought in. We have to be sure of the intention of the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, the motion does not give us that assurance. It gives a descretion which can be used adversely against local government in the future.

The reality of course is that that could lead next year —if the Government so choose—to a £90 million shortfall in funding for local authorities, and could do so again in the future. If one considers the impact on individual local authorities on that basis, an authority can choose either to cut its services or to put its council tax up to pay for the shortfall. In many authorities, council tax now accounts for only about 20 per cent. of total expenditure. A reduction of 1 per cent. in an authority's income from other sources can lead to a 5 per cent. increase in council tax, because that is a smaller proportion of the total expenditure of that authority.

On the other hand, the cuts can be made. If Sheffield were to have a £90 million shortfall from the Government, £900,000 would have to be deducted from council

expenditure or increased in council tax. By my calculations, £900,000 works out at about 90 home helps, or three or four local primary schools. Such a cut would virtually wipe out nursery education in the city. We are talking about substantial sums of money for local authorities.

The Secretary of State might choose mischievously to try to adjust the year-on-year capping calculations. That would prevent local authorities from increasing council tax to take account of the money that he was not prepared to provide to make up the shortfall in the business rate. That would have a completely arbitrary impact on individual authorities and would bear no relation to their needs or requirements.

I suggest that the Government have got themselves in a substantial mess; it is a mess of their own making. It comes from the long history of the 1980s when the Government tried to control and to regulate local authorities. They tried to control the expenditure of local authorities and have reduced their powers to the extent that the money that local authorities should be raising freely from their community in the form of business rates has been constrained and confined by central Government. They want to dictate exactly how much is collected in the centre and want the power not to pass that money on to local authorities where they decide that a shortfall unrelated to the needs of local authorities should not be made up.

For those reasons, it is important that we seriously question the measure's impact on the services that local authorities provide, because it could be substantial.

11.54 pn.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): It is a great pity that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who claims to have had four years' experience in local government, did not listen much more carefully to the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson). My hon. Friend came to the Dispatch Box very modestly today, but a year ago he predicted that the Government would come back again to this Chamber to introduce another measure to deal with non-domestic rates. He rightly predicted that because of the mess that the Government had made in fashioning an unacceptable policy for non-domestic rates we have had five Bills on the subject during the past four years.

The fundamental question that the Minister failed to answer when he introduced the measure—rather quickly because he did not want to spend a great deal of time explaining the shift of policy—was why there had been such a fundamental shift in policy since his predecessor announced to the House on 13 May last year that the Government would pay full compensation to the fund and that if there were a shortfall it would not be a power but a duty for the Government to make it up. He has failed to answer that question today and I hope that in the brief time available he will give the House the explanation that it deserves.

Hon. Members: Come on, answer.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that the Minister is going to reply to the debate, or is the abuse of procedure going to be doubled? Not only are the proceedings on the Bill to be compressed, but the Minister is not going to reply to the debate at all. It is standard procedure that a Minister answers the points raised. Is he going to keep his feet on the Table and refuse to answer the questions that have been raised during the debate?

Hon. Members: Come on.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The House has a number of conventions, which are elaborated in points of order when Ministers are required to answer. "Erskine May" lays responsibilities on Ministers to respond to questions in the House. It is clear that the Minister has been asked a number of important questions but he has just sat on his backside doing nothing. I wonder whether you can make it clear that you deprecate such an action.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Chair to insist that any hon. Member should speak, so that is not a matter on which I can comment.

Mr. Straw: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, will you confirm that it is standard practice that in a debate of this kind the Minister opens the debate, listens to the matters raised and then answers at the end?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That may happen on a number of occasions but it is not universally so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It may be within your recollection that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) challenged this very Minister when he sought to wind up a debate that he had commenced.

Mr. Cryer: I have been listening to the debate and my hon. Friends have asked several questions about the money resolution but the Minister has not deigned to rise to his feet. One of the matters that my hon. Friends and I are concerned about is the way in which the money resolution has been put before the debate on the Bill and the principle which is established on Second Reading. That is generally the way in which we work; the Second Reading debate lasts all day and we discuss the terms of the Bill, although not in great detail, after which we decide on the terms of the money resolution.

Doing things in this order means that people are denied the opportunity to listen to the extent of the debate. The reality is that many thousands—indeed millions—of people outside do not get copies of the Bill or know the details of its extent and nature. They use the focus of attention that Parliament is to obtain that information. It is true that there may well be only a short gap between the principle being debated and the money resolution being forwarded, none the less it is there. It seems to me to be an outrage that the Minister is not attempting in any shape or form to contribute to the debate. That demonstrates that the Government are treating the House with contempt.

I warn the Minister—[Hon. Members: "Oh."] Yes. There will be shouts. There are procedural means open to Back-Bench Members to use to ensure that if we do not want to listen to Ministers when they are desperate to get to the Dispatch Box, they will not get that opportunity. Ministers treat the House with contempt at their peril. The way in which Ministers have behaved, both in public and in private life, is disgraceful. There are already victims in a minority of instances. The whole tide of arrogant indifference to the democratic processes——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 59.

Division No. 60] **[12.00 midnight**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*

Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mudie, George
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Kevin Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Jacques Arnold be discharged from the Administration Committee and Mr. Iain Duncan Smith be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Thornaby-on-Tees

12.12 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I beg leave to present this petition on behalf of the townspeople of Thonaby-on-Tees in my constituency. Thornaby is a town comprising 24,000 people. I estimate that the petition contains about 6,000 signatures. The petition declares:

that Thornaby is not a postal town and is to become part of the new Unitary Authority of Stockton Borough; that for cultural and ceremonial purposes Thornaby, being south of the River Tees is to revert to North Yorkshire; and that Thornaby should not be addressed as "Stockton, County Durham".

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons declare Thornaby-on-Tees a postal Town in its own right, thus giving its citizens the equal and official right already enjoyed by their fellow citizens in the other Towns of Stockton Borough to give their own town's name as their address and to establish a Town Council so that the Town maintains its identity in spite of being part of Stockton Borough.

I hope that the petition will in due course be given careful and sympathetic treatment by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department managing the Post Office.

To lie upon the Table.

Council Tax Banding

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

12.14 am

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I am grateful to have an opportunity to raise the question of council tax banding from two points of view: first, for those in mobile homes; and, secondly, with regard to valuation appeals.

My interest in the position of those in mobile homes began when I received a petition signed by 140 residents of Garston park in my constituency. A similar approach has been made by the residents of Crookham caravan park in Newbury, who heard that I had this Adjournment debate and wrote to me asking for my support. I sent the petition to the Ministry and received a reply from the Minister of State, who laid out the current position. I was already aware of that, but at least the position was looked into.

My constituents in Garston park were keen on the community charge. They thought that it was a good tax and are upset that it has now been changed to a council tax, as they suffer under that proposal. Their petition pointed out that their properties were of a lower value than the bottom band of £40,000 and that they should therefore have special consideration. Mr. Cox, a gentleman from the estate, commented:

"At the moment we are in Band A, £40,000. This is far too high for these tin boxes. We now pay council tax, the same as someone living in a 2-3 bedroom house."

I have looked at their case. I do not question whether that is fair, but agree that they should have either a lower band or special dispensation.

Mobile homes differ from bricks and mortar homes in four ways: the average price is lower; they depreciate in value quickly; their occupants do not get full services because the homes are usually on estates; and, although they form a cross-section of society, the residents are slightly unusual.

Those in Garston park say that their properties are worth, on average, some £20,000. A survey of mobile homes showed that the average price for 1980-90 in the country as a whole was £34,000 for a new mobile home and £19,400 for a second-hand mobile home, giving an average of £24,000 for all mobile homes. That shows that the average price of many mobile homes is roughly £20,000.

Residents therefore feel that their properties should be given special consideration. The value of a mobile home drops nearly 50 per cent. when it becomes second-hand and occupants do not get full services. They must pay, through their rent to the owner of the site, for street lighting and road maintenance. Although they have rubbish collections, education and other local government facilities, they do not receive all the facilities available to bricks-and-mortar homes.

Residents are not a cross-section of the population but predominantly small households of one or two people, often elderly and retired. They are on low incomes and, although many have sold their bricks and mortar and moved from a house to a mobile home, they have done so to give them a bit of capital for their old age.

On introducing the consultative proposals to the House, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), said that the new tax would be simple and cheap to collect, would not impose excessive demands on any household, and would be seen to be fair. However, those people do not think that that has come about. He introduced another band —band H—at the top after a number of pressures, but nothing has been done at the lower end.

It is estimated that there are some 75,000 to 80,000 mobile homes in England. A special discount for them would probably benefit their occupants to the tune of some £90, on average, for each mobile home. I hope that the Government will have another look at the matter in any review of the council tax that they undertake.

On council tax valuations, the most recent national figure issued by the Minister of State in answer to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was that a total of 770,467 people had appealed against their valuations, and that the number of valuations outstanding was 597,931. The most recent figure for Reading is 4,611, and for Newbury it is 3,325. The figures were supplied by Reading's valuation officer. That suggests that the total is close to the original Government estimate of 1 million claims.

One of the matters that concerns me about the speed of dealing with valuations is that people have to pay the tax that is settled by the original valuation and then have to have a refund. Over the years, the refund accumulates and that presents a difficulty for the local authority which has to repay it. Therefore, it would be better if the business of the valuation was dealt with much quicker than at present.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is replying to the debate, said in a written answer on 26 November that 560,000 cases would be settled by the end of 1994 and that the rest would be settled as soon as possible. I hope that we can get quicker valuations and have the matter settled. The tribunals need more support and perhaps more resources. In a speech to the National Committee of Valuation Tribunals conference, the Minister said:

"We must not underestimate the danger that public attitudes to the new council tax will be soured by the perception that appeals are taking too long to settle."

In Reading, there is a unique situation. Twelve people successfully appealed out of the 120 people in Amity road, and the valuation officer reviewed the whole street and lowered the banding for everybody, which delighted the residents. The difficulty is that some 800 houses in other streets are similar to those that had their banding lowered. The local council got excited about that and made a national appeal in *The Guardian* and in all the local papers urging everybody in Reading to appeal. As a result, the number of appeals increased by more than 2,500, which meant more work for the valuation officer and the valuation department.

I am concerned that many of the people who got excited over the press release by the Labour-controlled council will not have their appeals upheld and will be disappointed and angry that they were misled into appealing unnecessarily. About 800 or 900 house will probably benefit as a result of the Amity road appeals, but there are now so many people appealing in Reading that the valuation officer is overwhelmed by work. I would not say that he is annoyed, because civil servants are not allowed to become annoyed. It must be unusual for a local council to tell everybody to appeal against valuations that obviously benefit the council.

While the council tax is basically fair and in many ways fairer than the poll tax, there is no doubt that a minority of

council tenants and those with mobile homes feel aggrieved about the tax. I hope that the Minister will look at the matter. It is almost a year since the tax was introduced, and perhaps it is time to review its workings. Will he also look at mobile homes valuations to try to improve the situation which particularly affects my constituency?

12.24 am

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South) *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Does the hon. Member have the permission of the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) and the Minister to speak?

Mr. Hawkins: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) and to the Minister for allowing me to intervene.

I shall be brief. I wish to speak about mobile homes and park homes. As the Minister is aware, my constituency has a large number of park home estates, and people there approached me in the way that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West was approached by his constituents. I have written on their behalf to the Minister and have had factual replies both from him and from Miss Modupe Kuponyi, a civil servant at the Department.

My constituents emphasise that the values of the properties in which they live are much lower than the £40,000 figure that defines the bottom council tax band. My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) was right to say that such dwellings also suffer much greater depreciation than other forms of property, and that those constituents do not receive the full range of services.

Many of my constituents have deliberately chosen to buy park homes rather than become a burden on the state and add to the already overcrowded council housing list —in order to release a little capital, as my hon. Friend said, so as to have some savings to alleviate the problems of their old age. I strongly support my hon. Friend in urging the Minister to review the tax and to introduce an extra bottom band—I suggest that it should be called the AX band—to ensure that the special needs of park home owners are recognised.

12.26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) for raising the subject of the council tax. I do not believe that there will ever be such a thing as a popular tax, and any new tax is even more likely to attract public criticism, especially in an area that has been the subject of prolonged controversy. The degree of acceptance that the council tax has already won, only nine months into its life, is therefore outstanding. As the *Financial Times* said just before last year's local elections:

> "Predictions of renewed political storm over the introduction of the council tax have not been borne out . . . Voters are certainly not ecstatic about the new property-based tax, but they regard it as a substantial improvement on the poll tax".

One would not expect ecstasy, but one does find acceptance, and a recognition that the council tax is the fairest possible way of paying for local government services.

Although he supports the principle of the council tax, my hon. Friend raised three specific concerns. The first was the length of time taken to process council tax appeals; the second was the council tax treatment of mobile homes; the third was what appears to be a disproportionate number of appeals in the Reading area. I shall deal with those matters in detail in that order.

With regard to the timetable for appeals, the Valuation Office Agency—the VOA—had received about 860,000 appeal proposals for England by the end of the council tax appeal period on 30 November. To put that figure in context, that means that 96 per cent. of householders in England have accepted the banding assigned to their home. Only 4 per cent. have lodged appeals.

Clearly, the people who have appealed will want their appeals to be dealt with as quickly as possible. To date, 175,000 appeals have been cleared up. I am also glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend and the House that the Department has agreed to allocate about £2·5 million more of its resources to the task of clearing up appeals, and as a result we expect the VOA and the valuation tribunals to have dealt with four out of every five appeals by the end of 1994.

That means that 700,000 taxpayers should see their appeals settled in just over 12 months after the end of the appeal period, which I think will be a sound achievement. Any remaining appeals will be settled as quickly as possible in 1995—a rather better target than that of which I was able to advise my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West shortly before Christmas.

We hope that the vast majority of cases can be resolved through discussions between the taxpayer and the Valuation Office Agency. That depends on the great majority of appellants being willing to settle their cases through such negotiation without recourse to a valuation tribunal hearing. Clearly, mutual agreement will not be possible in all cases, and there will be many appeals in respect of which the tribunals will need to adjudicate. We shall of course be monitoring progress closely, and stand ready, if necessary, to review our plans in the light of experience in handling appeals.

I fully understand the concerns of the taxpayers who are aggrieved at having to pay tax at a higher level than they believe is right and at having to do so until their appeal is settled. But if we had said that anyone who appealed would immediately have his tax bill reduced, it would have led to a large number of speculative appeals made with a view to achieving short-term tax reductions, and could also have led to serious collection problems. Under the present system, we can be sure that those people who have challenged their banding have done so on genuine grounds and not to gain short-term financial advantage or for any other spurious reason.

It is also important to keep matters in proportion. The vast majority of cases in which there is an appeal involve a change of only one band—over the course of a year, that amounts typically to around £60—and taxpayers who face real difficulties can ask to have their cases prioritised. Moreover, those receiving council tax benefit will have that benefit calculated against their actual bill: they will receive that benefit against the bill for the band at which

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

they are paying. I do not think that we are likely to see cases of serious hardship merely because an appeal has not yet been resolved.

The valuation office has set itself tough targets. Where the initial banding is clearly wrong, it is offering to reband the property within 60 days of the date on which the appeal is first received. If, on the other hand, it believes that banding to be correct, it will inform the taxpayer of that within 90 days. In all other cases—those where careful and considered discussion will be needed—it will establish contact within 120 days.

Those are challenging deadlines, which serve to emphasise our very real determination to crack on swiftly with the job of getting the appeals settled to everyone's satisfaction. It is obviously in the interests of everyone who wishes council tax to succeed that appeals should be resolved as speedily as possible.

Understandably, my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West focused on the situation in Reading. By and large, I suspect that the situation in Reading is similar to that elsewhere, but there appear to be one or two specific difficulties, some of which have been clearly exacerbated by comments made by the local authority.

As my hon. Friend said, one of those difficulties centred on some 120 houses in Amity road, Reading, which were put in band C in the original valuation exercise. That banding was based on evidence from sales on or around the April 1991 reference date which showed the typical market price to be around £52,000, which is at the lower margin of band C. Some residents of the road disagreed with that valuation—as is their right—and in respose to their appeals, the listing officer, having conducted some further research on prices in the vicinity, concluded that on balance the evidence pointed to a value just below, rather than just above, the banding level.

Those properties were very much on the cusp of the values between two bands. The houses concerned were therefore rebanded to band B, which is clearly good news for the residents concerned. That shows that the appeal system works. The listing officer now has in hand the alteration of the bands of a number of other similar houses in the locality.

The council tax bill for a house in Reading with two residents in band C is £540. The bill for one in band B is £67 less. The monthly council tax payments of residents of Amity road will therefore have been reduced by about £7 as a result of the rebanding. That is further good news for the residents of Amity road, as that will have been the second reduction in local tax bills experienced by many in less than a year. Even the band C council tax for Reading was more than £100 less than the community charge payable for two adults. Reading is required to refund any over-payment to the taxpayer's account, so no resident in Amity road has lost. Indeed, they have all gained, which is good news for Amity road residents.

However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West made clear, the situation in Amity road made the local press. It was even seized upon by some national journalists who were desperate to grab any possible bad news council tax story. However, the facts in relation to Amity road are good news for local residents and show that the system clearly works, whatever irresponsible local Labour councillors and others might seek to suggest.

If Amity road is the worst case that the Labour party can find to try to rubbish the council tax, that proves the robust fairness of the council tax. The fact that the valuation of one group of houses is on the cusp between two bands does not mean that all the bandings in Reading or in the rest of the country are in doubt, because there are clearly particular circumstances in Amity road.

It would be common sense and reasonable to conclude that there are not going to be that many instances when the value of properties are so close to the borderline between two specific council tax bandings. Such circumstances are unlikely to apply generally elsewhere—or, indeed, in many other circumstances in Reading. Obviously, every case must be treated on its merits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West wanted to know whether it will be possible to provide additional funding for the valuation office in Reading. The allocation and distribution of resources on individual offices is a matter for my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and for the Valuation Office Agency. However, the House will recognise that it would be wrong to focus our efforts and resources on specific areas to the detriment of others.

We all share the important objective of ensuring that all appeals are progressed at the same rate in all parts of the country. I have already made it clear that the extra resources that we have provided will enable that to be achieved quickly and effectively. I hope that, in due course in Reading, where there seems to have been a disproportionate number of appeals, many householders who have investigated the matter with the valuation office will be able amicably to settle their valuation banding and that they will not have been misled into making unnecessary appeals by some rather rash comments by the local authority.

My hon. Friends the Member for Reading, West and for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) referred to mobile homes. It was suggested that an additional valuation band should be created to accommodate mobile homes and, presumably, other properties worth considerably less than £40,000, which is the upper limit of band A. Such representations have, of course, been made on several occasions. Indeed, the House carefully considered the matter when the legislation was originally before it.

However, we believe that one of the significant advantages of the banded system that we have adopted is that it limits the variation between the highest and lowest bills in an area. There is unlikely to be much difference in ability to pay between mobile home dwellers and residents of low-value bricks-and-mortar homes. I appreciate that, if one is on a low income, a mobile home may be an economically attractive choice of home, but most low-income families live in conventional dwellings. We target help on such families through the council tax benefit system. Those whose incomes are at or below the income support level normally pay nothing at all in council tax, and that is the case whether they live in mobile homes or houses.

It is argued that we should make a special case for residents of mobile homes on the ground that they receive a number of their services from site owners rather than from the local authority. It is true that some services such as street lighting and road maintenance on mobile home sites are often privately provided, but local people living in mobile homes benefit from nearly all local authority services—for example, their children go to local schools,

and they have the support of local social services, the local fire brigade, local police, and so on. Of course, when those living in mobile homes go out on to public roads, they benefit from the local authority's construction, maintenance and lighting.

We are not convinced, and Parliament has not been convinced, of the benefits of creating another valuation band. However, the Government are not wholly unsympathetic to the special circumstances which mobile home residents might face. The organisations representing mobile home owners and occupiers have put to us representations about the council tax treatment of unoccupied homes.

At present, the regime for unoccupied mobile homes is exactly the same as that for unoccupied bricks-and-mortar dwellings, which are exempt for up to six months while they are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished. Having listened to the case put to us, we have accepted that caravans are rarely left unfurnished, either because the furniture is sold along with the home or because the furniture is actually physically fixed to the caravan. We therefore propose that, from April, all unoccupied caravans should be exempt from the council tax, whether or not they are furnished. I hope that that proposal, which is presently the subject of consultation, will be welcomed by mobile home residents and their representatives.

I close by quoting a particularly candid comment in *The Daily Telegraph* this year, when it admitted:

"Journalists comb the country for tales of erroneous house valuations and vastly increased bills. In reality, the reform looks like being a modest success."

When journalistic seekers of doom and despondency admit that a new tax is a success—even a modest one—the House can be confident that the council tax is a success.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 12 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Business Links

1. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many business links he will be opening in the next six months; and if he will make a statement.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): My Department is promoting the development of a national network of business links to provide a one-stop shop for support services for business. Three business links are now open, in Birmingham, Leicester and Congleton. By the middle of 1994, 30 will be open. My objective is to create a national network of around 200 outlets within the next two to three years.

Mr. Moss: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the business community considers his business links scheme as one of the most important initiatives to come out of his Department to promote manufacturing output and import substitution and to create new jobs? Will he assure the House that every effort will be made to speed the implementation of the one-stop shops to cover the whole country? Will he also encourage independent agencies, such as the Greater Peterborough training and enterprise council, which covers my constituency, which are setting up their own initiatives as a first step to achieving business link status?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful for the kind remarks of my hon. Friend. We will do all that we can to persuade the various agencies that are coming together to form the one-stop shops to move as quickly as is reasonable. There is one important caveat: we are determined to preserve the quality of the new services that are available and we would not wish to sacrifice quality for the number of units open.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: In July 1992, the President of the Board of Trade announced his plan to set up one-stop shops. He then told the House in December 1992 about
"a major new strategy to establish one-stop shops"
and said that it was "critical that the 15"—one-stop shops—
"are seen as pace setters".—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 414-17.]
He boasted that he would
"revolutionise the delivery of support services for business."—[*Official Report*, 15 April 1993; Vol. 222, c. *715*.]
On 17 February, he told the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) that he had had 57 bids to run those shops. On 17 March, he told the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) that he had a shortlist of 20 and on 15 April, he told the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) that there would be 23 one-stop shops while on 19 May, he told the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) that about 50 would be created. After all that, why has he opened only three in 16 months? Why have London and other parts of the country been neglected? Why has the right hon. Gentleman achieved so little despite four press releases, seven written parliamentary answers and a boastful statement in the House? Why is he even less effective than his party leader?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but I have not opened any one-stop shop. That is a matter for local initiative by local people. That is where the decision and the initiatives come from and that is the pace at which we can move.

Industrial Production

2. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the outlook for industrial production in 1994 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* France.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): The OECD expects both industrial production and overall output to rise by more in the United Kingdom than in France this year.

Mr. Merchant: Does my hon. Friend agree that what he has just said illustrates the powerful benefits that flow from successful policies of low inflation, low interest rates, low taxation and falling unemployment? Does he agree that a comparison of British and French achievement over the past decade further illustrates the success of this Government's economic and industrial strategy?

Mr. Needham: As my hon. Friend says, the United Kingdom currently has faster growth, lower inflation and lower unemployment than does France. United Kingdom manufacturing output has grown faster than that of France between 1979 and today. It appears that when France has a socialist Government it falls behind; when we have a socialist Government we fall behind France.

Dr. Marek: Nevertheless, does the Minister agree that if we compare the annual average rates of increase of industrial production between 1985 and the third quarter of 1993, the United Kingdom shows a rate of 0·7 per cent. whereas France shows a rate of 1·4 per cent? Is not the Minister doing a disservice to the country by bandying around selective statistics that can mean one thing or another? It would be far better if he provided us with a genuine set of statistics showing the trend, which, if we do not start in a dip or at a peak, indisputably show that France does better than we do in the long run.

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. I took the years from 1979 to 1993 and I did not even add the point that, as we are now out of recession

and France is still in it, the gaps are likely to increase further. If manufacturing production in 1985 is taken as 100, between 1979 and 1993 Britain's manufacturing output grew faster than that of France.

Instead of knocking the achievements of our industry, the hon. Gentleman should realise that we are competing successfully against one of our great and major competitors.

Mr. Batiste: Is not another key difference between us and France the fact that over the past 10 years we have encouraged inward investment in high-quality manufacturing while the French have been relatively resistant to such investment? What assessment has my hon. Friend made of the impact of that investment on British manufacturing?

Mr. Needham: We have indeed attracted 40 per cent. of the European investment made by Japan and a similar percentage from the United States. The fact is that that inward investment—as Opposition Members now realise, although they did not before—has brought immense benefits to this country, in terms of improving our quality, productivity and competiveness. Under this Government, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, (Mr. Merchant) said, with low inflation and low interest rates this country is the best possible place in Europe for foreign investment.

Aerospace Industry

3. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the future prospects for the British aerospace industry; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Prospects for long-term growth in the aerospace industry remain good.

Mr. Hanson: In the light of the projected job losses in the defence industries which will impact heavily on the aerospace industry, will the Minister today give a firm commitment to implement the unanimous recommendations of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, particularly those relating to defence diversification?

Mr. Sainsbury: As the hon. Gentleman knows, orders from the Ministry of Defence are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. He will also know that, as a result of the peace dividend, which we all welcome, the number of such orders is likely to be significantly lower than it was in the 1980s. We discuss that matter with the industry and do what we can to help it overcome it. It is, however, a problem not just for the industry in the United Kingdom but for industries throughout the world. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the United States aerospace industry looks likely to be cut by about a third as a result of the drop in orders.

Sir Thomas Arnold: What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to maintain good trading relations with China? Is not that a major export market for aerospace?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is right to identify China and the whole Asian and Pacific rim area as a major source of opportunity for aerospace exports—not just of complete aircraft but of aero engines and equipment. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and the whole Government are giving a great deal of attention to that area.

Mr. Fatchett: In *The Observer* last Sunday, the President of the Board of Trade claimed that there was now a partnership between the DTI and leading British companies. Against that background, can the Minister explain why every leading British aerospace company that gave evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee complained about the lack of support from his Ministry? Why is it that leading British aerospace companies, in contrast to their counterparts in France, Germany and America, cannot rely upon the Government for long-term help and for a strategic view of the industry's future? Is not it the case that the Government and the Ministry simply have no view of the long-term importance of Britain's aerospace industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to study a little more carefully than he has the evidence that was given to the Select Committee and, if he is able, to develop a slightly closer dialogue with the aerospace industry. If he does, he will find that the situation is very different from that which he describes. I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that the Government will continue to support this important industry in the way that we have done consistently and effectively since 1979, with a programme of support amounting to more than £1·5 billion.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the immense importance of the regional jet division of British Aerospace based at Woodford in the north-west. It is especially important to my constituency and to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold), as well as to Cheadle and Tatton. What is the Minister's understanding of the current position in the negotiations between British Aerospace and the Taiwan Aircraft Corporation? In the spirit of partnership that is so vital to industry nowadays, what assistance are the Government giving to ensure that the negotiations are ultimately successful?

Mr. Sainsbury: I recognise the importance of that aerospace plant to my hon. Friend's constituency and those of my other hon. Friends. As he will be aware, we have kept in the closest possible touch with the company and have provided it with a great deal of assistance in the course of the negotiations. I understand that the companies have so far been unable to conclude a deal. However, talks on possible collaboration are continuing and I understand that AVRO, which is the name that British Aerospace has given to the venture, is considering other options. A welcome development is that the general fortunes of this business are improving.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister join me in welcoming today's announcement by the newly appointed Minister with responsibility for the economy in Northern Ireland that unemployment in the Province has fallen below 100,000? Regrettably, that is still 13·3 per cent. of the work force. Does the Minister share my concern that 400 redundancies have been announced at Shorts, the most efficient and effective unit in the Bombardier group? Will he assure me that he will support Shorts as it seeks to obtain new orders overseas which will enable it to reinstate those who have been made redundant and create new employment opportunities?

Mr. Sainsbury: I join the hon. Gentleman in welcoming the reduction in unemployment in Northern

Ireland, but I recognise, as he does, that it is still far higher than we would like it to be. Indeed, I welcome the reduction in unemployment throughout the United Kingdom. Shorts is a remarkably successful company whose productivity has been transformed and it is using the considerable skills of its work force to great effect in the aerospace industry. I join the hon. Gentleman in regretting the recently announced job losses and, of course, my Department will continue to give as much help as it can to Shorts to enable it to obtain orders not only in this country, but throughout the world.

Cars

4. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the European single market will be opened up for cars.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): The single market is complete in all essential respects, so goods manufactured in the Common Market have the right to circulate freely anywhere within it. Good progress has been made in removing obstacles to free trade in cars and car parts, but we shall continue to press the Commission to bring forward other necessary measures and to enforce existing measures to ensure that the theoretical principle of free movement is a practical reality.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my hon. Friend aware of the growing concern of British motor manufacturers that, in response to the recommendations made to his Department nearly three years ago by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, he is shortly to announce an end to restraints on the import of Japanese manufactured cars in advance of 1999, which was agreed by the Community? Will he confirm that Britain does not intend to opt out of the EC consensus on this issue?

Mr. Hamilton: I can say to my hon. Friend that that matter is under review and we will closely consult the interests that are most affected. I know of no evidence to show that either the Commission or the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry is moving in the direction that he asserts.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that a successful domestic car industry is to some extent dependent on an efficient steel industry? What are the Government doing about the unfair subsidies that are being paid to the steel industries in Germany, Italy and Spain? If that trend continues, it could lead to further redundancies in our steel industry.

Mr. Hamilton: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises that, unlike in the 1970s, the United Kingdom now has a successful car industry. It is because of so many years of taking difficult decisions in the long-term interests of the steel industry that it is in the shape that it is in today. I agree that it would be intolerable if steel workers in this country were to be put out of work as a result of unfair state aids elsewhere in the Community. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry has been most vigorous in his activities in the Industry Council to ensure that close scrutiny is applied to all applications for state aids in other parts of the European Community to ensure that British steel workers are not disadvantaged as a result of unfair subsidy regimes.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the British car industry, particularly Japanese owners of various British car manufacturers, are doing far better within the United Kingdom than they are doing at home in Japan? Why does he feel that the British car industry is doing so much better than our European, American and Japanese partners?

Mr. Hamilton: As I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware, British industry, particularly the car industry, has addressed what in the 1960s and 1970s were long-term strategic problems. Today in particular, because the labour relations record of the motor car industry is second to none, we produce products of top-quality design which represent good value for money and which therefore regularly make increased inroads in overseas markets.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I inform the Minister that, during the recess, I had a very pleasant holiday in Florida where, in order to save money, I shared a bed—with my wife. I would have saved a greater amount of money if I had bought a Ford car in America and imported it into this country. Why can the Japanese sell cars in the United States similar to models sold here, but charge people in the United States 50 per cent. less than people here have to pay? Why do our motor manufacturers rip off the British people? Is it because the motor manufacturers are far too powerful for the Government to address?

Mr. Hamilton: I am most impressed by the vigour of the hon. Gentleman's paean of praise for the capitalist economy of what I am sure he once regarded as the great Satan of the United States. I hope that he enjoyed his visit to Disneyworld. As a member of a Mickey Mouse party, I am sure that he would have felt quite at home.

Manufacturing

5. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the Engineering Employers Federation to discuss proposals to increase the level of capital investment in manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has regular contact with the Engineering Employers Federation about many issues, including investment. The best incentive to increased investment is low inflation, low interest rates and a growing economy.

Mr. Clarke: The President should be aware that the engineering employers asked the Chancellor to provide capital allowances to improve investment in manufacturing. The Chancellor did not listen to the employers. Did the right hon. Gentleman take up the case on behalf of the engineering employers in the Budget?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and I have wide discussions on all matters that are of concern to the manufacturing and service industries. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that the single most important thing that he can do to help the manufacturing economy is to preserve the climate in which inflation and interest rates are low and productivity is rising. In that, my right hon. and learned Friend is doing an exemplary job.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the differences between industrial manufacturing

managers in the United States and those in the United Kingdom is the comparative reluctance of British managers in big manufacturing companies to leave and help start-ups and buy-outs in the small and medium-sized firm sector? There is a capital shortage in the small and medium-sized engineering sector. Will the reforms in the Budget, successor to the business expansion scheme, allow British manufacturing company managers to leave and take an interest as directors in those companies in which they are now being encouraged to invest?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will know that the new scheme that my right hon. and learned Friend announced made it clear that it would be possible, under the new successor arrangements for the BES, for investors to be directors and to draw an income from the company in which they were investing. Before we make too easy a judgment about the shortage of capital in small companies, it is important to realise that throughout the 1980s that sector increased to the extent that there are now 1 million more small companies than there were in 1979. The world recession slightly stilled the pace at which the expansion was taking place. There is no ground for believing that Britain will not see a resurgence in the growth of small businesses as we come out of that recession.

Mr. Wigley: Does the President of the Board of Trade accept responsibility for intervening to maintain manufacturing industry investment where that is threatened? Would he regard as appropriate an intervention in the circumstances of the announced closure today of BP at Baglan, with the loss of 600 jobs? If so, is that a responsibility of his Department or of the Welsh Office?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I would not regard it as appropriate to intervene. I have looked at the details of the announcement by British Petroleum and, as the hon. Gentleman will know, it is closing older capacity because its new investment is coming on stream. As far as I know, there will be no adverse effect on the British balance of payments.

Mr. Garnier: Will my right hon. Friend point the EEF towards Harborough, where he will find, both in the district of Harborough and in the borough of Oadby and Wigston, profitable engineering and small engineering businesses which have made over the years, and continue to make, capital investment in their own businesses and, as a result, are not only successfully improving their customer base in this country but are looking to find new markets both here and abroad?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. By common experience—my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade constantly reminds of this—there is now a whole range of excellent small and medium-sized engineering companies not just operating as part of the supplier chain to the inward investment but pioneering export markets in an encouraging way.

Mr. Robin Cook: Why will not the President admit that the Government have an abject record on industrial investment? Does he not know that the current level of industrial investment is well below that of 1979, by 10 per cent. in absolute figures and by 40 per cent. as a proportion of GDP? If he is confident that the figures will get better, would he like to predict in what year under the Conservatives manufacturing investment will get back to the level that it was when they entered office—or does he privately suspect that long before they can do that an increasingly impatient electorate will have thrown them out of office?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman knows that the manufacturing sectors of most advanced economies have been declining for many years. It is important to ensure that we create a climate in which the wealth-creating process is encouraged. He will be delighted to know that manufacturing investment is 23 per cent. up from where it was at the bottom of the recession in 1981. That is a remarkable recovery.

Businesses

6. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the Association of British Chambers of Commerce regarding the effect of the Budget on businesses.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Budget has been well received by business, including the Association of British Chambers of Commerce.

Mr. Waterson: I am grateful for that answer. Has my right hon. Friend received special welcomes for the provision in the Budget aimed at helping small businesses, including such matters as the proposal to lift the often onerous audit requirements? May I inform him that that measure, among others, has been warmly welcomed by members of the Eastbourne chamber of commerce?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am delighted to hear the last part of my hon. Friend's comments. I can confirm that there has been a welcome for the item on audit requirements, particularly among small businesses. It was among a wide range of measures aimed at helping small businesses, all of which were welcomed by the president of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, who said:

"We like the help for small firms."

We all like to hear that sort of response to the Budget.

Mr. Clelland: In the Minister's discussions with the chambers of commerce, did they mention that millions of pounds of taxpayers' money is being spent on providing training for non-existent jobs? Did they advise him that it would be better for the Government to provide incentives and investment in product development, thereby increasing production and jobs and providing a demand for training?

Mr. Sainsbury: Perhaps I may tell the hon. Gentleman a little more fully what the president said. He said:

"All in all, it was an astute balancing act which responds to many of the concerns and needs of business".

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Recognising the warm welcome that chambers of commerce gave the Budget, is my right hon. Friend aware of their pre-Budget submissions, which focused on the particular need for management education, especially in smaller and medium-sized firms? Will he confirm that that will be a principal priority of business links and the national vocational qualifications and their extensions to level 5?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is right to identify training in education, including management training, as vital ingredients for the competitiveness of British industry, particularly smaller companies. I can confirm to him that among the Government and other support services

that will be funnelled through business links, high priority will be given to those services that help management training and assist smaller businesses in identifying their overall training needs.

THORP

7. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the place of THORP in meeting Britain's future energy needs; and whether this will be tested at a public inquiry.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): It is for the owners of spent fuel in the United Kingdom and overseas to make their own commercial decisions as to whether to use THORP as part of their nuclear energy production plans. My right hon. Friends have decided not to hold a public inquiry in respect of the Sellafield discharge authorisations.

Mr. Williams: The Minister will know that two of the key arguments used in the initial public inquiry in 1976 to justify THORP involved future energy demand in Britain and the need for uranium and plutonium. As the fast breeder reactor programme has been cancelled, there is a glut of plutonium on the world market and the price of uranium is one sixth of what it was in the 1970s, will the Minister acknowledge that the energy arguments for THORP have collapsed completely? As circumstances world wide have changed so radically since the 1970s, is there not an overwhelming need for a public inquiry to re-examine those very arguments?

Mr. Eggar: No. As my right hon. Friends have made clear, there is absolutely no need for a further public inquiry. Indeed, it is rather absurd to contemplate a further public inquiry 15 years after the initial public inquiry which, after all, was authorised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the funding was approved by the then Labour Government, and to reopen the whole question. The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that 3,000 jobs in west Cumbria and 2,000 jobs elsewhere in the United Kingdom depend on the plant and that BNFL estimates the commercial benefits of the plant at £4·5 billion over 10 years. Is he in favour of more prosperity in this country or against it?

Mr. Page: As the United Kingdom is a signatory to the climate change convention to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions, and as 34 per cent. of our carbon dioxide emissions come from power stations, is it not absolutely necessary that we should have a carbon dioxide-free nuclear industry in which THORP plays a vital part? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have been more than scrupulous in allowing public inquiry and investigation into the viability and usefulness of THORP?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have issued a lengthy decision letter of some 75 pages. As I understand it, a judicial review of that decision is likely to take place, so it is difficult for me to go further than that. With regard to environmental benefits of nuclear power, that is one of the matters that we shall want to address during the conduct of the nuclear review.

Land Mines

8. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give further consideration to curtailing the export of land mines.

Mr. Needham: We believe that our current licence controls are sufficient.

Mr. Cohen: Is the Minister aware that it is estimated that there are 100 million uncleared mines in 56 countries around the world, many of which have British connections, that those mines kill thousands of people every week, and that the United Nations and the United States have said that trade in land mines is unacceptable and on a par with trade in chemical weapons? The Government could act immediately by issuing an Export of Goods (Control) Order which would ban not only the export of land mines but their design, so that British designed land mines would not be manufactured under licence in other countries. Why will the Government not act to stop the slaughter?

Mr. Needham: The Government support the United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines which pose any threat to the civilian population. We have not produced or exported anti-personnel land mines in the category covered by the United Nations resolution for at least a decade.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister sure?

Mr. Needham: Absolutely sure. We have the capability to make land mines that are self-destructing and self-neutralising as part of a runway denial system, which we believe is a perfectly proper use of land mines in making equipment for defending our forces. If the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) thinks back to the Gulf war, he will realise that we have an obligation to ensure that our troops are properly protected and defended by the use of equipment which will stop the enemy using its runways. That is a capacity which we wish to maintain.

Mr. Bellingham: A while back I asked the Minister about a report by Amnesty International which covered not just land mines but the export of torture and execution equipment and gave the example of a firm that exported gallows disguised as playground equipment. Does my hon. Friend agree that such exports are unacceptable, and will he update the House on the progress that he has made to stop them?

Mr. Needham: I agree that any export of equipment that can be used for torture is unacceptable. We must ensure that such trade is stopped, and whenever it comes to our notice we insist that it is stopped. I assure my hon. Friend that we will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the export of anything that could be used for torture ceases.

Business Links

9. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of the business links initiative.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the brilliant answer given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade a moment ago.

Mr. Lidington: When my hon. Friend considers the next batch of business links bids to come before his Department, will he give careful and sympathetic attention to the bid from Thames Valley Enterprise which has set up business links in Aylesbury, Reading and Slough that will be of considerable benefit to people in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and south Oxfordshire with the full backing of Buckinghamshire county council and the Thames Valley chamber of commerce and industry?

Mr. Hamilton: A proposal from the Thames Valley partnership which covers my hon. Friend's constituency was accepted by the November assessment panel and those business links are due to open in May and June 1994 in Slough, Reading and Aylesbury. I commend my hon. Friend's support for the initiative.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister also be aware of the danger of supporting any business enterprise that seeks to build on the popularity of the royal family? Will he bear in mind the failure of that enterprise and the loss of £7 million, including £200,000 of taxpayers' money? I hope that, with his fellow Ministers, he will take steps to ensure that that money is returned to the public purse.

Mr. Hamilton: I do not know whether it was clear to my hon. Friends what the hon. Gentleman was rambling on about, but it was not clear to me.

Post Office

10. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the external financing limit for the Post Office in the next two financial years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The external financing limits for the Post Office for 1994-95 and 1995-96 are, respectively, minus £226 million and minus £213 million.

Mr. Pickthall: Does the Minister agree that, in essence, that is an extra tax on the Post Office and thus on post office users? How does he justify to those post office users the fact that that gleaning of money from the Post Office will increase by more than 150 per cent. in the next three years? Does he agree with the Post Office Users National Council that that will mean lower capital investment, job losses, poorer quality services in parts of the Post Office and, most importantly, that it might prevent the Post Office from cashing in on its commercial success and becoming a world beater in its area?

Mr. McLoughlin: I can think of no part of that question with which I agree. The hon. Gentleman talks about capital investment. Between 1976 and 1979, capital investment was some £89 million, compared with £900 million over the next three years. Under the last five years of a Labour Government, postal charges increased 122 per cent.—compared with 31 per cent. over the last five years of this Government.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that BT contributes substantially more to the Exchequer as a result of being privatised and able to develop its services? Could not the same principles be applied to the Post Office, or at least to part of it?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's views. The Government are conducting a wide-ranging review of the Post Office and will bear in mind my hon. Friend's representations.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Minister aware that that wide-ranging review has been going on for 18 months while the Government dither over what to do with the Post Office? Does he have any idea of the damage done by that prolonged delay? Has he seen the statement by the chairman of the Post Office that that delay has already caused a sense of crisis and may cause a spiral of decline? Why does the Minister not admit today—and thus end the uncertainty—that the Government cannot find a way of privatising the Post Office which would not place at risk thousands of Post Office branches, and that the best way of keeping the Post Office successful is to retain it in the public sector where it can provide a public service?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman must be patient. No doubt he will attack whatever conclusions we reach as a result of the review. As to post office closures, 19,000 of the country's 20,000 post offices are already private businesses.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend will be aware that electronic mail is a fast-growing business world wide. What discussions has he had with the Post Office to ensure that it develops a share of that business?

Mr. McLoughlin: A number of matters are continually being discussed with the Post Office. One aspect being taken into account in the review is the way in which the Post Office may want to compete in other markets and the best way for it to do so.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister accept that it is Government humbug to impose strict external financing limits on public bodies and then to argue that because they are so restricted those bodies must be privatised? Is not the reality that the Post Office is and will continue to be an essential public service which requires a monopoly to enable it to deliver mail to every household in the land? It needs relaxed external financing limits, to enable it to compete internationally, rather than more Government restrictions.

Mr. McLoughlin: I will not take any lessons in humbug from the hon. Gentleman. No doubt he would have made the same argument in respect of BT and all the other privatisations that this Government took forward. They have been most successful, bringing expansion and better markets, leading to benefits for the consumer.

Coal Industry

11. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many coal mines were in production in June 1979, June 1992 and 31 December 1993.

Mr. Eggar: I have been informed by British Coal that there were 223 producing coal mines at the end of the financial year 1978-79, 50 in June 1992, and 22 on 31 December 1993.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that when I was made redundant in Derbyshire, I had a choice of about five different pits offering work within a radious of five miles? In 1979, people made redundant in the mining industry in

Derbyshire had a choice of only two or three pits within a radius of 10 miles. Today, under a Conservative Government, every pit that is closed means that the miners are, almost without exception, thrown on the scrap heap of redundancy. There is no longer any choice. The answer is to stop imports of coal—especially that produced by slave labour in South Africa and Colombia. Any right hon. or hon. Member who wants evidence of that should view the film to be shown in the Grand Committee Room at 7.30 pm today about coal being produced by child labour in Colombia. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will attend.

Mr. Eggar: I had no idea that the hon. Gentleman was so keen on getting a marketing job when he retires from the House. He also forgets that in March 1964 there were 576 pits in the country, and that six years later there were 299 pits. In other words, in six years the Labour Government closed more than 270 pits. The hon. Gentleman is also plainly incorrect: no underground miners have been made compulsorily redundant by British Coal.

Mr. Oppenheim: Has not the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) got a cheek to complain about pit closures? Why did he not resign the Whip in the 1970s when the Labour party was closing pits by the score——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that has nothing whatever to do with the Minister. Let us deal with policy matters.

Mr. Oppenheim: Should the hon. Gentleman not spend more of his time being concerned about those industries which use energy and about the gas industry, in which jobs would be lost if we extended further the 40 years of protection from competition from gas and imported coal which British Coal has had since the war?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend. What is more, I wish that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) would study the statistics more closely. He would find that there has been a significant fall in steam coal imports in the past year over the previous year.

Mr. Barron: Does the Minister accept that if any remaining market-tested pits are currently selling all the coal that they produce, they should not close?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the pit in his constituency is currently under development. British Coal is in active discussion with a number of private companies about the leasing and licensing of pits that it has already closed. The Government have made it clear, and the British Coal board has agreed, that it will make the pits that it closes available to the private sector.

Sir Michael Grylls: How many new jobs have been created in the coal closure areas in the past few years?

Mr. Eggar: Very large numbers of jobs have been created in that period: 84 per cent. of all people who are registered with British Coal Enterprise have found a job or a training opportunity within a year to 18 months of being registered. British Coal Enterprise has an excellent record and Opposition Members who represent mining constituencies know from their experience that that is so. It would be nice occasionally to hear some praise for British Coal Enterprise from the Opposition.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Minister congratulate the miners and management of the Castlebridge mine in my constituency, who have just signed a four-year extension to the contract to provide coal for Longannet power station? Is that not evidence that when a generator is also responsible for distributing electricity, it is a more rational system of electricity provision in the country and a commitment to coal? The dreadful figures that the Minister has rehearsed today are in large measure due to the fact that generation and distribution of electricity have been separated and there is a dash for gas, which in Scotland has mainly not taken place, because of the close links between the coal industry and the generators and the customers for electricity.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that there is a major gas-based electricity generating station not far from his constituency. Of course I congratulate the people, the workers and the management of Longannet on succeeding in securing that contract. We need to ensure that coal is produced throughout the United Kingdom at competitive prices and is therefore able to increase its market share and compete effectively against gas and other fuels. On that we can agree.

GATT

12. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the GATT agreement concluded last month within the Uruguay round.

Mr. Heseltine: The conclusion of the GATT negotiations on 15 December is a large step towards more free and open international trade. It will bring more trade within GATT and strengthen the GATT rules. This will mean improved economic efficiency, increased growth, more jobs and lower prices, as well as wider choice for consumers.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. If he has not done so already, will he send Commissioner Leon Brittan warm congratulations on the work that he did during the negotiations, on behalf of the entire Community? Incidentally, he also defended European media culture—television, films, theatre and art—from a wall-to-wall invasion by dubious American material, but received little credit in the British press.

Will my right hon. Friend note another agreeable development? Having tussled with each other, Leon Brittan and Trade Commissioner Kantor are now working together to get the Japanese to open up their markets. Is my right hon. Friend confident that the Japanese will co-operate on this occasion?

Mr. Heseltine: I assure my hon. Friend that I have conveyed warm good wishes to Commissioner Brittan. I share my hon. Friend's view of his work.

I was in Tokyo on Monday and had extensive conversations with senior Ministers in the Japanese Government. I believe that they welcome the GATT round as much as we do, and that they are working to introduce changes—involving access to services and to their domestic markets—of which Britain is now well placed to take advantage.

Mr. Grocott: Has the Secretary of State had an opportunity to discuss with his French counterpart the importance attached by the French to the protection and

preservation of their film and television industry? Will he reflect on the fact that in this country, under his stewardship and that of his predecessor, the balance of trade in television production has moved from surplus to deficit in the space of some seven years? Moreover, the proportion of British television programmes made and produced in this country has declined dramatically, especially since the passing of the Broadcasting Act 1990. When will the right hon. Gentleman start doing as much for television and films in this country as his French counterpart does in France?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that those industries are not directly sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry. I am sure, however, that he will welcome the wide-ranging reviews already announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage as much as I do.

Mrs. Peacock: We all welcome the signing of the GATT agreement. Is my right hon. Friend aware, however, of the great concern in our wool, textile and clothing industries about the lack of agreement on tariffs? He will know of the huge amount that must be paid for many of our goods to enter other countries; is he aware that if the matter is not resolved quickly and satisfactorily many jobs may be under threat?

Mr. Heseltine: I share my hon. Friend's concern for the textile industries. The round will include a reduction in tariffs in the United Kingdom's main market for textiles. For example, American textile tariffs will be reduced by an average of 27 per cent.

Mr. Bell: The House will welcome the fact that the President of the Board of Trade went to Japan and spoke to Japanese Ministers. It is very important for the Japanese to open their markets to a greater extent than they have done in the past few years.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that although the Uruguay accords represent a highway to greater trade liberalisation, they constitute only one stage of the process? The creation of the World Trade Organisation will be extremely important, but is the right hon. Gentleman not a little concerned that the ambitious programme that the organisation is setting itself may turn this highway to trade liberalisation into a bureaucratic nightmare?

Mr. Heseltine: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the kind remarks with which he prefaced his question. I believe that it is generally recognised that the establishment of the WTO in the GATT round is potentially a major step forward in the policing, monitoring and facilitation of the GATT agreement. I think it wrong at this early stage to anticipate its deterioration into a "bureaucratic nightmare". Let us hope that it will be able to do its job effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Waller: Does my right hon. Friend accept that at the end of the 10-year period to come, the United States will still be erecting barriers to our exports of textiles and clothing which will be very much higher than the barriers to its exports to the European Union? In the negotiations about the details of the GATT agreement that will take place in the coming months, will my right hon. Friend urge Sir Leon Brittan and his colleagues to press for genuinely free trade?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will know that it is the Government's policy, wherever possible, to do precisely that. However, I must be realistic and say that a complex and time-consuming round has now been virtually concluded and it would be unrealistic to think that there will be a major change in the structure of that round in the next year or so while details are being finalised and explored. We all hope that this round is the precursor to the next round where the issues will again be visited and, we hope, more satisfactorily resolved.

Post Office Closures

13. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to order a review of the programme of post office closures in inner-city areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no such programme.

Mr. Parry: My question relates to the closure of Granby street post office in my constituency. The Minister will be aware that that has been opposed by the local city council, church leaders, pensioners and other organisations. Will the Minister agree to meet me and the chairman of the committee opposed to the closure to discuss this matter?

Mr. McLoughlin: Of course I agree to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss the issue. However, operational matters are matters for the Post Office. As the hon. Gentleman will know, plans to close Granby street post office in January 1992 were reversed because adjacent sub-post offices were not big enough to accommodate additional users. Since then, the pattern of robberies at Granby street post office has continued. The sub-postmaster and his staff have, understandably, been frightened and demoralised by the attacks and the sub-postmaster has repeatedly sought to resign. Post Office Counters has received no serious or viable applications to take over the Granby street site. In the absence of other options, Post Office Counters has decided to relocate to the neighbouring Lodge lane post office, which has larger premises 400 or 500 yd away. As I have said, however, I will meet the hon. Gentleman.

Managers

14. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what monitoring his Department undertakes of the performance and effectiveness of managers in the United Kingdom manufacturing industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department is continually monitoring the performance of British industry. Management skills are one of the many factors influencing that performance.

Ms Coffey: The Minister will be aware that much concern has been expressed to the Trade and Industry Select Committee by witnesses in relation to the quality and standard of British managers. I understand that those concerns were also expressed in the report prepared by the Department of Trade and Industry competitiveness unit, which has not been published. In view of the crucial importance of good management in ensuring that people work to the best of their ability, achieve job satisfaction and increase the competitiveness of British industry, and in view of the fact that the British worker has been much

abused for the industrial ills of this country, what positive steps does the Minister intend to take to ensure that British management is of the highest quality and pulls its finger out?

Mr. Sainsbury: I share the hon. Lady's belief that management has a major contribution to make to the competitiveness of British industry in every sector and in every size of industry. That is why I welcome the fact that the level of management training in the United Kingdom is increasing. One statistic that demonstrates that fact is that in 1992 almost 6,000 students graduated with the qualification of master of business administration, compared with just over 1,000 in 1980.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those sectors of British industry that have seen the greatest increases in productivity and investment are those that have been privatised by the Government? Does that not illustrate the fact that we are helping manufacturing industry while the Opposition parties are seeking to depress it?

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree with my hon. Friend wholeheartedly. One of the damping effects of public ownership has been to deter management from the sort of initiatives that improve competitiveness and identify export opportunities for their businesses. The success of privatised industry, not only in improving its competitiveness and the service given to customers, but in improving its exports, demonstrates the value of that programme.

Mr. Purchase: Notwithstanding the welcome increase in the number of graduates from the MBA programme, is the Minister aware that a little time ago John Harvey-Jones remarked that, never mind our managers achieving MBAs, it would be welcome if many of them could even read a simple balance sheet? That was from someone who is seen as an expert in business in this country. It is a reflection of the poor professional level of management in British industry over the past 20 years and there is room for much improvement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Indeed, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade recently drew it to the attention of the Institute of Directors that perhaps British managers have rather too fulsome an opinion of their own performance. He said that that was a challenge—one to which I am happy to say that British management is broadly responding. The management charter initiative shows that that response is to be found in small companies as well as in the larger ones.

Mr. Heald: Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the work of the Chemical Industries Association and other bodies in that industry which have done a great deal in terms of management training? Does he agree that the results can be seen in the fact that the industry's exports have risen by 25 per cent. in the past five years? Does he agree that training for management is the future?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend that that industry has been remarkably successful and that its trade association has made a major contribution to that success. Indeed, I repeat what my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has said many times —trade associations have an important role to play in encouraging competitiveness and improving management in their member companies.

NATO Summit

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the NATO summit in Brussels, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

On 10 January, the summit launched the "partnership for peace" programme with a framework document and an invitation to 22 states to participate. On 11 January, it issued a declaration. These documents have been placed in the Library of the House.

NATO summits are not held routinely, but only for a specific purpose. This was only the 11th summit in 35 years. It met to carry forward the post-cold war evolution of NATO which began at the 1991 Rome summit.

NATO's core function is to ensure the security of its member states. It has been by far the most successful collective security organisation in history, and it was agreed that the alliance will continue to be the cornerstone of post-war European security.

As this was the first summit attended by President Clinton and Prime Minister Chrétien of Canada, a key objective was to renew the transatlantic relationship. President Clinton's affirmation that the core of American security remained with Europe received a warm welcome. He confirmed his commitment to keep around 100,000 United States troops in Europe.

Over the past five years, new democracies have been born to the east. A pre-eminent challenge for NATO is to develop its relations with those countries in ways which will enhance stability across the whole of Europe. There must be no new dividing line, no new antagonistic blocs. The "partnership for peace" programme is an imaginative response to that challenge. All states which were once within the Warsaw pact have been invited to join, and NATO may also invite other states within the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The aim of the partnership is to bring Europe together by building practical military co-operation between nations in ways that reflect their different aspirations and capabilities. That could include joint exercises in peacekeeping, search and rescue or humanitarian operations; it could include joint military planning, exchanges on defence budgeting and the democratic control of armed forces. Each partner will draw up with NATO an agreed partnership programme tailored to that particular relationship. Partnership will be an evolutionary process, and it will bring all partners closer to NATO.

The summit has thus opened a clear perspective of the enlargement of the alliance. It is too soon to determine which countries will be able to meet the obligations of membership or when, but there are obviously strong candidates in the democracies of central and eastern Europe.

A second challenge for the summit was to improve the alliance's ability to mount new humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. During the cold war, NATO's military structures were based predominantly on static regional commands and large-scale formations. Experience in recent years in the Gulf and in Bosnia has shown the importance of flexibility and of mobility.

The summit endorsed the new concept of combined joint task forces. They will improve NATO's capability to deploy task forces inside or outside the NATO area, but, because they will be available for purely and predominantly European operations, the combined joint task forces could also meet the requirements of the European security and defence identity. They will strengthen the European role within NATO without detracting from its transatlantic character.

Partnership for peace and the combined joint task forces are changes of fundamental significance. The alliance will now begin to implement them.

The summit discussed other important issues. It supported efforts by the United Nations and the European Union to secure a negotiated settlement in Bosnia. We discussed the recent intense fighting in Sarajevo. We reaffirmed our readiness, under the decisions taken last August, to carry out air strikes to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo.

We also considered ways to solve two other current problems. The United Nations command in Bosnia has recently been prevented from rotating the United Nations Protection Force contingent in Srebrenica and from using Tuzla airport. On a proposal from the United Kingdom and France, the summit asked UNPROFOR to draw up plans for the Netherlands contingent to take over from the Canadians in Srebrenica. We also decided to examine with UNPROFOR how Tuzla airport could be opened for humanitarian relief purposes.

We would prefer not to have to use force, but those who are impeding UNPROFOR at Srebrenica and Tuzla must realise that force is available, if necessary, to support UNPROFOR and its ability to protect relief efforts.

In all our discussions, we were conscious of the importance of closer relationships with Russia's democratic leaders. Russia has a huge contribution to make to stability and to efforts to resolve international problems. I hope that the Russian Government will take up the invitation to partnership with the alliance. If they do, it will be another way in which we can enhance our support for reform and democracy in Russia.

I should briefly describe individual meetings which I held during those two days.

I met the Prime Minister of Turkey and welcomed her country's continuing support for Operation Provide Comfort in Iraq. Mrs. Ciller expressed her commitment to settlement of the Cyprus problem, which is long overdue.

I focused on Bosnia in my meeting with the French Prime Minister. We decided to call for the action in connection with Srebrenica and Tuzla which I have described.

With the German Chancellor and the Italian Prime Minister, I discussed developments in Europe and further efforts to enhance relations with Russia and to support reform there.

I thanked President Clinton for his support concerning Northern Ireland. We welcomed the decisions taken about Bosnia, and looked ahead to our next meeting in Washington at the end of February.

I had a long meeting with the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Joulwan, the chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Sir Richard Vincent, and other senior NATO officers. We examined how "partnership for peace" would be put into effect, and the way in which the combined joint task forces would be set up.

It was a timely summit. It has reaffirmed northern America's commitment to Europe, and has shown that the allies stand closely together in maintaining their collective security. The summit has carried forward the modernisation of NATO's military structures. It has launched a vital new initiative towards the east, opening the way to new relationships and new members. It has established the outward-looking character of the NATO of the 1990s, with a greater emphasis on operations in support of peace and humanitarian relief.

I believe that the summit has successfully equipped the alliance to meet new challenges, and I commend its results to the House.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): We on this side of the House broadly welcome the declaration agreed by the North Atlantic Council yesterday in Brussels. We hope that it is the beginning of a process in which countries and institutions such as NATO seek to come to terms with the opportunities and challenges that result from the end of the cold war.

I particularly welcome the general principles and direction of the "partnership for peace" concept. That offers the prospect of closer co-operation with former Warsaw pact countries, including Russia, and creates the circumstances for an expansion of NATO itself. Military co-operation designed to enhance mutual security is clearly desirable, particularly if it can be developed to encourage wider participation in United Nations peacekeeping efforts.

However, may I suggest that the emphasis on military co-operation should be balanced by encouraging political developments within applicant countries? Ought not the criteria for involvement in "partnership for peace" and eventual NATO membership be expanded to include an effectively functioning multi-party democracy and an acceptable record on human rights, as well as strict civilian control of the military apparatus?

On issues of arms control and disarmament, which were discussed at the council, we welcome the declaration's stated commitment to the indefinite and unconditional extension of the non-proliferation treaty, and are encouraged to see reference to the need for the negotiation of a universal and verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty.

Despite attempts by the British Government to continue nuclear testing, we welcome the US moratorium and similar action by France and Russia, which we hope will soon lead to a treaty being signed. Do the Government accept the target date of September 1996 for the successful negotiation of that vital treaty?

Following the welcome agreement by the United States, Russia and Ukraine to destroy Ukraine's nuclear weapons, will the British Government accelerate the promise made in 1992 to supply British-made nuclear weapons transporters to the Ukraine to help with the removal and to assist Russia in the disposal process?

On the continuing and agonising situation in Bosnia, will the Prime Minister say whether the acceptance of the use of air strikes now is different from or stronger than the apparent commitment made last August, which resulted in no effective action or sustained improvement in the situation?

Does the Prime Minister accept that repeated declarations that are not followed through risk undermining the credibility of both NATO and the whole UN operation, and only strengthen the hands of those who have become adept at defying the wishes of the international community?

Will effective action now be taken to open the airport at Tuzla, allow the replacement of UNPROFOR forces in Srebrenica, and lift the siege of Sarajevo? Is it not wholly intolerable that a defenceless population in Sarajevo should be shelled so relentlessly and pitilessly? Was it not disgraceful that, during the so-called "Christmas truce", Sarajevo was bombarded constantly?

Finally, will the Prime Minister put an end to suggestions that British forces in Bosnia might be withdrawn once the winter is over? Do we not need a commitment to increase ground forces, as requested by the UN, to make a greater effort to bring some peace to Bosnia?

The Prime Minister: First, I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman's general support for the declaration and the "partnership for peace" policy. I am sure that he is right to say that co-operation, both militarily and politically, with former Warsaw pact countries, including Russia, is vital to our own interests and security as well as to the development of democracy right across the continent of Europe.

On political development and military co-operation, the right hon. and learned Gentleman touched particularly on human rights. I confirm that all countries entering NATO would need to be democracies and we shall certainly look at political developments, but not necessarily as an intrinsic part of the "partnership for peace" proposals.

We shall be prepared to sign the comprehensive test ban treaty as soon as it is negotiated and settled, whether that is by September 1996 or some earlier, perhaps some later, date.

Our offer to help the Ukraine with the removal of nuclear weapons has been there for some time. I do not immediately know whether it is practicable to accelerate it, but I have no objection in principle to doing so if that would be of assistance and if our assistance is required. The agreement reached between Presidents Clinton, Yeltsin and Kravchuk, if carried through, is a remarkable advance in the reduction of nuclear weapons and I very much hope that it will be adequately carried out. To have nuclear weapons removed from Ukraine would be a great bonus.

The declaration on the general level of air strikes as regards Sarajevo was a reiteration of what was suggested on 2 and 9 August. Of course, the practical decisions for that should not be made by politicians some distance away, but should best be made upon the advice of troop commanders near at hand. It is predominantly upon their advice that it would be right for NATO leaders to act. Reservations have been expressed by troop commanders from time to time, and we would be very unwise to sweep those to one side.

It was determined that, in the light of advice that we might receive, the agreement in principle for military strikes exists. What is different in this particular declaration is that the two specific cases of Srebrenica and Tuzla are included under the broad umbrella.

The position in Srebrenica is that the Canadian troops can probably come out—that is certainly possible—but it is not possible at the moment for the Dutch troops to get in.

[The Prime Minister]

It is intolerable when UNPROFOR troops are inhibited from getting into Srebrenica to carry out the necessary humanitarian work.

To be strictly correct in relation to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question, Tuzla airport is technically open. The problem lies around the airport, because there is a danger of incoming aircraft being attacked. It is not immediately evident precisely what needs to be done on the ground.

It is for that reason that the commanders are finalising the plans that they commenced some time ago with the determination to ensure that Tuzla airport is open——

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): When?

The Prime Minister: As soon as possible. It should be open to assist the humanitarian relief. The right hon. Gentleman may shout, "When?", but, yet again, if we are wise, we will not issue such casual edicts from afar, but will seek the advice of the military commanders on the spot. That is what we are committed to doing.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked about the withdrawal of troops from Bosnia. We have committed ourselves to assist with humanitarian aid, and I must tell the House and the right hon. and learned Gentleman that, at this stage, I am not prepared to extend that commitment until I am certain of the security of British troops working for the United Nations there. I have consistently taken that position, and it is also taken by the Heads of other Governments who have troops on the ground in Bosnia. Despite the remarkable work that they have done for humanitarian reasons, our first concern must be the security of the United Nations troops, and in particular those of our own country.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): If air strikes are authorised, can my right hon. Friend reassure the House that contingency plans are in place to prevent British troops and United Nations troops from being sucked in to the conflict in Bosnia?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is part of the UNPROFOR determination to discuss with troop commanders on the ground the current position. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will realise why I do not go into details of what might have to happen in those circumstances, but I reiterate that the security of our troops would be given the very highest priority of all. The Secretary-General of the United Nations would have to approve air action by NATO on behalf of United Nations troops.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister accept that the future peace and stability of Europe depend on upholding the principle of national integrity of borders, especially in volatile areas such as the new democracies of eastern Europe? If NATO, for very good reasons, has to treat the matter gradually, is there not a case for Europe and the Western European Union to be a little more bold? Specifically, does the Prime Minister accept that the WEU has a role to strengthen and complement NATO's actions in creating a framework for peace in Europe?

On Bosnia, does the Prime Minister recognise that, as he has been warned on many occasions, the bottom line credibility of the United Nations operation in Bosnia is now at risk? As President Clinton said, if we cannot show the determination to deliver our promises, we should not make promises. In that context, is not the opening of Tuzla airport central to that credibility? If the Prime Minister will not say exactly when that airport will be opened, will he at least give us an indication of the time scale in which he expects it to happen?

The Prime Minister: With great respect to the right hon. Gentleman, I must tell him that the last part of his question was unreal. It does depend on what is happening on the ground and on the advice that we get from the troop commanders there.

As for not making promises unless we can keep them, we have been very careful about promises we make—unlike the right hon. Gentleman, who has been shifting and manoeuvring throughout this whole operation, advocating everything from all-out war to, apparently, pulling out immediately. His opinions seem to have been moving rapidly on an escalator, so I fear that I am in no mood to accept lectures from him about Yugoslavia.

On the right hon. Gentleman's earlier point, there are practical reasons for adopting, and it is right in principle to adopt, an evolutionary approach to the possible extension of the NATO alliance. Of course the WEU has a role; that is partly why we have combined task forces. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the Western European Union also has a role as part of the European defence identity and as the European pillar of the NATO alliance. That is most certainly true, and it will remain so.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I greatly welcome my right hon. Friend's assurance about the priority given to the security of British and other United Nations forces in Bosnia. I also welcome the cautious approach that he and his colleagues have adopted towards the evolutionary process of bringing the former Warsaw pact countries under the NATO umbrella.

May I ask my right hon. Friend a question about Cyprus? He said that he met the Turkish Prime Minister and obtained assurances from the Turks that they seek a peaceful solution. Will he also approach the Greek leadership and ensure that the Greeks do not adopt too aggressive a stance in attempts to reach that peaceful solution?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, the straight answer is yes: most certainly. That is a matter that we regularly discuss with the Governments of Greece and Turkey. What was encouraging in my discussions with Mrs. Ciller was her belief that the confidence-building measures were a proper basis for continuing discussions now that elections in the northern part of Cyprus are concluded. I hope that, under the aegis of the United Nations, it will be possible to move much closer to a settlement.

This dispute has gone on for far too long. United Nations troops have been in Cyprus far too long, and I think that there is impatience on all sides that people should move towards a proper settlement of what we have for too long known as the Cyprus problem.

I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks about an evolutionary approach to the extension of NATO. I am sure that such an approach is right. For example, once a country enters the NATO alliance, it undertakes an inviolable commitment to defend the security of NATO's borders.

There has been a British Army on the Rhine for 25 years. Once NATO is extended, it is conceivable that, at some stage, there will be a NATO army, not on the

Rhine but on the Vistula. We need to be careful about extending NATO; it must be done in an evolutionary fashion. That is right in principle, and desirable in terms of the practical way in which NATO should develop.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask the Prime Minister a question of which I have given his office notice? Are his NATO colleagues at ease about the continuing sanctions and actions against Libya, given the evidence from Edwin Bollier, the Swiss manufacturer of the timing mechanisms that were so crucial to the Lockerbie crime, and the evidence of his engineer, Ulrich Lumpert? Is it true that Lumpert's evidence was given to the Scottish police three years ago?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Gentleman gave me notice of his question about the Lockerbie bombing. Sanctions against Libya were not the subject of discussion at the summit. As the hon. Gentleman has said, new evidence has been reported in the press, casting doubt on Libyan complicity, but after five years, the inquiry into the bombing has not revealed any evidence that implicates any country besides Libya.

Recent press reports notwithstanding, my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate remains convinced that the evidence still justifies the warrants issued for the arrest of the two Lockerbie suspects. The inquiry remains open; if anyone has new evidence pertinent to the case, he should pass it to the investigating authorities without delay. But there seems no doubt at the moment that it is right for the two warrants to stand.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the accepted or agreed new stronger line against Serbian obstruction of humanitarian aid in Bosnia is welcome, provided that the operations are carefully limited, and that it does not lead to any uncontrolled escalation of outside troop involvement in the area?

On the question of NATO expansion, did my right hon. Friend note the comment by the President of Poland, Lech Walesa, a few days ago that it would be a tragedy if Poland and other western and central European countries were not brought by some firm date into a new European security alliance of some kind? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that can be done without in any way isolating Russia and its neighbours, whose security needs are also great? Does he accept that that is the right way forward, and that it would allow us to have a Europe with a new security system, and not one in which many countries feel that they are still in a security vacuum?

The Prime Minister: On Yugoslavia, I can do no other than agree with my right hon. Friend. In terms of the expansion of NATO, for the reasons that I set out some moments ago, it is right to take this matter carefully and to deal, firstly, through the "partnership for peace" proposals. Of course, in the case of Poland and the other Visigrad countries, it is expected that at some stage in the future —perhaps within 10 years or so—they will become members of the Community, the European Union. At that stage, via the Western European Union, it is highly possible that they would enter the alliance more speedily than others.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): The Prime Minister and the other Heads of State and Governments are to be congratulated on evolving NATO even further and, in particular, on confounding those who had hoped that NATO and the alliance were now superfluous. While the Prime Minister was discussing "P4P", we were discussing "B2B".

I have three brief questions. First, if NACC—the North Atlantic Co-operation Council—is so important, was there any discussion about providing it with a staff and a budget, and perhaps an assistant secretary-general? Secondly, if Europe is to do more for its own defence, was there any discussion about how that could be done when defence forces and budgets are in near free fall? Thirdly, if there is to be more accountability of executives to legislatures in defence, as a member of the Select Committee on Defence may I ask whether we too may have a little more of that?

The Prime Minister: We are, of course, moving on beyond NACC with what is actually proposed. On the levels of armed forces, of course the intention is that there should be joint task forces, for example, and joint disciplines. There would be more people coming in to be available to deal with peacekeeping and other matters. Of course, those countries that are in "partnership for peace" would also be able to play a role in the joint task forces from an early stage. Therefore, a good deal of practical action can be taken to prepare the countries in the "partnership for peace" proposals for possible eventual accession to NATO.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his exceptionally strong support team on the important British contribution to this sound strategic plan for NATO. Does he agree that the worthy objective of the distribution of humanitarian aid in Bosnia requires the active co-operation on the ground of all the local troops manning control posts, be they Serb, Croat or Muslim? How could we be sure that that local co-operation would continue if we had previously taken military action against one of the sides?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend points precisely to one of the primary factors that needs to be taken into account before determining whether any military action of any sort needs to be taken. It is easy to say that it is an easy decision, and that one has only to unleash an aircraft or two and all will be well. I say to those who readily advocate that course without careful thought that it may well not be a wise policy. It may be a necessary policy at some stage, but such a policy should be entered into with very considerable caution.

Co-operation among the participating forces on the ground is very patchy. I think that great frustration is building up among Governments, particularly those which have troops on the ground, at what seems to be a complete double standard, with the participants saying in Geneva that they want peace, and acting on the ground in a fashion that denies every single word they utter in the peace negotiations.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The Prime Minister reiterates yet again the readiness to use air strikes. Can he explain how, over these many months, no action whatsoever has been taken where it has been desperately necessary, and all we have had have been the mumblings and the bumblings of the Foreign Secretary of this country, and of other western countries in Europe? How has he—or has he—the will to ensure that action will be taken to clear up the situations both in Srebrenica and in Tuzla and to

[Mr. Andrew Faulds]

mount action against the artillery—the Serbian artillery—which is continuing to bombard Sarajevo? Has he personally the will to do such a thing?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has just illustrated, with very great clarity, I fear, how easy it is to make declaratory remarks without considering what is necessary on the ground to carry them out and without any understanding whatever of what we might be asking the commanders on the ground to do, and, if they have done it, what the subsequent implications of that would be, either for their troops on the ground, the humanitarian operation, or indeed the civilian population, who are there to be helped, if it became impossible to carry forward the humanitarian operation.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. Every Head of Government at NATO had the will. What we need to be sure of is that it is wise to do so, and on that we must necessarily rely on the advice of the commanders on the ground, and, as the sanctions are in United Nations guise, the sanction of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. What we did was to indicate that, in the right circumstances, the will is there to take that action.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In view of what my right hon. Friend has said, does he now feel that there is a key role for the Western European Union to extend the hand of co-operation to central European countries, with a view to furthering their defence and security?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I have no doubt about the present—and indeed the future—role of the WEU. We are at the moment actively considering what can be done, and how it can be done, to give the WEU a more effective and perhaps a larger role. As I told the House a moment ago, the WEU would be the vehicle effectively to provide the European pillar of the NATO alliance, through the European Union's own proposals on defence.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Would the Prime Minister care to elaborate on what obligations he might feel that some countries may not be able to meet in becoming members of NATO? Although I welcome the general thrust of the statement and the Council meetings, does he agree that it is unwise to make promises that may not be able to be fulfilled, and imply threats that are not carried out? In the end, that causes people to ignore the issues.

When he thanks President Clinton for his co-operation in Northern Ireland, will the Prime Minister give us some information as to whether President Clinton is following advice from his embassy in London, or from Dublin, as there seem to be some confused messages?

The Prime Minister: President Clinton has certainly given strong support to the joint declaration issued before Christmas, and he reiterated that in a meeting that we had in Brussels a day or so ago. I have no doubt that we will return to the general issue of Northern Ireland in the meeting that I will have with him on 28 February.

There would be substantial obligations for countries joining NATO. They would, for example, need to join the integrated military structure. Fresh members of NATO would certainly be required to do that. One of the reasons why it is right in practice, as well as in principle, to have an interim approach via "partnership for peace" is that one needs to prepare the planning, organisation and management of defence in other nations, to look at a whole range of things, such as equipment interoperability and a proper legal framework for military forces, all of which, when the time came, perhaps, for a country to enter NATO, would need to be determined.

During the period of membership of "partnership for peace", it is hoped that, through those proposals, potential applicant members will begin to make those changes.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, if the central and welcome aim of the summit—to enhance the stability of Europe—is to be achieved, it is essential that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia does not expand, and that the carnage is brought to a halt? If he accepts that, will he also accept that, hitherto, Serbia has never taken seriously threats that have been issued, from NATO or anywhere else, and that it is essential that it now understands that we mean business?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that it would be desirable both to prevent the expansion of the present conflict and then to bring it entirely to a halt. What has happened has tended to happen frequently. There was no doubt at the outset of the conflict that the principal aggressor was Serbia and the principal victims were the Bosnian Muslims.

Since then, the position has become not quite so clear-cut. Each of the three participants in the dispute has been, from time to time, a stumbling block in reaching a negotiated political settlement. Some of the fiercest fighting has been between the Muslims and the Croats, and has not involved the Serbs. In no sense am I seeking to defend Serbia. I am saying that, if it ever was, this is no longer a clear-cut case of one aggressor and one victim, but a most horrible dispute in which each of the participants has committed actions of which it should be thoroughly ashamed.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Will the Prime Minister accept that at the heart of the issues concerning the future of NATO are Europe's community of interest and the understandable security fears of the Visegrad countries in central Europe? Therefore, will he make it clear this afternoon, as the Foreign Secretary did on the BBC's "Newsnight" the other night, that any physical threat to the security of those countries, irrespective of when they become members of NATO, will be met by effective NATO action to defend them?

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would have put it in quite that crisp fashion. *[Laughter.]* My right hon. Friend is quite capable of doing almost anything, but I doubt that he spoke precisely in those terms. Of course the security of countries is of great importance to us. However, what the hon. Gentleman invites me to say goes further than he would find anyone going at the moment.

The best way to ensure security for the future of Europe is to ensure that the reform process and the reformers in Russia are sustained and stay there. That is of vital interest not just to Russia but to the rest of central and eastern Europe. If there is one thing that would be of immense value for this generation of politicians across Europe to

pass on to the next, it would be to have helped Russia to become permanently a good neighbour to Europe, and part of the general western system of democratic nations.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Could my right hon. Friend elaborate on the integration of the French Government and French forces into future NATO planning and thought? That is crucial both in NATO and in the WEU.

The Prime Minister: French forces have for many years not been part of the integrated command in the same way that other NATO forces have been. As to the joint task forces and the new proposals, France will play precisely the same role in terms of integration as each of the other members of the NATO alliance. France will take a full part, to deal with the point most pertinently, in the joint task forces that are proposed.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): While many of us will understand the caution being exercised by the Government and their allies in the context of the expansion of NATO, could the Prime Minister elaborate on the criteria that will apply to those who wish to move from partnership into membership, particularly in the context of the time scale that will be applied, not solely in terms of capability? What consideration is being given to the Baltic states, given that Lithuania is one of the applicants for full membership of NATO, as those states that are recently independent from the Soviet Union surely deserve our support?

The Prime Minister: Yes, they certainly deserve our support, and we hope that they will take up the "partnership for peace" proposals. The Baltic states are among the countries that have had the offer, and I both hope and expect that they will take it up.

The obligations placed on potential applicants for NATO are the same as those that are placed on existing NATO states—proportionate, of course, to their size and strength. The criteria, however, will be the same and will include, as I said in response to an earlier question, a democratic system of government.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend clarify how exactly the combined joint task forces are supposed to work? He said that they will be able to operate out of the NATO area, and that they will strengthen the European identity in the alliance. As the United States is the only country in NATO with a strategic airlift capability, and as only the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands of the European member countries have amphibious forces, how will such troops be deployed out of area?

Will the Germans participate out of area, as to do so is against their basic law? Will there be integrated military staffs? Will there be pre-planning, and will combined operations be exercised in advance? To cobble together forces to meet difficult contingencies overseas is not necessarily a recipe for success, as we have seen with Somalia and the Americans.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's last point shows precisely why we need the new combined joint task forces. Many of his detailed questions are being considered by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, who will report to the North Atlantic Council by the end of March. I suspect that I am able to anticipate most of the report, but it would perhaps be wiser to wait until he has delivered it.

Although the command and control, for example, of NATO operations in Bosnia has been ingenious and effective, it has necessarily been ad hoc. It is intended to ensure that the alliance is capable of taking on a full range of likely future mission adjustments. The purpose of the combined joint task forces will be to ensure that a proper command and control structure is swiftly available, rather than it having to be provided when a crisis arises.

It is a new concept that is being developed by SACEUR. Its intention is to provide more flexibility, specially earmarked personnel and personnel who are trained, used to working together and deployable, at home or abroad, at short notice under the command of NATO. As my hon. Friend knows, the concept has been employed with some success by some nations—the USA and the United Kingdom in particular—in deploying national forces, but it is a novel idea to use it in NATO.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Was not NATO set up in 1948 in answer to a perceived threat from the Soviet Union? Since that threat has now diminished and disappeared—if it ever existed—and since the Warsaw pact has been disbanded, what is the point of people spending time and a great deal of money looking around for something for NATO to do, simply so that the organisation remains in existence when it has no function and when eastern European countries need encouragement to develop militarisation and further to arm troops like a hole in the head? Why not accept the truth—that NATO is redundant and that we would be a lot better off without it?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman carries many Labour Members with him—he certainly carries few Members of the House as a whole, and almost no one in the country, with him. He assumes that there will never be a threat again. I do not know the basis on which he makes that assumption. It is certainly not made on any logical basis. He is saying, effectively, that he has an insurance policy and he has not had to claim on it this year, so he will cancel it and assume that he will never need it. The reality is that NATO has been the guardian of our security for more than 40 years. It would be folly beyond belief not to ensure that NATO is securely in place for the next 40 years.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): In view of the isolationist tendencies in the United States, should not the President's firm commitment to have 100,000 American troops on the continent of Europe be warmly welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House? My right hon. Friend will have read the reports of an era of estrangement between Britain and the United States. Will he and the Foreign Secretary make a new year resolution to do all in their power to ensure that the Anglo-American relationship, while it may be conducted more at arm's length than 30 years ago, remains extremely cordial?

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier, I strongly welcome the re-commitment by the USA and Canada to NATO. President Clinton showed his commitment to the security of Europe in a most practical fashion by making it clear that 100,000 US troops will stay in Europe. I welcome that very much.

As for the second part of my hon. Friend's question, there was one area of disagreement some nine months ago, but apart from that, President Clinton called for the integration of a broader Europe and the integration of the

[The Prime Minister]

former communist bloc with the rest of Europe. As the House will know, I have been advocating that course vigorously—for example, in calling for enlargement of the European Union. Since then, we have agreed in a series of statements and on a series of occasions.

We agreed in Brussels, where President Clinton welcomed the action that I initiated with the French. As he said at his press conference, they agreed with my position, and I strongly agreed with theirs.

When I next meet President Clinton in Washington at the end of February we shall have much to discuss: Russia, on which we have a common view; the free trade agreement; the GATT agreement, on which we worked together to ensure that it came about; the middle east peace process; Lockerbie; sanctions on Iraq. Those are all matters on which the United Kingdom and the United States are in complete agreement and upon which the two Governments have worked together. As I said a moment ago, I was able to thank him for his strong support over Northern Ireland. So the relationship between the United Kingdom and United States is in very good repair.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Prime Minister agree that Tuzla airport has become critical precisely because the heaviest, severest and most barbarous fighting is between the Muslims and the Croats in the areas around Mostar and Vitez and is blocking the supply line from the port of Split? Was there no discussion at the NATO conference of the need for pressure to be put on the Croats and the Muslims? How on earth can a one-sided threat of air strikes assist in getting the three parties to sign a peace accord when they meet in Geneva next Wednesday?

The Prime Minister: It is not just a question of signing in Geneva. Quite a lot of agreements have been signed in Geneva. What concerns me is whether the agreements signed in Geneva are honoured in Bosnia. That has been the principal difficulty.

As for putting pressure on all the parties, that point was discussed, and it was agreed that, in terms of diplomatic political pressure, it is desirable to put pressure on all the parties, not only the Serbs. There are particular transgressions by the Serbs, where it may be necessary for us to carry out the air strikes we referred to earlier, but pressure undoubtedly needs to be put on all three parties to achieve a negotiated political settlement: the hon. Gentleman is quite right.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): In view of the recent sale of North Korean long-range missiles to Libya, Iran and elsewhere, and as it is now known that the American Patriot missile was less successful in bringing down Iraqi Scuds during the Gulf war than was suggested at the time, what discussions took place at the summit on the need for global missile defence, particularly in view of the fact that the Americans have ended research and development on the strategic defence initiative?

The Prime Minister: Predominantly, the summit endorsed comprehensive examination by NATO of responses to the particular problems of proliferation. The intention is that that approach will embrace the traditional non-proliferation policies and will also review the nature and size of any ballistic missile threat there may be to the alliance and, if and where that threat exists, what capabilities the alliance has or may need to counter it. Yes, there was substantive discussion on that point.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): The final communiqué at the summit referred to NATO intensifying and expanding its efforts to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Can the Prime Minister tell the House what specific or new proposals he has in mind to achieve this desirable and important objective?

The Prime Minister: It was one of the things that has occurred. It is not simply a matter for the United Kingdom; that, as the hon. Gentleman knows, spreads much more widely. The agreement that was reached with the Ukraine, Russia and the United States is a further move forward. We need to make sure that START and other agreements are fully honoured. All these are elements of the non-proliferation programme. There is also the test ban treaty, which was mentioned earlier. There are a whole range of policies marching in parallel in the direction the hon. Gentleman wishes us to go.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must move on.

Points of Order

4.19 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point of order, of which I have given you and the Secretary of State notice, concerns the availability to Members of the House of the district auditor's report on the designated sales policy of Westminster city council, which was due for publication tomorrow.

The inquiry has been going on for more than four years and directly involves two Members of the House—my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) as an objector, and the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) as a respondent. Every other right hon. and hon. Member of the House has an interest in the outcome of what, on any basis, has been one of the most major inquiries ever into alleged unlawful spending by councillors.

It was always understood by the objectors and by Westminster city council, if not by the respondents themselves, that, at the end of this stage of the inquiry, two things would happen. First, it was understood that all primary evidence—transcripts, documents and so on—would be made available to the parties but, if further proceedings to surcharge were to take place, not to the public.

But, secondly, it was understood that the district auditor would make available in the public domain his report based upon that evidence—the so-called "Note of provisional findings", which runs to more than 500 pages. That was exactly what happened, and rightly, when the district auditor reported into Lambeth and Liverpool in 1985.

But last night we learned that that report will not now be made available to Members of the House, or generally to the public. All that we and the public will get tomorrow is a five-page summary. It is as if a judge of the High Court, after a four-year action, said, "This is what I have decided, but I am not telling the public why nor what weight I have given to the evidence."

My understanding is that that step has been taken by the auditor as a consequence of what can only be described as constant bullying by lawyers acting for one of the respondents, Dame Shirley Porter. But the decision not to publish will place the House in a most extraordinary position.

The report is a matter of great public interest. What if the two hon. Members, who are parties and who will receive the report, wish to quote from it in the House? Will they then be able to quote from it but none of the rest of us be allowed to ask questions upon it? In any event, since copies will be issued to the parties, it is almost certain that further unofficial copies will be made and then passed round, rather as dog-eared copies of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" were in the days before the law was changed.

Semi-secret justice is no justice at all. It is surely wholly wrong for there to be one rule when publication of an auditor's report concerns ordinary councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool and another rule when it concerns the well-connected and the very rich.

There is a way in which such a low and terrible farce can be avoided, and that is for the Secretary of State to use his reserve powers under the Local Government Finance Act 1982 in relation to the Audit Commission, and to ask the House to make a return so that the auditor's report becomes a parliamentary paper to which parliamentary privilege would then attach. Therefore, I ask you, Madam Speaker, as the guardian of the rights of the House, to ensure that that is done, and I ask, through you, for the Minister now to make a statement about this.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for his prior notification of his intention to raise the point of order.

My initial reaction is that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the Secretary of State's power under the Local Government Finance Act 1982. My understanding is that the Secretary of State can direct the Audit Commission to provide documents and information, but not the auditor. There might well be a real problem if Ministers could be seen to be putting auditors under pressure in that way.

However, I am pursuing detailed legal advice, and as soon as I receive it I shall write to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall place a copy of that letter in the Library of the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The point of order was to me.

There have been some interesting exchanges, and the House is well aware of the situation. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for giving me notice of his point of order. Although it is open to right hon. and hon. Members to table motions calling for documents to be laid before the House, in a case such as that which the hon. Gentleman has in mind, the motion would not constitute a motion for an unopposed return—as described on page 281 of "Erskine May".

Such a motion, therefore, would not enjoy any precedence over other motions, and it would have to be placed among early-day motions or the remaining orders of the day. Whether the Secretary of State chooses to table such a motion is a matter for him. As the hon. Gentleman has made clear, the papers in question are not in the Government's possession. We must leave it at that, with the Minister's response to the point of order.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a different aspect of the same point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Straw: I thank you, Madam Speaker, and the Minister for those replies. I want to make it clear that there has never been any question about the independence of the Audit Commission or of the district auditor. I do not believe that the district auditor's independence would in any sense be called into question by the Secretary of State asking the House to make a return for the papers. In fact, the district auditor's independence would be greatly strengthened if such a return were made.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The matter has been dealt with; we cannot go on debating it. The Minister has replied, and we should leave it at that for the time being.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Skinner: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Skinner: Between 1972 and 1974, when Clay Cross councillors were surcharged under district auditor reports made before 1982, the matter was placed in the public domain, and everybody knew everything about it. In fact, Members of Parliament representing towns and cities other than Clay Cross throughout the country, including Scotland, were involved. The Minister said, however, that since 1982 a clear distinction has been made as a result of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. It is hard to believe that the Government do not have the power to do in respect of Westminster as they did in the cases of Lambeth and Liverpool, which both arose after 1982. Is that because Westminster is Tory controlled and close to the Tory Government?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that legal advice is not given by the occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Winnick: It is on a different aspect.

Madam Speaker: I do not think that we need a point of order on another aspect. We are dealing with points of order—this is not a debate.

Mr. Winnick: My point of order concerns the rights of Members of Parliament. If there is legal pressure on the district auditor—as I understand is the position—not to publish a 700-page report on what happened in Westminster city council, right hon. and hon. Members will not be able to read it. Why should not right hon. and hon. Members be able to study the report when that is essential for their understanding of events?

Madam Speaker: I cannot listen to allegations about legal pressure. The Speaker is not in a position to give legal advice. The House heard the Minister's comments, and right hon. and hon. Members must leave it there.

BILL PRESENTED

Social Security (Incapacity for Work)

Mr. Secretary Lilley, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Gummer, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mrs. Secretary Bottomley, Mr. Secretary Redwood and Mr. Nicholas Scott, presented a Bill to provide for incapacity benefit in place of sickness benefit and invalidity benefit; to make provision as to the test of incapacity for work for the purposes of that benefit and other social security purposes; to make provision as to the rate of statutory sick pay; to make other amendments as to certain allowances payable to a person who is or has been incapable of work; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 32.]

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 99(2) (Matter relating exclusively to Northern Ireland).

Health Service

That the Matter of the health service in Northern Ireland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Northern Ireland, be referred to the Northern Ireland Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Non-Domestic Rating Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.28 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time. It does two things. It honours a pledge given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech on 30 November 1993 to provide yet further help for businesses next year under the transitional arrangements we introduced to phase in changes in rates bills following the 1990 revaluation. Similar help will be provided in Scotland by reducing rate bills, on average, broadly in proportion to the reduction in England.

Secondly, the Bill gives the Government greater flexibility to introduce, if necessary, further transitional arrangements following the 1995 revaluation. The House will be aware that this is the third time in the past two years that we have brought forward measures to help businesses that are facing rates increases as a result of the 1990 rating reforms. The previous measures were warmly welcomed by the House. I hope that this Bill, too, will be given a swift passage so that local authorities will be able to incorporate the changes when they send out their rate demands before the start of the financial year. Failure to do so could result in uncertainty for businesses and delays in bills or the need to re-bill, with the administrative costs which that would involve.

Many businesses are already benefiting from the introductioin of the uniform business rate. The occupiers of 1·25 million business properties that have no need of the transitional arrangements can plan ahead in the knowledge that the business rate poundage cannot rise above inflation. By announcing a poundage of 42·3p in the pound, the Government have guaranteed that their bills will rise by no more than 1·7 per cent. next year, enabling them to benefit from the current low rate of inflation.

For around 360,000 businesses, however, increases in bills will be greater than 1·7 per cent. next year. Those are the businesses which are still moving upwards towards their full new rate bills after the 1990 revaluation. It is inevitable that revaluations shift the burden of rating between businesses. That has to happen if rates are to continue fairly to reflect the relative prosperity of different types of businesses in different areas. Equally inevitably, adjustment to those changes can be painful. It was to cushion such changes and to ease the pain that the Government introduced transitional arrangements in 1990 and additional measures since then further to soften the impact.

The Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992 froze rate increases beyond the rate of inflation for 1992-93 and allowed businesses whose bills were being phased downwards following the 1990 reforms to see their remaining gains come through this year. That was an extremely generous package which benefited around 900,000 premises throughout the United Kingdom at a cost of around £1·25 billion over three years. The Non-Domestic Rating Act 1993 again held rate increases to the rate of inflation for 1993-94 at an additional cost of some £550 million.

Without any change to the arrangements for 1994-95, businesses that benefited from the two earlier measures would face increases of up to 20 per cent. on top of inflation next year. We do not think that businesses should be asked to face such large increases. However, it is necessary to make some progress towards full rate bills based on the 1990 revaluation. We simply cannot afford a further freeze for all properties. The Bill will, therefore, reduce the increases that businesses would otherwise be facing to 10 per cent. on top of inflation for larger properties and 7·5 per cent. for smaller properties. For smaller properties that are in part domestic and in part non-domestic—the composite hereditament—the Bill will continue the freeze on increases beyond the rate of inflation for a further year.

The measures will provide relief of some £90 million in forgone revenue for around 360,000 properties in England. A free-standing shop in, for example, Newcastle or York with a rates bill of £4,000 for 1993-94 would save about £305. An office with a rates bill of £10,000 in that year would save about £1,017.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): The Minister has mentioned my constituency, where many properties will face such enormous increases in their business tax when the uniform business rate is introduced that they will not reach anywhere near the revaluation level at the end of the five-year transitional period. What guarantee can the Minister give that those businesses will not face an enormous £2,000, £5,000, £10,000, or £20,000 increase, as some of them could if transitional relief is not run forward beyond the end of the current revaluation period and into the next?

Mr. Curry: In 1995, there will be a revaluation based on the values of April 1993—the values of nearly a year ago. Because of the change in business fortunes, many properties may not reach even the rateable values anticipated in the 1990 revaluation; they will not have to complete a transition, because the new values will be lower than those fixed in 1990.

Mr. Bayley: That is certainly true of some businesses and properties, but for other properties the new revaluation level will be considerably higher than the existing uniform business rate, involving transitional relief rebates. Unless the transitional relief regime continues for some years, to ensure that the rate bills of businesses do not rise from, say, £20,000 to £40,000—unless the system continues in a form similar to that proposed by the Minister for the current year—some businesses will incur massive increases, not this year but next year.

Mr. Curry: I look forward to receiving the hon. Gentleman's support in the Lobby tonight. The Bill will enable us to mitigate increases that might result from the 1995 revaluation, without necessarily requiring a self-financing system, so that those whose rates are going down need not meet the costs of those whose rates are rising. The purpose of the legislation is to give the Government the necessary power, without necessitating recourse to primary legislation, to enable them, by means of an affirmative resolution in both Houses, to introduce

[Mr. Curry]

transitional measures financed by a contribution to the pool to compensate for any deficit in the amount that it would otherwise have received.

Mr. Bayley: The Bill would certainly give the Government the power to roll forward transitional relief. I am asking for a political commitment that they will use that power to protect businesses in my constituency—and, indeed, in the constituencies of other hon. Members.

Mr. Curry: It is perfectly clear that the total business rate is hypothecated to local government finance. If we introduced measures that resulted in less money being available for the pool than would be available otherwise, local government would expect us to make good the shortfall. I, therefore, give the hon. Gentleman the commitment that we would do so.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Curry: I was going to give the Opposition time to recover from a state of stunned shock, but I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister answer a question that he failed to answer when I asked it during last night's debate on the money resolution for this Bill? Why has he thought it necessary to depart from the principle set out in previous Bills—and, in particular, from a statement made in the House on 13 May last year by his predecessor, now Secretary of State for Wales? During the Report stage of last year's Bill, the then Minister said that full compensation would be paid and that the Secretary of State would make up the entire amount missing from the pool.

Mr. Curry: The House risks falling into a dangerous consensus. Under the current legislation, if we decide to mitigate, compensation must be provided within the system—unless we introduce measures to enable the Exchequer to finance the deficit. That is the commitment made last year by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, as he now is; and I am fulfilling it in this Bill.

We are looking ahead to the 1995 revaluation. After that, we may need to mitigate further. We want to have the power to do so in a way that enables the House to scrutinise our proposals fully. The measures will be introduced by means of an affirmative resolution.

There is a change. We are departing from existing powers that impose a system of self-financing. We can compensate the pool only by means of primary legislation, such as this Bill. We are moving to a system in which we seek powers to make regulation, to give us more flexibility. We do not yet know the nature of the scheme that we might introduce and it would be entirely wrong for us to bind ourselves, by means of a duty, to a scheme that we have not yet devised. The affirmative resolution procedure, however, will give the House a proper opportunity to debate the matter. I cannot understand why the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has such a constitutional hang-up about the problem.

After that brief consensual interlude, I shall continue. The measures will provide relief for about 360,000 properties in England, to the tune of about £90 million. I quoted examples of offices in Newcastle and York. Some 180,000 shops and offices will benefit by over £50 million and 60,000 warehouses and factories will benefit by £7 million. About 120,000 other properties will also gain. Much of the relief—about £73 million—will benefit 236,000 businesses in London and the south of England, because that is where the impact of the 1990 revaluation was felt the heaviest, based as it was on 1988 values. The same principles will be adopted next time.

Businesses in Wales will save £5 million and in Scotland the rate bills of all 220,000 businesses will be reduced by £10 million overall under separate powers. The reduction will, on average, be broadly in proportion to the reduction in rate bills for businesses in England.

We believe that this additional relief will be welcomed by businesses in the run-up to the 1995 revaluation. However, that revaluation is likely to result in further shifts in rate bills to reflect the changing economic fortunes of businesses since the peak of the boom in 1988. We may need to introduce further transitional arrangements for 1995-96 onwards and our powers to make further transitional schemes are contained in the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which has just been the subject of my exchanges with the hon. Member for Leicester, East.

It is still too early to say how the revaluation is likely to pan out. Although the Valuation Office Agency has been collecting the necessary data, this will need careful analysis before final assessment of the rateable value can be determined. We do not expect to have firm indications of the effect of the revaluation before the spring. We shall then be able to look carefully at the overall pattern to see what form any further transitional arrangements might take. Once the proposals have been formulated, we would expect to consult on them by the early summer. We would certainly wish to give businesses a chance to comment on the proposals, and local authorities will need as much time as possible to prepare for the introduction of any new scheme once it has been finalised. We would expect to announce our conclusions in the autumn. Parliament will also have an opportunity to consider any new arrangements. The regulations giving effect to them require the approval of both Houses and must come into force by 1 January next year.

In some respects, we do not believe that our existing regulation powers are wide enough to do all that we might wish to ease the transition in 1995. The Bill will provide additional flexibility. In particular, our existing powers require the Secretary of State to devise transitional arrangements that are self financing. The Bill will remove that requirement and enable the Government to devise rules that would reduce the burden on businesses. It will enable us, should we wish, to ease the burden for those facing increases as a result of the 1995 revaluation without requiring the full cost to be borne by other ratepayers. We should be able to make up the difference by making an Exchequer contribution to the business rate pool.

The existing powers also require regulations governing each five-year transitional period to be made before the period starts. That would require the Government to take a view in advance on the extent to which they might be prepared to support the arrangements centrally each year. The Government would wish to have the flexibility to decide that afresh each year in the light of changing economic circumstances. The Bill will allow regulations to be made governing one year at a time.

The Bill will give us the powers to ensure that protection against rate increases under any transitional arrangements after 1995 is not lost if a property is subsequently altered to create a new property. In such cases, it will be necessary to derive notional rateable values for the new properties as if they were in existence at the time of the revaluation. The Bill will allow regulations to include provision for the valuation officer to certify such notional rateable values and for ratepayers to be given the opportunity to appeal if they disagree with the certified value.

We believe that, overall, the measure will provide further relief for many businesses and enable a smoother transition towards the new rate bills that businesses will face following the 1995 revaluation. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.44 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Non-Domestic Rating Bill because it fails, in future years, to guarantee that any shortfall in the rating pool will be made up by the Secretary of State, fails to guarantee that the cost of transitional arrangements for non-domestic ratepayers will not be borne by council tax payers and fails to make the Secretary of State sufficiently accountable to Parliament."

When the Government fall, as they surely will, it will be because of their continued abuse of power, their failure to respect the spirit of the rules and conventions of the House, their failure to distinguish between private partisan interest and their public role as trustees of the constitution and because of the contempt and arrogance which Government Members now display for all who disagree with them.

The House is being asked today to agree to every stage of the Bill without any justification. The fact that the Minister did not devote a single word to attempting to justify the abuse of power spoke volumes for the lack of justification for the procedure that has been adopted. I am sorry that the Minister should be a party to this abuse. Since he became a Minister he has built up a deserved reputation for being reasonable. On two occasions I have heard him say that he comes from the consensual wing of the Conservative party, if that is not an oxymoron. At a conference organised by the city council in the city represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) and for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) I heard the Minister open his remarks by saying that he believed in consensus and that he wanted to develop it. The use of that word used to be a hanging offence in the Conservative party, but he used it. Yet last night he showed contempt for the House. Our anger and astonishment at what he did was palpable when he refused to answer straightforward questions put during the short debate on the money resolution. Today he has offered no explanation for why the Bill should be forced through every stage in one day.

As the House knows from the excellent speech last night of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), we are not opposed to the principle that businesses should receive a subsidy as a consequence of the continuation of the recession. We made that clear when similar but different Bills were debated last year and the year before. The Bills that were debated last year and the year before followed the normal and accepted procedure for non-emergency Bills. This is not the nationalisation of Rolls-Royce which, although it was introduced by the Conservative party, we accepted had to take place in a day. This Bill is not to deal with an emergency but to provide relief for businesses in respect of their business rates for the next financial year which starts on 1 April.

Last year and the year before, the Committee stages of those Bills were separated from the Second Reading by well over a week, which is the normal procedure. *[Interruption.]* That is correct and I will give the Minister the dates if he wants them. The House has developed that procedure regardless of whether a Bill is contentious. The Second Reading debate allows Members to think about and discuss the general principles involved. Detailed questions are asked of Ministers and there is time to reflect on the answers. There is also time to table amendments in the light of the debate on general principles and for them to be debated. If the Minister is wondering why the Opposition, who are a constructive Opposition, dealt with matters expeditiously last year and the year before, it is because Ministers sought to respect the conventions of the House and provided time for reflection. There is another reason. Both those Bills were introduced after the financial year had started. Ministers could have said, "We should not be in this position, but we are. It is an emergency. The financial year has already begun and rate bills are about to be sent out. We want to get this through immediately." They never said that. They took their time, as did the House and, as it happened, neither Bill received Royal Assent until midsummer.

This Bill was published in December, three and a half months before the end of the financial year. It is having its Second Reading two and a half months before the end of the financial year. We do not want any jiggery-pokery from the Government later, so I must make the point that even allowing for the suspension of the usual channels, given the narrow range of amendments tabled, their grouping and the normal time for discussion, there is no doubt that if there is a majority in favour of the Bill, it could become law by the end of February. That is the earliest that it will be needed by any treasurer. I hope that the Minister will take account of that fact. If he wants to offer an explanation that none of us had spotted as to why councils need such powers now when they know that they are likely to get them in any event before the end of February, I invite him to intervene. It is interesting that he fails to do so, just as he failed to offer the House an explanation during his speech—no wonder he is looking so uncomfortable.

The Bill differs in two important respects from the two previous Bills, as our reasoned amendment makes clear. Our amendment states that

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the . . . Bill because it fails in future years, to guarantee that any shortfall in the rating pool will be made up by the Secretary of State, fails to guarantee that the cost of transitional arrangements for non-domestic ratepayers will not be borne by council tax payers and fails to make the Secretary of State sufficiently accountable to Parliament."

The Bill is a masterpiece of obfuscation. I think that the Government have signed up to the "Clear English" campaign, but it is perfectly obvious that the parliamentary draftsmen have not paid their subscription. There has rarely been a less comprehensive Bill. Any member of the public picking it up would think that it was an examination paper for maths A-level rather than a Bill apparently designed to give relief on rates.

[Mr. Jack Straw]

I shall read out clause 1(2) so that it becomes clear just how confused it is. It refers to

"sub-paragraph (2A) of that paragraph"

which, according to clause 1(1), is

"paragraph 5 of Schedule 7A to the 1988 Act."

I know that my hon. Friends who are experts in these matters think of little else. Clause 1(2) continues:

"for the words from 'except that' to the end there shall be substituted the words 'except that for the financial years beginning in 1992 and 1993 X is 100 and for the financial year beginning in 1994 X is—

(a) 110 if the hereditament falls within sub-paragraph (3) below, and

(b) 107·5 if the hereditament falls within sub-paragraph (4) below."

It then gets worse. I am making a serious point. If the House passes legislation, it is important that it should be comprehensible. We know and the Minister knows what the legislation means, but a busy business man who is supposed to be relieved of the burden of government and who wants to know what it means will need A-level maths and will probably have to be a retired parliamentary draftsman as well.

Buried in clause 3(3)(a) is one of our principal objections to the Bill and the difference between this and previous Bills. It states that

"in paragraph 9(3A) of Schedule 8 to the 1988 Act (as set out in section 4(1) of the 1992 Act), for the words, 'shall also' there were substituted the words 'may also'".

One of our principal objections is that under the 1988 Act —now the 1990 Act—the Secretary of State is required to make up any shortfall in the business rate pool as a consequence of the introduction of a transitional scheme. Under the Bill, that requirement is turned into a discretion, as my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) and others have said. That means, first, that there is no requirement on the Secretary of State to enter into a transitional scheme even if one is needed, which will place a burden on businesses facing very large increases—well above the rate of inflation—as a result of revaluation.

Secondly, where a transitional relief scheme is put in place, the cost of that scheme may not be borne by the Exchequer, as it should be, but will fall as cuts in the overall spending of local councils or will fall to be paid by the domestic ratepayers, or council tax payers, of the area. The domestic residents will be robbed by the Treasury and the Secretary of State in order for the costs of the transitional scheme to be made good.

Mr. Curry: I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), who asked for a political assurance. I said that we did not use the word "duty" because it would be daft to incur an obligation to compensate in respect of a scheme that we have not yet devised, but we accept that the product of business rates is hypothecated to finance local government, that local government will expect that any money that is forgone should be made up and that if we use the powers we shall top up the pool. Why do the Opposition seek to remove those powers?

Mr. Straw: All that the Minister of State has to do is to accept one of our amendments and change "may" to "shall". He might want to discuss an amendment which states that if there is a scheme, the difference "shall" be made up.

Mr. Curry: Ridiculous.

Mr. Straw: It is not ridiculous. The Minister has given half a confession—or coughed only half the job, to use a phrase employed by the Lancashire police. He has coughed the fact that the Government do not know the nature of the scheme to be introduced so he cannot firmly draft the legislation to take account of the undertaking that he has given to the House, which will appear in *Hansard* but which is not included in the Bill. He has not got a clue about the scheme that will be introduced in the future. It is probably fair to say that, given the way in which things are changing, there is no betting that he will be the Minister this time next year.

Mr. Curry *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall allow the Minister to intervene in a moment.

It is almost certain that the Treasury has insisted on the change because it objects to the fact that it is being required to make good the shortfall under current legislation. I do not doubt the Minister's word, but, having spent 15 years listening to Ministers give their word in the House, I have to say that although he has given his word as an honourable Member there is a world of difference between a Minister giving his word and that word being translated into enforceable Acts. The difference is that Acts can be enforced while the word can be ignored, not by him but by his successor.

Mr. Curry *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall give way to the Minister and then I shall make my final point.

Mr. Curry: Will the hon. Gentleman agree with me on at least one point of logic? If there is no scheme, there is no shortfall, and if there is no shortfall there is nothing for which to compensate. I do not understand why he is making such a song and dance about whether we introduce the scheme. If we introduce the scheme and there is a shortfall, there will be compensation. If we do not, there is nothing for which to compensate, so I do not understand why the hon. Gentleman is disagreeing.

Mr. Straw: That leads to the second substantive point in our reasoned amendment. We do not want the House to buy a pig in a poke. The House is being invited to provide the Secretary of State with powers to introduce a scheme of indeterminate character subject only to the affirmative resolution, which means an hour and a half of debate late at night during which the Minister need not reply to questions—as was the case last night. The Bill should include the undertaking that the Minister has given to the House to the effect that where there is a scheme, it is not a matter of discretion that the Treasury should pay.

I recall the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill, which represented a modest U-turn by the Government just before the previous election. The Government abandoned a scheme which was the subject of the No. 1 Bill for a negotiated pay arrangement with teachers and substituted a pay review body. The Treasury was given the power to override the review body's recommendations and to give directions to it. Other review bodies were not subject to such a power. We asked the then Secretary of State, now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, why it was there. He said that it was just there because it was there and would never be used. Those were his

undertakings, but it has been used recently, in the decision by the Government to impose a statutory pay policy on all public sector workers.

The Minister must therefore bear in mind our scepticism. If his words mean what they say, there is no reason on earth why the parliamentary draftsmen, with the skill that they have shown in the algebra that they have put into the Bill, cannot translate his words now into words on the face of the Bill. The Bill gives powers to the Secretary of State which are far too wide, as we say in our reasoned amendment.

The Bill also allows us to discuss the general principle of the non-domestic rating system and to review the operation of the scheme after its first three years. The law was changed in the 1988 Act and came into operation in April 1990 as part of the poll tax fiasco of that year. The decision to establish a uniform business rate is spelt out in the rantings of the former Prime Minister, now Lady Thatcher, which I have read—although I must tell my hon. Friends, in case they think that I have gone soft, that I have not purchased them, but merely borrowed them from the Library. *[Interruption.]* I wonder whether Conservative Members have read them. They may need a strong dose of carbolic soap afterwards, but it is none the less an interesting read.

Mr. Curry: We are waiting for the film.

Mr. Straw: The decision to impose a national business rate was a result of a frenetic campaign by some sections of the Conservative party and some sections of business against the setting of a business rate by each authority.

Business rates increased, as did domestic rates, in the early 1980s. They increased faster than inflation, but they increased, not as a result of so-called overspending by local authorities, but as a direct result of cuts in revenue and rate support grant from 61 per cent. in 1978-79 to 46 per cent. in 1985-86. It was a simple matter of arithmetic that if services were to be kept at approximately their previous level, if one cut revenue support grant by that enormous amount—more than 25 per cent.—the effect, especially taking account of gearing, on domestic rates and business rates would be to increase them by an even greater proportion.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I am delighted, as ever, that the hon. Member for Lancaster wishes to intervene. No speech that I make would be complete without an intervention by her, and I give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman, who has the misfortune to share our county council, can account for the fact—gearing or not—that spending by the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council increased by 186 per cent. after it became Labour-controlled initially. No amount of gearing could account for that.

Mr. Straw: One reason why I am always delighted to give way to the hon. Lady, courteous though she is, is that it is an invariable truth that any question that she asks contains a major error of fact. If I were allowed to offer a wager across the Floor of the House that spending by Lancashire county council increased by 186 per cent. in, I guess, the first year or so of Labour taking control of the council in 1981, I would not just put a tenner on it. I think that the hon. Lady accepts the wager. If she means in a period of 15 years that—*[Interruption.]* I think that the hon. Lady is wrong. Lancashire county council has a good record and it was in no different position from any other authority confronted with a dramatic cut in revenue support grant.

The hon. Lady needs to remember that Labour was elected in 1981 because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said from a sedentary position, we had terrible services in Lancashire. That is why, in every election since—1981, 1985, 1989 and 1993—when every time the hon. Lady has predicted that the Conservatives would sweep back into power in Lancashire, she has been proved wrong. People have faith in the services that Labour authorities provide, and quite correct, too.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, whatever defects Lancashire county council may have—it seems to have very few—those defects cannot be compared with the malpractices which have been carried on by Westminster city council? Lancashire county council has not carried out the type of sleazy political work of that council in London and nor has it had a character like Lady Porter, who should be disqualified for ever from engaging in any form of public life. Should not Lancashire county council—and other local authorities in my hon. Friend's region as well as in mine—be congratulated on not having as members such notorious political characters as those who used to be, and some of whom perhaps remain, members of Westminster city council?

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is entirely right.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: So am I.

Mr. Straw: One of the consequences, which I shall describe, of the profligacy, waste and sleaze in Westminster—as may emerge tomorrow if we ever see the district auditor's report—is that they have been a burden on business because it seems that Westminster city council has wasted millions of pounds of ratepayers' money. As a consequence, the business rate has had to be much greater than it would otherwise have been and there have been fewer services.

The Conservative Government were responsible for that—there is no doubt about it, although I knew that amnesia is the first requirement of any Minister these days. There is no doubt about the fact that there was a major cut in the revenue support grant and that was why business rates increased. Despite that, the Government——

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a further nonsense in the Government's approach in 1979? He is right that the Government's policy of cutting the rate support grant between 1979 and 1985 forced the increase in rates, including business rates, and the Government then brought in legislation to try to tackle that increase. Part of that sequence of legislation resulted in a council tax which the Government also found too high and, as a result, they had to legislate to increase central Government support to local authorities to bring the council tax down. The policy went full circle. In the meantime they destroyed many local services along the way.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. Under rates, despite what the Government say, average domestic rate

[Mr. Straw]

bills in Labour-controlled areas were always lower than in Tory-controlled areas. It is still the case today, thanks to the excellent work of our Labour councils, that average council tax bills per household in Labour-controlled areas are £14 lower than they are in Conservative-controlled areas.

Despite the truths that I have spelt out, the Conservatives claimed—that was the so-called intellectual basis, the tissue of their policy proposal for going to a national business rate—that high business rates lost jobs. No Opposition Member—it is rather different on the Government Benches these days—wants taxation of any type to be a pound more than it should be. The Conservative party is, as we know, the party of high taxation, which breaks its tax promises, and Labour is the party of probity on tax, as on other matters. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] The Government's claim then, however, that there was a link between rates and jobs, not only stank of hypocrisy but had no basis in fact.

In 1980, I asked the excellent statisticians in the House of Commons Library if they would do a regression analysis which sought to correlate increases or decreases in unemployment with business rate increases in each travel-to-work area. They found no such correlation. I presented that evidence, in the early 1980s, to the then Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. After much humming and hawing, the Government decided to spend £50,000 of taxpayers' money to carry out a major study into the effect of business rates on the location of employment. Rather a similar story was attached to the publication of that report as to the publication of the Westminster district auditor's report. The Government believe in open government and it is something of an irony that the right hon. Member for Bristol, West should now be in charge of open government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) will remember all too well that, at the time, the then Minister of State did everything that he could to suppress the report. Why did he do that? Was an issue of national security at stake? Would the report expose an intelligence agent in Iraq, who might be exterminated, as we were led to believe was the reason for suppressing the Iraqgate affair? Were people's personal peccadilloes being revealed in that study on the effects of business rates on the location of businesses? I agree that those should not be revealed. The answer is none of those, but that the £50,000 study, paid for with taxpayers' money, had reached the wrong conclusion.

The statisticians had been asked to use their expertise and intellect and set up all kinds of mathematical models to establish whether there was a connection between rates and jobs. They did that and came up with exactly the wrong answer for the Government. Their answer confirmed the validity of the work carried out by Mr. Robert Clements, who is now head of the statistical section in the House of Commons Library. For ease of reference for the Minister, the report has been deposited in the Library and he has only to pop downstairs to get it. I have the introduction of the final report, which we had published only by getting hold of an illicit copy, publishing it ourselves and then embarrassing Ministers into making it public.

The report went into detail about methodology. It said:

> "Simple graphs and cross-tabulations reveal no relationship. Multiple regression, which enables a more sophisticated analysis of the data, confirms the importance of the structural and other factors, but provides no evidence that the location of manufacturing employment change is related to the level of or change in rates . . . Preliminary analyses also fail to reveal a relationship between rates and changing number of manufacturing businesses in each area."

The report went on to say:

> "The report therefore concludes . . . that with the exception of office employment in and around London"—

the report found a saving in that regard—

> "it is not possible to detect an influence of rates on the location of employment."

The report then said that many more detailed studies were needed.

Interestingly, it is suggested in the body of the report that there might be a relation between higher rates and more jobs because higher rates supported higher public spending which, in turn, supported high local private employment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): My hon. Friend will recall that, back in the early 1980s, any surveys carried out could prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that 2 per cent. of business costs were rate costs. So the other 98 per cent. were other costs. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree with that.

Mr. Straw: I agree with my hon. Friend and I congratulate him on his clairvoyance. He has not seen my speech in advance, but that was exactly the point that I was about to make. I was going to point out that, despite all the blather and bluster that we get from the hon. Member for Lancaster about the burden of business rates—we do not want business rates to be higher than they should be—we never heard a peep out of the Government about what they were doing about the much bigger burden on businesses, then and now, caused by employers' national insurance contributions.

In 1978, £3·3 billion was raised from the business rate and £6·1 billion from employers' national insurance contributions. In 1992, £13 billion was raised from rates and £22 billion—the figure is still rising—from employers' national insurance contributions. So if the few Conservative Members present to pay an interest in the level of business rates are seriously worried about the burden on business, they should campaign to reduce employers' national insurance contributions, rather than increase them.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am trying to follow carefully the point which the hon. Gentleman is making, but it is difficult to understand his assertion that there is no link between where businesses locate and the business rate charged in that area. If that were so, the programme of enterprise zones which allowed free rates for a period of five years and which has been so successful in rejuvenating many parts of the north-east would not have been so successful.

Mr. Straw: I understand the hon. Gentleman's perplexity because it was widely shared among Conservative Members. In the end, the penny dropped with most of them. I shall send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the study.

First, as the study shows, businesses move and relocate as a result of factors that are not related to the level of business rate. That is because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East said, the business rate in

relation to overall business costs is so low that it is unlikely to be a factor in location. The study made it absolutely clear that it was not a factor.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about enterprise zones. The reason why we hear so little about enterprise zones these days is that, as the study showed, they led to a transfer of jobs within a travel-to-work area, from areas where businesses were paying rates to areas where they were not paying rates. There was no increase in jobs, which is why the scheme has disappeared into oblivion.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): In the so-called free enterprise zones, where rates may be free, the lease and ground rent charges went up to compensate for the saving that businesses made on their rates. So although the local authority did not receive the rates, some businesses were exploited through their leasing arrangements because they were paying no rates.

The studies carried out many years ago in Sheffield, which was a major manufacturing base, showed that when employers were asked why they could not be competitive and why there would be job losses—it was not just because of Europe, although that was a significant factor—showed that the energy costs far outstripped any rate rise during the period when the city council controlled the rates. It seems odd that we are still beefing on about that and that the Government are considering VAT on energy costs. They do not know what they are talking about.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right and underlines the point that the enterprise scheme was one of the most expensive forms not of job creation but of job transfer ever invented. My hon. Friends the Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and for Burnley have just reminded me that, in many cases, the benefit from the rates holiday was taken not by the business located in that area but by the landlord, who increased the rent.

Mr. Bates: The north-east has attracted some £3·5 billion worth of inward investment, creating or safeguarding some 35,000 jobs as a result of development corporations. Many of those businesses have been created in enterprise zones.

Mr. Straw: The north-east has done well and it is a testament to the brilliance of Labour-controlled authorities throughout the north-east. The areas of inward investment in the north-east are all in Labour-controlled areas. Inward investment has taken place in Derbyshire, which is another Labour-controlled area.

Mr. Bates: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No. I have already given way twice to the hon. Gentleman.

I remember it being said that Newcastle's rates and other rates in the north-east were too high. Of course, they are too high as a consequence of the Government's policies, but they did not affect business location or the attractiveness of the area to inward investment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Will my hon. Friend take it from me that, although rates may be a factor, a more important factor for a company coming to a city is what is available in terms of Government grant, skills in the area, the location of the business, transport costs, and good public services to transport people to and from work? If the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) wants to check those facts, I am sure that he will find that most local authorities will confirm what I am saying.

Mr. Bates *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I have already given way twice to the hon. Gentleman.

As Labour authorities score high on good public services, they create jobs while Tory authorities destroy them.

The Bill provides an opportunity to review the underlying principle of the business rate. I have already dealt with why the Conservatives went ahead with a national business rate. In doing so, they assaulted local democracy and, at the same time, halved the local tax base at a stroke. We objected to that, as did the local councils, but it was easy for the Conservatives to reject those complaints. Many in business and many Conservative Members, however, opposed the change.

In a letter written to the *Local Government Chronicle* in December 1991, Mr. Graham Mason, the director of company affairs of the Confederation of British Industry, said that its policy on business rates was set out in a document issued in 1987, but he noted

"our approach to reforming local government finance was not adopted"

by the Government. I am not arguing that the CBI was then fully in favour of the local business rate, but it was never in favour of the national non-domestic rating scheme.

The Institute of Directors is not affiliated to the Labour party, although these days anything could happen and usually does, but it has always been in favour of a local business rate. Interesting statements have also been made by individual business people. Mr. Stephen Boyd, the operations director of Courtaulds, has written:

"At least with the former system you could talk to those who made the decisions locally on the county or district council and have a good moan. Now the decision is based upon the Retail Price Index.

Local businesses, whether part of multi national companies or local enterprises, are an essential part of the life of a community. They consume local services. They require local supplies."

They also employ local people.

"there is precious little link between the quality of services received and the amount paid out . . . It seems to me that the gearing imposed by the current financial regime"—

the gearing consequences of having a national business rate have been extremely severe—

"gives local authorities very little room for manoeuvre.

Returning UBR to local decisions would bring the gearing factor back to two to one, a far more comfortable position."

He argued that the system should be changed and that a business charter should set out local business rights. We would support and develop such an initiative.

Mr. Tony Saint, then director and general manager of British Aerospace at Hatfield, put forward a similar argument in the *Local Government Chronicle* in December 1991. He wrote that meetings between business and local government representatives had always been constructive and noted:

"Meetings were a strong influence on county council members when they were considering the level of local taxation to levy each year. The sharp break with the past as a result of the introduction of the uniform business rate has removed this long and steady relationship. No matter how many meetings we now have, nothing the county council does can influence the level of 'local' tax that businesses are required to pay."

Mr. Bill Michie: The Government keep telling the nation that we must keep state hands off the running of

[Mr. Bill Michie]

businesses. That is nonsense. Next year, the Government may take into consideration the recession and may appreciate that the business rate should be set accordingly, but as the business world has said, it is much easier to talk to the people who run the city or the county about problems. Flexibility was far greater under the old system. I hope that I will have the opportunity to speak later about the problems encountered in Sheffield because of the current system's inflexibility. Unfortunately, we will not have the time to discuss that problem in detail.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right.

It is important to note that Mr. Tony Saint also said:

"In the past there was a proper consultative process in which my company felt a genuine involvement and through which we had an ability to influence the outcome of the level of the tax in a particular year."

As a result of the imposition of the central tax, that involvement and influence have gone.

My hon. Friends will be interested to know that our policy is also supported by the Conservative flagship borough of Westminster city council. Councillor David Weeks, the leader of the council before he was fired, wrote this to the *Local Government Chronicle* in January 1992:

"At Westminster we fully support the call of the Institute of Directors for the return of business rates to council control. Since national non-domestic rates were introduced we have vigorously campaigned for the right of local authorities to be held accountable for the taxes paid by and the services provided to their local businesses. The argument we have made carries even more weight for the smaller businesses, which operate only within the boundaries of one local authority."

If Westminster council was able to collect business rates from every premises used for business purposes, the rate base would be greater and those who pay business rates and council tax legitimately would face a smaller bill because they would not be subsidising those who avoided the business rate.

Many hon. Members have studies or offices in their private houses. Plenty of people run small businesses from their homes. Neither is separately rated. When anybody lets an office to someone else or runs a separate business from it, questions arise about whether it should be subject to the national non-domestic rate. That brings me to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan).

I wrote to the hon. Gentleman as one is required to do —and I always do so—to state clearly that I intended to raise this matter on the Floor of the House. Madam Speaker will be aware of that fact because I sent her a copy of the letter. I also left the hon. Gentleman a telephone message to that effect. I know for certain that he contacted one of my Front Bench colleagues and acknowledged that he had received my letter. I fully anticipated that he would be present today, because he would then be able to answer the questions raised relating to entirely legitimate matters of public interest. I am astonished that he is not here, because in all my years in the House I have never known an occasion when an hon. Gentleman about whom legitimate questions about his conduct of public business have been raised, and who has been given proper notice by an hon. Member that those questions would be put, has not come to the House to deal with them.

The hon. Gentleman's purchase of No. 17 Gayfere street involved a public subsidy from Westminster city council. That subsidy was paid for by council tax and business ratepayers in Westminster. The question is whether it was right for that subsidy to be passed on to the hon. Gentleman. In my view, that depends, critically, on the circumstances in which the hon. Gentleman made his deal with Mr. Ball-Wilson, the ostensible purchaser of No. 17. When the hon. Gentleman loaned that gentleman most of the purchase price, did he agree with him that, in return, as soon as the three years had elapsed—the restriction governing a sale—Mr. Ball-Wilson would sell the hon. Gentleman the property? That is an important question.

My second question concerns the business rating of No. 17 Gayfere street. That house is not the residence of the hon. Gentleman, but——

Mr. Bates: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance because I do not detect that this matter relates to the business before the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I am listening closely to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and I assure the hon. Gentleman that if any of his comments are out of order, I will rule them so.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am raising serious questions about the business rate in Westminster. I quoted from the former leader of Westminster city council—his comments were made well in advance of any knowledge of Mr. Ball-Wilson or the purchase made by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton—who expressed his support for our policy in favour of local councils having the right to determine the business rate. Anyone who avoided paying that business rate would increase the burden on legitimate business ratepayers in Westminster. That important issue is germane to the purpose of the Bill.

My second question to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton concerns the business rating of No. 17 Gayfere street for national non-domestic rating purposes. I understand that that property was used as the headquarters for the leadership campaign of the Prime Minister. I understand from an article in the *Evening Standard* that it was also used by the author of a biography of the Prime Minister. I do not believe that that book has enjoyed enormous sales—perhaps there is some curse on the property. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has decided to duck and run and not to answer my questions, because I know that he is around.

The *Daily Mirror* claims that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton worked for Mr. Marc Rich for six years, during which time Mr. Rich was a fugitive from justice in Switzerland. Did the hon. Gentleman do that work from No. 17 Gayfere street? This raises serious questions about whether the place is rated, whether it should be rated and whether, if it is not rated—it appears not to be, judging by the views of Westminster city council —Westminster ratepayers and the Exchequer have lost revenue as a result. The hon. Gentleman does not seem willing to answer these questions or even to come and listen to them and I am sure that Conservative Members are as astonished as I am that he has ducked out without explanation. But these questions will not go away until he provides a proper answer to them.

I now set out the Opposition's view on the national non-domestic rating system. We support the subsidy in the Bill because it is needed by business, but we do not believe in the principle of a national non-domestic rate. All our experience of the past three years confirms our view that the position that we took in 1988 was correct. Our view is

the same as that of the Institute of Directors, of Conservatives in Westminster and of many in business. We believe that the Government should conduct a thorough review of the NNDR system with a view to establishing an improved system of business rates.

We do not say that the old system was perfect; indeed, it had its defects. Recently the Institute for Fiscal Studies conducted a major study of various alternatives to the system that should be looked at carefully.

When we come to government we will establish a local business rate. We will have safeguards to ensure that it cannot be increased any faster than increases in the domestic local tax. We will establish a charter, as proposed by the director of Courtaulds, and we shall consult widely on our proposals.

At the election the Prime Minister said that if electors voted Conservative on the Thursday, recovery would begin on the Friday. This Bill is proof that, despite that claim, the effect of the recession on businesses continues to be so great that the Exchequer subsidy of business rates is still needed. But the Bill provides no guarantee that all such subsidy will be paid in future years by the Treasury and it gives too much power to the Secretary of State.

Above all, the manner in which the Bill is being forced through the House is wholly unacceptable. It represents an abuse of power by a petulant, incompetent and contemptible Government, drawn from a party that has lost all moral authority to govern.

5.32 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) pointed out that this is a short Bill. It is also, probably inevitably, a technical Bill. I make no criticism of the Government for that, because it is a very important Bill for a large sector in this country.

First, the Bill affects councils. I speak as a vice-president, serving in a purely honorary capacity, of the Association of County Councils, which is clearly affected by the idea of a uniform business rate. The Bill probably affects district councils even more, because they are the unpaid tax gatherers, for the Government, of the UBR. That is not to say that they have any say in the matter —the proceeds do not come to them but go into a national pool. Nevertheless, they have to collect the money and incur the odium for doing so.

The Bill affects every domestic council tax payer because there are no guarantees in the Bill that any shortfall in the rating pool will be made good by the Government; nor are there any guarantees that the costs of the transitional arrangements will not have to be borne by the domestic council tax payer. The House heard with astonishment and delight the Minister of State giving a firm assurance about this to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley), who extracted the assurance from him with the persistence of a true Yorkshire terrier. The Minister said that the Government would bear such costs. If so, why not include that in the Bill? It would be simple to do so. We have an amendment tailor made for the purpose: it changed the word "may" to the word "shall". If the Government accept the amendment, proceedings on the Bill—or at any rate on this point—can be kept short, no doubt to the delight of hon. Members.

To parody the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer about an election in the midlands, I fear that some future Minister will come along and say that the Government are not bound by what a Minister of State said in response to an intervention on a wet and windy Wednesday. That is what we shall hear in 1995 or 1996. I plead with the Government to incorporate the amendment, if they mean what they say. The Minister is an honourable and respected figure, and I am sure that he means what he says, but I am not sure that the Government do. They have often backtracked on their words in this House. There was a time when such words were sacred and if Ministers said something in the House the Government would carry it out because they had given their word to the House of Commons, so I hope that council tax payers will be protected in the Bill.

The Bill will affect business and industry because they face another revaluation in 1995, albeit based on 1993 prices. All the expert advice suggests that that revaluation will mark a shift of the burden from London and the south-east to the rest of the country, especially to the north and the north-west—a reversal of what should happen. The burden will shift from retailing and office development to manufacturing industry, a ridiculous state of affairs in a country which depends so much on that industry. Despite that, the Bill says little about the revaluation and its effects.

Finally, the Bill affects this House. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, it gives more and more powers, by regulation, to the Secretary of State, who can thereby avoid bringing primary legislation, on which all of us can have a say, to the House. I know that the Minister has said that the regulations will be debated here, some of them even under the affirmative procedure, but we all know what that means: the regulations are discussed late at night, when most hon. Members want to go home or have gone home, and the regulations are not amendable. We have to accept them all or throw them out.

This is not the sort of government that we expect. I deeply regret the fact that the Government, as they have done so often before, are taking more powers against local government—and by the back door, not by debate in the House but by regulation.

As my hon. Friend asked, why are the Government behaving in this way? They have offered us no explanation as to why they are forcing the measure through all its stages in a single day. We started the Session a fortnight late; on 18 November. Sessions usually start at the beginning of November. We had an extended Christmas holiday. Not much legislation is in the pipeline, as far as I can tell, to keep us going for the rest of the Session—so why adopt this arrogant approach, just as the Government did before Christmas when they shoved two other Bills through in one day? I do not know whether arrogance, incompetence or the Government's fear of Conservative Back Benchers is the reason, but the House will not put up with this: we have the right properly to debate legislation which will affect our constituents.

The Minister said that the House has accepted other such Bills. Possibly, but the national business rate has never been accepted by the main local government organisations—the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of County Councils. Both are opposed in principle to the whole idea of a national non-domestic business rate. It drastically reduces the independence of local authorities, which is what the Government want. In 1989-90, locally raised money formed 57 per cent. of local government finance. This year, it was 17 per cent. That is a mark of local government's dependence on central Government, and the concept is

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

wrong. The national business rate goes further in the direction of centrally administered rather than locally administered funds.

Conservative Members generate many myths about local authorities. Thank God none has been generated in this debate, certainly not from the Minister, and Conservative Back Benchers have chosen not to speak. They say that local authorities are spendthrifts and that they hate and suppress business. That is nonsense. All councils—I speak on behalf not just of Labour-controlled councils but of those controlled by Liberal Democrats or Conservatives—co-operate with chambers of commerce. There may be exceptions to that, but I do not know of any. They also co-operate with local firms because it is in their interests and in the interests of business to do that.

There is co-operation on planning, on the environment and on services such as waste disposal and removal. There is a great deal of co-operation on roads and other communications, which are vital to businesses and which are, on the whole, controlled by county councils. Such dialogue is important. There is co-operation on education. At one time, I would have said that there was co-operation especially on higher and technical education but, alas, the functions in relation to those have been removed from local authorities. People from technical colleges can no longer see councillors to discuss schemes because the technical colleges are no longer controlled by county councils.

Local authorities, not the Government, are the best judges of the needs of counties and districts. A uniform business rate is a wedge between business and the council which it should not be. The business rate collected by councils goes into a national pool and the council itself does not benefit from it. As I have said, the 1995 revaluation will be traumatic for business no matter what the Minister says.

All the forecasts are that the burden of rates and the revaluation will shift from London and the south to the north, the north-west and the midlands. It will shift from retail to manufacturing and such a trend should not be allowed. I passionately believe in manufacturing industry. Service industries such as tourism play a vital role, but a nation depends on what it makes, and to put an additional burden on manufacturing at this time is a shift in the wrong direction.

We have tabled new clauses and amendments on matters about which the Bill is totally silent, but those matters should be addressed. The Bill says nothing about the utilities of gas, electricity, British Telecom or cable, which were formerly nationalised industries but are now profitable private businesses which can cause more trouble to a local authority than all the chemical industries put together: roads which have been dug up require reinstatement and traffic deployment schemes, but the firms that cause the problems are lightly treated under the rating system. In fairness not just to the domestic ratepayer but to businesses which have to bear the greater part of the burden of rates, the Bill should contain measures to deal with that or we should have a proper Committee stage to address those problems. I know that the rating of utilities is a complex matter but it could still be addressed.

The Bill gives the Secretary of State undue powers for which he is not accountable to the House. As I have said, even affirmative resolutions are not properly debatable because they are presented at a time when most hon. Members want to go home. They are not amendable and have to be accepted as a whole or not at all. Such crucial matters should be addressed by primary legislation and not by regulations.

The Government want to go back to basics. There are two age-old-basics: the basic right of democratically elected local councils to provide and be responsible for the needs of their areas, and the right of the House to question, amend or reject any Government measure. The Government want rule by regulation but there should be rule by democratic debate. The Government and the Leader of the House, who is in his place, should carefully consider those basic principles and not try to railroad the House without any reason whatever. There is ample time to pass the legislation long before 1 April, which is the start of the financial year. I do not think that any hon. Member likes that, and the House will not stand for it.

5.46 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): It is interesting to note that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have not had an opportunity to call any Conservative Member. I am surprised that the Government cannot find a Back Bencher to support them, at least vocally. That reminds me of what happened last night, because at the end of the debate on the money resolution for the Bill the Minister was not prepared to answer the questions that had been raised. Some of us felt that that was not a great display of courage because some serious issues were raised. I hope that the Minister will answer some of those questions in the winding-up speech at the end of this debate.

Yesterday, I said that the origin of the problems of the national non-domestic rate was the lack of revaluation of business premises between 1973 and 1988. I should like the Minister to address that. Perhaps that was due to a lack of political courage by, first, the Labour Government and then the Conservative Government, who feared business reaction to the huge increase in business rates that would have been likely if revaluation had gone ahead. That lack of courage meant that when the revaluation finally took place on the introduction of the national non-domestic rate, there were large increases for some businesses, and the Government were forced to introduce a transitional scheme.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the flagship of the Conservative Government, the 1987 legislation on the poll tax, included that? It was debated at great length and one of the problems addressed was that transitional arrangements for the non-domestic rate would be overtaken by another transitional arrangement because of another revaluation. The situation in which the Government now find themselves was forecast during the debate on the poll tax legislation, and they are now trying to force legislation through the House.

Mr. Rendel: The hon. Gentleman makes a valuable point, but what he says is not surprising, because it was clear even at that time that the revaluation would result in enormous changes to business rates and that some sort of transitional arrangement would be needed for a long time.

The transitional relief was expected to be, and, indeed, was to start with, self-financing in the sense that businesses which suffered big increases in rates were compensated by those that were likely to gain from a reduction. But the

gains were not given to them straight away, and that meant that the original scheme was self-financing. However, shortly afterwards, we entered a recession and the Government faced a general election. Just before that general election, the Government decided to allow all the benefits for firms and businesses that were looking for a reduction in their rates to be given to those businesses.

That was clearly an electoral bribe and it has made necessary the increase in other funds to make up for that drop in rates coming in; that bribe has, therefore, caused the problems that we are facing today—the need to change the transitional relief year by year. The challenge that I gave to the Government last night—I would welcome an answer today, as they did not have the courage to answer last night—is: do they agree that the electoral bribe given in March 1992 is the main cause of the problems now?

I shall go a little further into how the need for huge transitional relief has arisen and point out that it has been necessary in some areas of the country, particularly the rather more prosperous south-east, which had the tremendous economic boom of the late 1980s, spurious though it has turned out to be. As a result of that boom, there were huge property value rises in the south-east.

In areas around my constituency, large rateable value increases have led to large increases in the NNDR payable. That has put the south-east and similar parts out of kilter with less prosperous parts, which did not perhaps gain such benefits as were gainable from that boom. We have found, of course, that the recession has had almost the opposite effect. Those parts of the country that benefited in the short term from the boom have been the same parts that have been hit—often worst—by the recession.

The areas where property values rose at the time of the revaluation of 1988 are often the same areas that will be revalued at a much lower rate under the property revaluation of 1 April 1993. That has led to a curious situation in which there had been huge increases in business rates, which have had to be reduced by transitional relief. But those increases may lead to reductions in the total amount payable once next year's revaluation—it was introduced on 1 April 1993, but the new business rates will become payable next year—comes into effect.

Those huge increases have led to a number of business bankruptcies in the meantime. It is my fear that if the increases are allowed to go ahead, even at the levels that are being contemplated over the next year, a number of businesses will become bankrupt during that year—businesses that would have found their rates reduced by the revaluation had they survived as long as the beginning of next year.

I therefore believe that it is foolish of the Government to go ahead with increases in rates charged this year for some of those firms which are likely to be, or could be, put out of business during the next 12 months, but which, if they could survive that period, might survive thereafter and become viable once more.

There is a good case to be made for saying that the amount of rates relief that has been allowed—or will be if the Bill is passed—is insufficient and will lead to a loss of businesses, which the Government could avoid if they chose to do so. If the Government chose to avoid that loss of business, that might be self-financing because the loss of businesses inevitably means that rates will be lost as well and the country's general level of prosperity will fall.

I shall now deal with the details of Labour's amendment, because I have certain sympathy with much of what Labour Members have talked about and much of their amendment in terms of the apparently illogical way that the Government were planning at first not necessarily to make up losses, but now, as promised, are to make them up.

However, it seems that we should on this occasion support the Government on Second Reading and not support the amendment, because although I have certain sympathy with some of what the Labour party has said today, the point that it is making is a rather technical one. I say that for the following reason. The amount that council tax payers will have to pay in any year depends on what comes back to them not only from the NNDR—the distributable amount—but from the revenue support grant.

It is open to the Government to make increases or decreases in the revenue support grant as they wish. Were they, for example, not to make up the full amount in the distributable amount as a result of changes to transitional arrangements, it would still be open to them to make up that amount by increases in the revenue support grant. Equally, if they chose to make up the whole amount lost in transitional arrangements, they could nevertheless reduce the revenue support grant. So the ultimate effect on the council tax payer is not in itself determined by the passing or otherwise of the Labour amendment.

Mr. Betts: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, first, the total amount of money available in the revenue support grant to local authorities is likely already to have been announced by the Government by the time they announce their decision on whether they will make up any shortfall under the legislation, and, therefore, that there may be a direct impact on local authorities in total from the Secretary of State's decision in the future?

Secondly, if the money is made up from the revenue support grant rather than through a direct making up of the shortfall under the discretion available to the Secretary of State under the legislation, the impact on individual authorities will certainly be different, and, therefore, so will the impact on individual council tax payers in the services that they receive.

Mr. Rendel: In practice, the Government will decide the level at which they will make up the distributable amount before they make any announcement on the revenue support grant, whether or not the decisions are announced in the appropriate order. Therefore, in practice it is still within the Government's capability to decide on the total final result for the individual council tax payer.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, looking at the record of the Government, in practice the local authorities are not compensated by the full amount and that that is one of the problems with the Bill?

Mr. Rendel: I accept that. The problem is that the Labour amendment does not seem to overcome that difficulty, but I accept that the difficulty exists.

Mr. Vaz: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's sympathy for the Opposition's amendment, but does he not accept, as was said by my hon. Friends earlier, that it would be much better if the commitment that the Minister gave to the House were put in the legislation? Therefore, does he

[Mr. Vaz]

not accept that it is much better to support the reasoned amendment, which calls for that commitment to be put in the legislation?

Mr. Rendel: To a large extent, I have already given my reasons for thinking that it does not much matter whether that commitment is in the Bill or not. Therefore, my reason for opposing the reasoned amendment proposed by the Labour party is that, in practice, there is insufficient reason for voting against the Second Reading of the Bill when to do so might cause other problems. It is those other problems that I shall particularly put to Opposition Members who wish to see the amendment passed.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's indulgence, as I know that he has given way many times today. I understand the point that he is making, but surely he accepts that we are dealing with a Government who have shown stealth and guile in imposing taxation burdens on everybody in the country over a period and it would be a good thing to remove the opportunity for them to increase other people's taxation by stealth and guile through the mechanisms provided in the Bill. They may well do that. The Minister is saying that he accepts the principle of hypothecation and that all the product of the business rate will go to the pool, but he refuses to put that in the Bill. Surely, if that were in the Bill, we should at least achieve one thing—we should remove one bush behind which the Government could hide when imposing what will effectively be extra tax on ordinary people.

Mr. Rendel: I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point, as I said in my remarks about Labour's amendment. However, I do not feel that passing the amendment will enable us to force the Government to play fair in the long term, because they are answering only one of the two parts of the problem, which are the NNDR and the revenue support grant. However, my sympathy is not strong enough to lead my party to refuse to support the Bill as a whole. I have now answered that point four times in a row.

As I was going on to say, further difficulties are liable to accrue if we do not give the Bill a Second Reading. I ask Labour Members to consider to what extent they feel that they could deal with the problem of the excessive rates in certain areas that are likely to lead to business failures later this year if the Bill or something like it is not passed. We should not forget that, once it receives Second Reading, it can be amended in Committee.

Furthermore, we must consider not only what would happen to those businesses facing excessive rate rises this year but what would happen after the revaluation has taken place and we see, perhaps in areas rather more relevant to Labour Members, excessive rises next year. The relative value of businesses in some of the more prosperous parts of the country may be reduced compared with the value of businesses in rather less prosperous parts of the community, which have not suffered to quite such a significant extent from the change in business values.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman is raising a couple of points for the Labour party to answer. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) told the House that we are not opposed to the principal objective of the Bill, but we believe that there should be more time to consider its proposals and that it needs some amendment. The amendment is not aimed at defeating the principle of the Bill. We believe that people outside the House should have the time to put their views on the Bill so that they can be taken into account. Some amendments, such as those that we have tabled today, should be debated and, we hope, agreed to so as to improve the Bill.

Mr. Rendel: I thought from the previous four interventions that the Labour party was more distrustful of the Government than I am, but that intervention implies that I am more distrustful of the Government's intentions than is the Labour party. If we do not at least give the Bill a Second Reading, thereby giving us a chance to amend it, we may lose the whole thing. If that happened, there would be no guarantee that the Government would introduce another Bill. That would leave businesses facing enormous rate rises. Because my distrust of the Government's intentions is such that I do not believe that they would introduce another scheme for transitional relief, I would rather we had what is on offer in the Bill.

Mr. Vaz: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman's problem is. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) made it clear that the Labour party supports the subsidies that have been given to businesses not just in this Bill but in other similar Bills in the past three years. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), when he led for the Opposition on this matter last year, made it clear then that we supported the subsidy. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and earlier my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said that it is ridiculous that the Government are pushing this important Bill through in one day.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) was elected to the House in a spectacular fashion, and told the electors of Newbury that the Government should not be trusted. Perhaps he is now showing his true colours. He is more prepared to trust the Government than is the Labour party, which is proposing to scrutinise the Bill carefully and to consult local businesses. Surely he supports that aim.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are supposed to be brief. Unfortunately, today some of them have not been and I hope that the House will take note that in this and other debates interventions should be short.

Mr. Rendel: That intervention was making the same point as others and it would be wrong of me to repeat my answer to the previous intervention, which was probably adequate. I have made it quite clear that I do not share the Labour party's trust in the Government, and their belief that the Government will introduce a new Bill if this one falls. The problem with Labour's opposition to Second Reading is that the Government might not introduce another Bill. The Opposition are endangering businesses —I accept that they may not intend to do so and that in principle they are supporting the transitional arrangements —by trusting the Government to come back with a further Bill, and I do not have that trust.

The NNDR system as a whole is not a sensible way to tax businesses for local taxation purposes and we should be moving to the system of site value rating, which the Liberal Democrats have proposed for a long time. That would lead to an increased transfer of the burden of business rates

away from struggling businesses and towards the developers out to make a quick buck. That is an excellent principle to work on, and the Government would be well advised to look at it.

Such a system would be particularly valuable to those parts of the country, including my constituency, that have seen huge pressures of over-development of green-field sites in the past 15 or 20 years. A number of brown-field sites have not been properly developed and could do with further development in place of that damaging pressure on green-field sites.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that if he pursues his policy of site valuation, that would effectively mean many small businesses in his constituency and other town centre areas paying excessively increased rates? Would not that be damaging, especially to the small business sector?

Mr. Rendel: No, that would not be the outcome. If we can get some of the brown-field sites better developed, with higher rateable values, the rates on the town centre small businesses to which the hon. Gentleman referred would not be so high. I do not accept his point. Site value rating would put a lot of pressure on ensuring the most effective, efficient and productive use of every industrial and commercial site. That pressure is not being properly applied by the NNDR system, but the country could do with it for its greater economic benefit.

I should like to commend one part of the Government's NNDR system, as far as it goes. The Government would do well to develop it further in an effort to overcome some of the problems we have been discussing today. I refer to local authorities giving discretionary rate relief to certain vital businesses. I speak from some experience as a member of a local council who has often sat on panels deciding whether discretionary relief should be applied.

The problem is that the current system is very restrictive. It is extremely difficult for failing businesses to get an allowance for discretionary relief. The local authorities almost invariably know best which businesses in their areas should be getting discretionary relief and which should not. The trouble is that, although they may know that certain businesses deserve and would get real value from the system, they may well be unable to grant relief to those particular businesses because of the way in which the legislation has been drawn up.

The legislation does not appear particularly restrictive; the problem is that it has been left to case law to decide whether or not particular businesses fall within the remit. I give the example of a firm in my constituency which manufactured and then either hired or sold period costumes. The business was struggling to survive. The owners and directors of the business were drawing no salaries and, as a result, at the end of the year the company had made what was described in the accounts as a small profit, only because in effect there were no labour costs. As it was making a profit, it was deemed not to be suffering hardship.

One of the difficulties about the discretionary system is that, in order to be eligible for a discretionary award, a company has to be suffering hardship. That is an example of the way in which the scheme is unnecessarily restrictive and I would welcome any move from the Government to make it clear in the legislation that the scheme should be applied more freely and openly to a number of businesses which otherwise would go under as that business has.

Under case law, it is difficult for a business to obtain discretionary relief unless it is the only business of that kind in the area concerned. Another case in my constituency involved a copy shop which was providing valuable business services to a number of businesses in Newbury, but which was suffering difficult times because there are other copy shops in the area and competition was severe. As it was not the only copy shop in the area, it was unlikely to be eligible for relief. That seems absurd. The Government, who claim to be in favour of competition between businesses, surely should not be using discretionary relief in such a way that only one or two competing businesses may survive.

There is a clear case for making discretionary relief less restrictive so that it would be possible to retain both businesses in the town. They are both valuable small businesses in the town centre. It would be of great help for the scheme to apply to such businesses.

In summary, the Bill offers some valuable help to small businesses and others. It is a pity that the help offered is so small, particularly because of the circumstances of some businesses. Their rates may come down next year, but it may be too late to help them survive.

It is a pity that the Labour party has not recognised the importance of making sure that at least some help is given to business. To be fair to Labour Members, they have worked hard recently to make friends in business and I welcome that. There has been antagonism between Labour and the business sector for too long and I am glad that they are trying to do something about it. However, it is a pity that their attitude to the Bill does not necessarily fall in with that policy.

The Government could take further measures. They have the chance to provide further transitional relief, to consider site value rating and to make discretionary relief less restrictive. The Government are trying to help businesses. They could and should have done much more and I hope that they will consider that seriously.

6.15 pm

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): Anyone looking in on this place at the moment would be surprised at how we have been conducting business tonight and for quite some time. We are discussing the national non-domestic rates. It is an opportunity for hon. Members on both sides of the House to discuss business, the problems that businesses face and the burden caused by the rates in particular, yet we have not heard a single speech from the Conservative party, which pretends to be the party that represents business.

What is going on here tonight will surprise people, but when they see the manner and the time in which the legislation is being pushed through, they will be even more surprised. I get nothing but stares of disbelief when I explain to my constituents how we consider business in this place, the holidays we get and the working time in Parliament throughout the last Session and at the start of this Session, yet Bills were guillotined before Christmas.

We are discussing an important Bill, and the money resolution was pushed through last night without adequate discussion and before the main debate on the principle. It is thus quite clear that the Government have no intention of

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listening to any of the points raised by hon. Members about the legislation, as the financial arrangements for it have already been pushed through. It certainly leaves a lot to be desired. People talk in jargon about the democratic deficit, which has grown to such an extent that, if we are not careful, Britain shall have no credit because of the way in which the Government are running the country.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said earlier, it was not just the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) who was reluctant to come to the House today: most Conservative Members seem reluctant to debate such an important issue. People outside will not understand that. It will do no credit to the democratic process and the way in which the Government are running the country.

The way in which the Government propose to push the Bill through also leaves much to be desired for those who will be affected by it. We would have expected the Bill to provide opportunities for people to make representations and to be consulted about legislation that will be of some financial importance to themselves. That is the normal process of parliamentary scrutiny.

I am sure that businesses have made representations to the Government about the national non-domestic rate. I am sure that the CBI and the small business organisations have made representations to the Government. They have certainly made representations to the Opposition parties and to individual Opposition Members.

Organisations should be given time within the parliamentary process openly to make adequate representations to Parliament, not simply to make rushed representations to individual Members while the Government rush the Bill through before anyone understands it in detail. That is disgraceful. It is causing upset in this place and has resulted in scorn being poured on the way in which we conduct our business. It should be condemned in the strongest terms.

I speak as an ex-chairman of finance in Coventry city council, so I am fully aware of the problems that councils will face in collecting the national non-domestic rate on behalf of the Government. However, there is no need for the time scale that is imposed by the Bill.

Coventry city council's treasurer's department always took pride in doing its business efficiently and correctly. Its officers took a pride in their work which went beyond political pride. In particular, they took pride in being the first, or almost the first, to send out the bills. Certainly for them, there is no need for this legislation to be passed before the end of February. They will not have completed the decision-making process for the council tax, so there is no need for them to discuss the collection of business rates before the end of February.

Yet, despite the fact that Parliament has just enjoyed an extended holiday, this legislation is being forced through in our first week back as though we faced a major national disaster to which Parliament must respond. One would have thought that the Russians had invaded the Ukraine and were moving westward. There is no need for it, and it is a disgraceful way in which to conduct business.

The Opposition's main concern is the pledge by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that further help to business should not be at the expense of the domestic council tax payer. We need to know whether that pledge and the Minister's assurances tonight are worth anything at all.

As hon. Members have said, it is all very well for the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box and give an assurance that he sees the national non-domestic rate as a hypothecated tax, the product of which will go back into the rating pool and not be interfered with. But such an assurance is not worth a light, particularly given recent comments by other Ministers.

People in this place and elsewhere have said that pledges given before elections mean nothing and are of no value. They have been dismissed in the most cavalier of fashions. Reference has been made to things said on rainy nights, and so on. The assurance given from the Dispatch Box tonight is worth nothing. In a couple of years, a different Minister may be in post, so the assurance tonight is valueless.

If the Government want to curtail debate on the Bil, get the business through the House and earn some credit, they need only accept that that guarantee should be built into the legislation, by changing the word "may" back to "shall".

When we see a single word changed in that way, and given the Government's record, we are entitled to ask why. The Minister has said that effectively it does not mean anything, and that the Government intend to guarantee that all the money raised from the national non-domestic rate will go into the pool. If that is the case, why was the Bill drafted in this way? People are entitled to be highly suspicious about that, and to ask that it be reversed and that the guarantee be built into the legislation. A commitment from the Dispatch Box is not worth anything.

I disagreed with only one intervention by my hon. Friends during the speech of the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel): that was when my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said that he did not understand why the hon. Gentleman was saying what he was. At the end of those interventions, I understood only too well what the hon. Gentleman was doing. Like me, he is a relatively new Member, but he was doing what his hon. Friends on the Liberal Bench often do, and that is saying two different things. He attacked the Government for not giving business the necessary protection, while saying that the Labour party's amendment was good but that he could not support it because it was not good enough. He then went on to say that the Labour party was effectively leaving business open to higher bills, which he and everyone else knows is not the case.

We are seeing the classic ploy of the Liberal party. Liberal M'embers say two different things which are reported in two different parts of *Hansard*, so that they can tell the natural Labour supporter that they backed the Labour party in the House on the national non-domestic rate, and at the same time tell the natural Conservative voter that the Labour party cannot be trusted because of what it tried to do over this Bill.

I am sure that, over a period, the hon. Member for Newbury will become much better at that sort of thing and will be able to disguise it much more effectively. He will learn from his hon. Friends, and I am sure that we shall see many similar performances from him, getting better by the day. But let us make no mistake: he was using the old Liberal trick of saying one thing in one place and a different thing in another, so that he always has an appropriate quote to suit his purpose. We need have no doubts about what was going on there.

Mr. Rendel: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that everything I said today concerned the Opposition's amendment and the Government's policies, and was not personal abuse?

Mr. Ainsworth: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman feels offended. I was congratulating rather than abusing him. I am sure that he was doing his best to toe his party line and to behave as other members of his party have behaved over a period. I would not have thought that that was an insult, but if the hon. Gentleman feels that I have insulted or slighted him, I assure him that that was not my intention. Whether I was insulting his party is another matter, which we would need to discuss outside the Chamber, where we could talk more freely.

Much has been said tonight about the connection between rates and jobs, and the need to protect businesses from excessive rates. My experience of regular discussions in Coventry suggests that the introduction of the national non-domestic rating system was most damaging, in that it broke the tradition of consultation between local authorities and business rate payers. Although such consultation survives in Coventry as elsewhere, it is not of the quality that previously obtained. That is true of both sides.

It is difficult to motivate business men and their representatives to spend time consulting, under a statutory system, on the level of spending that a local authority is about to set when it will not make a blind bit of difference to the bills that businesses will pay. As a consequence, although we enter into consultations in Coventry with many good people, others are totally out of touch with current legislation, and seem to think that the local authority still sets the district rate. The national system has effectively destroyed the incentive for the business community to consult properly with local government over the way that it conducts its affairs.

Equally, it is difficult for a councillor to persuade colleagues to spend time discussing with members of the business community who are not themselves liable to pay the business rate why the ruling group has decided to set local taxes at a particular level. Many councillors face a restriction on the amount of time that they are allowed off work, and say, "Why should I spend my valuable time consulting the business community over the level of a tax that is set nationally when I could be participating in determining council policy and decisions?"

Furthermore, nothing has replaced that traditional consultation. Most businesses could write a letter to the relevant Minister, although whether they would receive a reply is something else—but there is no effective opportunity for effective consultation at a national level.

Mr. Pike: Does my hon. Friend agree that, when the rate was set locally, business representatives could meet council officers and councillors to discuss the services that they would receive? That direct link meant that they could often persuade the council to respond positively on improvements to car parks, bus services and so on.

Mr. Ainsworth: My hon. Friend is right. In Coventry, as elsewhere, local chambers of commerce made a massive effort annually to ensure that they properly consulted their own members and made valuable representations to the council. They engaged with the council in a positive dialogue each year. Great efforts have been made to continue that process, but the dislocation of decision making mitigates against that dialogue. It has become far more difficult to motivate both sides to continue that debate—the quality of which, as a result of the break in the link, has deteriorated.

Government Members have repeatedly said that a prime reason for businesses relocating is the level of local tax, but that is not my experience. It may be a factor for businesses, but Coventry undertook substantial research into the reasons why companies relocate—and I am sure that other local authorities throughout the country in areas of mass unemployment have done the same.

In Coventry, it was found that the business rate level was a relatively minor element in the decision-making process. Companies were more concerned with finding a location that offered good access to their market; a good infrastructure, in terms of the road and rail network; and a decent environment for staff at all levels. That impacts on directors who want to live in the leafy hinterland of Warwickshire. It was important to company chairmen and directors that they could enjoy a high standard of living in Stratford-upon-Avon, while being able to drive into Coventry relatively quickly.

Companies also wanted a good environment for their employees, and they sought high-quality recruits. They therefore looked for high spending by the local authority on a good standard of education in the local work force, on whom relocating companies could draw. They did not consider only local tax levels—their decisions had a much more sophisticated basis.

On the principle of the NNDR, it has been said that the proportion of taxes raised locally has fallen drastically. The main reason is the transfer of the business rate to national level. The percentage accounted for by local taxes was once 57 per cent., but it is now 18 per cent. Any sort of decent accountability by local government cannot be achieved while local government raises such a small proportion of the money that it spends.

Under any acceptable system, we cannot increase the level of taxation raised at local level unless we increase the tax base. The Government have recognised that fact, and have run away from their own decisions on accountability: when it got too hot, they introduced the poll tax system.

One of the principles of that system was to increase accountability. However, before long, they were ensuring that VAT rose to an astronomical level to keep poll tax bills down, because they could not handle the heat from their own supporters and opposition of every description. Therefore, they effectively destroyed accountability at a local level by taking away the ability to raise a high proportion of tax. Decisions on the level of council services are now effectively taken at a national level.

Mr. Rendel: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one way in which local accountability could be quickly increased would be by a system of local income tax, so that local income taxes could be quickly raised, while national taxes could be quickly reduced? That would enable a larger proportion of taxation to be raised locally and would provide just the accountability that he seeks.

Mr. Ainsworth: As the hon. Gentleman may have expected, I have discussed the issue of local taxation with many people over a long period and, as somebody who has always earned a living on a pay-as-you-earn system and has paid income tax at the proper rate on the full amount of income, I have usually found that the debate has reached

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the conclusion that the income tax payer is the only person who pays all the taxes due from him. There are so many fiddles and ways around the taxation system for other people that it is unbelievable.

One of the emotional arguments against the rates was that it was the only tax that the rich ever had to pay in full, and that was why they were always so scathing about it. It is not wise to propose that we empty the basket of taxation available and load it on to the income tax payer, and that we should have not a property-based tax but an entire system of income-based tax. That is a crazy policy, which I would not support. However, I know that the hon. Member for Newbury does support that idea, and that it is the policy of his party.

Quality decisions on services are best taken at a local level. One cannot make good decisions at national level about all the matters that are currently dealt with by local government. More responsibility ought to be passed to local government to achieve that quality, rather than decisions being made at national level, which, in the case of Coventry, is 90 miles from where they will take effect.

We ought to see a big increase in decision-making at local level, yet, by the introduction of a national non-domestic rate system, we have destroyed local accountability and the ability of local government to take decisions about the level of service it wants to provide and for which it is accountable to its electorate.

The real problem with the national non-domestic rating system is that it deprives local government of the ability to raise taxes locally and pay for services. That ability should be returned in some way to a local level not only for domestic tax but for business tax also.

6.44 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I make no apology for speaking in a wholly partisan fashion on behalf of the small businesses in my constituency, because in York the revaluation in 1990 hit harder than in any other district council in the country.

The average revaluation was a 15·5 times increase—higher than anywhere else. The combination of the 1990 revaluation and the introduction of the uniform business rate was a lethal cocktail which has sent the tax for York businesses spiralling into the stratosphere. The average increase in business rates in York is the ninth highest of all 367 local authorities.

What is so surprising is that York is alone at the top of the league of massive increases as a northern local authority. Above it are Windsor, Winchester, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Wandsworth. From the top 100 local authorities that faced rises, only another four were in the north of England. Three of those four were in north Yorkshire: Selby, Scarborough and Harrogate. The fourth was South Lakeland.

Understandably, the increase provoked a wave of protest from businesses in my constituency. More than one third of all the businesses in York appealed against the revaluation and, four years later, all those appeals have still not been heard. It shows how inept and inappropriate the introduction of the UBR and the revaluation was in York. It shows what is wrong when a centralising Government claws the power into Whitehall to set local taxes and overrules generations of local decision making.

Local authorities know local businesses, they know who works for those businesses, they know who runs them and they know the local business conditions. They could set rates with the knowledge of what the local economy could and should take. Instead, we have a centralised, ever stronger state which lays down what businesses must pay, with no respect for their ability to do so or to the local variations in economic performance.

York was especially hard hit by the introduction of the UBR and revaluation, but it was not alone. The political cost of sending the taxes of many small businesses through the roof persuaded the Government to introduce their transitional relief scheme. That was intended to be a bridge over a maximum of five years to enable those businesses that had been clobbered most by the revaluation and the UBR to go through the five easy stages to catch up to the point at which the revaluation had placed them.

The trouble is that, in cities such as York, the five-year period is nowhere near long enough to enable businesses to catch up to where the district valuer, a central Government official, had said that the new revaluation would put businesses' taxes. Come 1995, when the next revaluation is due, many businesses in York will not have reached the level of taxes stipulated by the 1990 revaluation brought in by the Conservative Government.

In York, there are 3,867 non-domestic hereditaments. In year four of the five-year period, 2,071 are still receiving transitional relief. The rise in their taxes was so great that they have not caught up to the level of tax that the Government said they should have been paying four years ago. Half the total number of businesses still depend on the safety net.

In the first year of transitional relief, businesses in York received rebates worth £11 million; this year, the amount is still £6 million. If this were a taper—and if the target were to be met in five years—it would be down to the last £2 million, or even £1 million; but it is not. We are speaking of a botched tax; a blunt national instrument. Although it may have helped businesses in some parts of the country, it is basically a crude implement that did not respond to local needs.

In 1989-90—the last year of the old local tax system—a butcher in the centre of York paid £722 in rates. In the current year, that butcher will pay £23,550 in uniform business rate, without the benefit of transitional relief—which is just under £7,000: £6,957. That is one year away from the end of the taper. At the end of next year, the transitional relief will run out, and the Bill gives no guarantee that it will continue. As the company is over the £10,000 threshold, next year it will pay an increase equivalent to the inflation rate, plus 10 per cent.; but it will still be a long way from the target set in 1990—by some £5,000, or even more. Unless the transitional relief rolls forward, it will face a £5,000 increase in its business tax.

Someone who works in that butcher's shop could well be sacked: that is really the only flexible cost that small businesses retain. That is what the Bill will do—not just in one butcher's shop, but in dozens of small businesses in York. In 1989-90, an ironmonger's business paid £3,868 under the local rating system—the amount set by York city council, a Labour authority. Its current UBR bill is £59,100, and this year it will receive transitional relief of £18,700. At the end of the year, however, that relief will be swept away, because the Bill makes it discretionary whether the Government roll on transitional relief.

The Minister said that some businesses might receive a reduction following the new revaluation. They may, of course, but at present the revaluation hangs over the heads of small businesses like the sword of Damocles. They do not know whether the Government will kick them or help them; they do not know whether to invest, or to make staff redundant in preparation for yet another tax hike. They have already incurred tax increases well above the rate of inflation each year: as a result of being on transitional relief, their UBR increases have been the highest in terms of percentage.

That uncertainty will inevitably slow the pace of recovery. It will keep the recession going in York. At the last count, 70 shops were empty in York city centre. They are not all empty because of high business rates; rents have risen, and the recession has played its part. However, we are talking about what is now a national business tax. Rateable values are set by a national civil servant, the district valuer; the poundage is set by the Government in Whitehall. To increase that tax far above the rate of inflation will inevitably increase pressure on vulnerable businesses.

I hope that the Minister is right, and that some rateable values will fall in the 1995 revaluation. If that happens, it will show that some businesses have been grossly overtaxed in the past five years. If taxes are lowered, that is the only interpretation that can be applied. At the time of the last revaluation, people in York—certainly members of the Labour party—said, "You do not understand the local market and the local economy, and you are grossly overtaxing businesses, especially small businesses in York."

I suspect that, in most cases, the south-east of England will gain most from the new rateable value. Like York, the south-east had a large increase in the last revaluation. Unlike York, however—thankfully in some ways, from York's point of view—the south-east has been hit especially hard by the recession, and market values have therefore slumped more there than in the north. York has thus lost both ways: it received a southern-scale increase at the last revaluation, but is unlikely to be given a southern-scale decrease in the 1995 revaluation.

One of the reasons for that is the fact that business rate valuations depend on the assessed rental value of properties. Nearly every commercial lease is now based on upward-only rent reviews, which have penalised small businesses in my constituency to a huge extent during the recession.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): That is mirrored in my constituency—and, I imagine, in constituencies throughout the country. It is disappointing that not one Tory Back Bencher is present: there are two civil servants for every Tory in the House. That demonstrates the general attitude of Conservatives to this important debate.

Mr. Bayley: That is an interesting point. One of our reasons for giving the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) such a hard time is the fact that—apart from the Minister who opened the debate—he is the only non-Labour Member who has spoken so far. Obviously, we must attack the hon. Gentleman; we have no one else to attack.

Now that my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) has set me off, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that Labour has no antipathy to business. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I speak not as a former district councillor, but as someone who has set up and built up a small business. I see no contradiction between doing that and being a socialist. The business was fully trade unionised, and was highly successful; it generated employment, and large rent rises were a potential problem for it.

As for the issue of upward-only rent reviews, if the Government wanted to reduce the burden on small businesses, they would legislate against clauses in commercial leases that provide only for such reviews, as they are being urged to do by many small businesses in the current Department of the Environment review. If they believed in market forces, they would do that.

Businesses are being forced to incur rent rises because their commercial leases include upward-only review clauses, while competing against new businesses with new leases at market rents involving considerably smaller costs. That prevents fair competition. People in the private sector want competition, but they want fair competition.

Many businesses in York are on a cliff edge. More than half are still receiving transitional relief. If that relief does not roll forward next year, they will face a problem. The Government must give a rock-solid commitment to rolling it forward; otherwise, they will simply roll forward the recession.

I welcome the Minister's commitment in his opening speech. I am sorry that he is not in his seat now, because I intend to chase him on that political commitment month after month and year after year to ensure that it is implemented for the benefit of small businesses in my and other constituencies. I intend to start now.

I should like the hon. Gentleman to firm up the commitment and say that, in future, the transitional relief that he said would be rolled forward will limit increases next year and in future years to no more than the limit that the Government are proposing in this legislation for the current year.

I want a commitment that large businesses in out-of-London constituencies such as mine—businesses with a rateable value of £10,000 or more—will pay no more than 10 per cent. above the rate of inflation each year as their contribution to the catching-up process; that smaller businesses—under the £10,000 threshold—will pay no more than 7·5 per cent.; and that mixed hereditaments which are part residential and part business will pay no increase greater than the rate of inflation. Will the Minister guarantee those figures?

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): My hon. Friend may have noticed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is in the Chamber. Perhaps he will intervene and guarantee that the money will be made available.

Mr. Bayley: I am more than happy to give way to the Chancellor if he wants to give that support to small businesses and economic recovery. However, like other Conservative Members, he seems a little tongue-tied today.

The Government say that transitional relief is needed this year because the recession is not yet over. The transitional relief scheme is structured so that the money goes to all businesses facing high increases in their business taxes, regardless of whether they can afford to pay. It means that some businesses, such as the large multiple chain stores with city centre shops, are laughing. They are getting a tax break when they do not need it,

[Mr. Bayley]

because they are making huge profits. At the same time, small local firms are going to the wall because they are not getting the relief from tax that they need to keep themselves in business and to keep employees in jobs.

Is that a wise or just way to spend £100 million of public money? When the Government are saying that they have to cut many of their programmes, including welfare, education and health because of the pressure on their budget, would it not make more sense to target the money that is available for transitional relief on providing help to companies that need it and not to contribute to the profits of companies that do not need it?

Would it not make more sense to put greater resources into supporting discretionary relief? It has the advantage of being agreed by the local authority so it is local and flexible. It is agreed by people who know the businesses concerned and have time to investigate the trading position of those businesses. It is clearly needed.

When it was introduced in 1990, only £23,000 was spent nationally on discretionary relief. By 1993, that had risen to £835,000. However, that is still less than 1 per cent. of what the Government are spending on their broad-brush approach to transitional relief.

On this point, I agree with the hon. Member for Newbury. He raised an important point. Transitional relief goes, in part, to small businesses such as those in my constituency that desperately need it because they are being clobbered by unfair tax rises, but it also goes to larger businesses which do not need the relief and to which it does not make the difference between trading and not trading or between keeping employees and casting them into unemployment.

If the Government modified the discretionary relief scheme so that they paid 100 per cent. of the discretionary relief instead of just the 75 per cent. that they pay now, that would provide an incentive to local authorities to look carefully at businesses and to award the relief where it was needed. At the moment, the 25 per cent. contribution has to be taken from hard-pressed council tax payers, and there is pressure on local authorities not to award it.

The Government may say that, if they paid all the money, there would be an incentive to local authorities to hand out the money willy-nilly. I do not think that that would be the case, because there is a tight statutory limitation on how discretionary relief may be used, but it underlines the fact that the uniform business rate is no longer a local business tax set by local authorities, contributing to local authority coffers and spent by local authorities on services for the local community. It is a national business tax, because the money comes to national Government.

If it was a local tax, there would be an incentive for local authorities not to give relief except in the most extreme circumstances, because it would mean that the spending power of their budget would be cut. That is not the case when it is a national tax. If the Government want to target the resources that they say it is so hard to find this year on the businesses that need it most, they should do more to improve the discretionary relief scheme.

I am asking simply for a firm commitment that the areas of the country that have been hardest hit by business rate rises will be protected by transitional relief on terms no less favourable than the Government are proposing this year in this Bill. I want a commitment that that will roll forward in future years. Also, I want a commitment that whatever money is available will be targeted on businesses in greatest hardship where jobs are at greatest risk.

7.6 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): At the risk of being accused of attacking the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel), which is not my intention, we must put him right on one or two issues. The Labour party has supported businesses since 1945 and probably earlier. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newbury will accept that from time to time it is right and proper that if a political party feels that it is necessary, it can and should criticise business and business performance. In my view, it seemed a strange logic to be criticising the Government at the same time as criticising the Labour party for tabling an amendment. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newbury knows what he meant when he did that and I would not want to try to read his mind.

Some of the Government's problems stem from the fact that their manifesto for the 1979 election said that by hook or by crook they would do something about the rating system in this country. By hook or by crook, they have got themselves on a hook. They have not yet come up with a formula that is acceptable to either the business community or ratepayers in general. That is the Government's dilemma.

I am worried about where the Government go from here. In two or three years the evidence will be mounting that the Government's efforts in controlling the business rate have created problems. One of the problems will be caused because they are creating an artificial platform for the business rate. Therefore, in two or three years business men will receive a hefty bill because the Government will be looking for ways of withdrawing transitional relief.

A charade has been imposed on local authorities year after year. I have had 20 years experience in local government. It is one thing to be a Minister for two or three years and have various theories about local government, but it is another to have 20 odd years experience of dealing with domestic ratepayers and the business community. In my experience in Coventry, local government representatives sat down with members of the business community to discuss the problem and, where possible, we adjusted our budgets to assist them. The adjustments took many forms, such as allowing the council to provide grants which it is probably not able to do under the present system. Year after year, business men go through the charade of explaining their problems to local councillors and asking for their assistance, but the councillors are powerless to do anything because the power rests with central Government.

As has been proved by the events of the past eight days, we now have government by regulation, not by debate or scrutiny in Parliament; government conducted on the whim of a Minister who may decide to invoke regulations or create new ones. That is one of the great dilemmas facing the country, not only in terms of local government but in terms of the way the country is run. The way in which the Government are rushing the Bill through the House is symptomatic of that dilemma. No one can scrutinise the legislation. In November most local authorities will have begun consulting the Government to ascertain the rate support level. In about March they will be

fixing their budgets, but meanwhile they are going through their annual policy review process. The Government are defying all logic in rushing the Bill through the House without proper scrutiny.

We now have government by regulation, but let us consider another charade. Local councillors may believe that they are making representations to Ministers, but do the Government give anything or take any notice? No, they do not, because they resent local democracy, a subject which forms part of tonight's debate.

A contradiction highlighted by the debate is the fact that large companies such as British Gas and the electricity utilities are treated in exactly the same way as the small business community; there is no distinction between big and small in terms of Government assistance. That is because Government policies are ill thought out and ill conceived. In a couple of years, the Government will no doubt find themselves once again having to review how local government is financed.

I have outlined some of the dilemmas facing the Government and the House, but the problems started way back when the Tory party fought the 1979 general election on the basis that it would do something about local government finance. It ignored the warnings and the pitfalls that were pointed out in the Layfield commission's report. The Government seldom mention that report.

As I said in an intervention, the Government said that rate levies deterred businesses from setting up in various communities. I am sure that the Government have their own statistics, but their views do not stand up because, according to any survey, rates represented only 2 per cent. of business men's total costs. The Government have never been able to refute that. Coventry city council has lost well over 30 per cent. in terms of rate support relief over 12 years. That means that it has lost more than £200 million. As a consequence of such losses, authorities such as Coventry had to pass on the burden to the ratepayer. The Government did not like that and called the authorities profligate. Yet the Government believed that they themselves could introduce the poll tax and squander £18 billion in the process. They have never been held to account for that, but if any local authority squandered vast amounts of public money its councillors would be disqualified or at the very least subject to investigation.

For all those reasons, I shall support the amendment.

7.14 pm

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): I have been sitting here wondering whether Conservative Members have gone on strike and withdrawn their labour. Are they trying to prevent this debate by the simple device of not participating in it? I suppose that the alternative is that the Prime Minister has set a competition to find who can best define "back to basics" on one side of A4 paper. Conservative Members probably do not realise that whoever performs best in the test has to face the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) on "Newsnight" at 10.30 pm tonight, which is something that no one would want to do on that particular issue.

I am not surprised that Conservatives are embarrassed by the Bill. It is a cause of embarrassment for a number of reasons. Everyone recalls that when the Government introduced the uniform business rate and made it national with effect from April 1990, and when they set up a transitional relief scheme to deal with that and the rating revaluation, they introduced a scheme that they said would operate for five years. It is significant that the Government had to abandon the original scheme because of the recession and their economic mismanagement and because they did not realise what was happening in the economy. The facts are clear.

The original intention was that the maximum increases in non-domestic rates in real terms in 1991 would continue throughout until 1995. As we know, however, the Government eventually woke up to the fact that the economy was in recession and, as it turned out, the recession cost businesses billions of pounds—far more than anything provided in transitional relief. The 1992 Budget therefore abandoned the original scheme and froze real-terms rate bills for 1992-93. Nevertheless, there were said to be green shoots of economic recovery all over the place and we were told that that year was a one-off, that it was the one year when there would be a change in the original scheme for transitional relief.

Unfortunately, the sightings of green shoots had been somewhat premature and the following year the Chancellor had to tell the House, "Oh dear, we have got a recession; we had better freeze the real-terms increase for 1993-94 as well." The Bill does not continue the freeze in non-domestic rates except in the case of small, mixed-use properties. The maximum increases are to be half of those originally intended. I am not sure whether that is good news, in that the Government are now apparently slightly more confident of economic recovery this year than last year, or whether it is bad news because they are less optimistic about recovery than they were three years ago.

Relief is to be provided to keep down the costs to businesss, which we all support, but if one reflects on the history of non-domestic rating since 1990, one cannot say other than that the Government had to abandon the original scheme simply because of economic mismanagement and because they did not understand what was happening in the economy.

The damaging effects of the recession on businesses have been so great that they have swamped the small amelioratioon brought about by successive Non-Domestic Rating Bills. Billions of pounds have been lost in sales during the recession. We have just come through the worst recession in any industrial country in 25 years and it is sheer fantasy to pretend that transitional relief schemes could compensate businessses for that. That may be one reason why this year, unlike others, we do not hear the usual chorus of Conservative Members jumping up and down and saying how wonderful their schemes of transitional relief and support for the business community are, and that theirs is the party of business. I suspect that they are not singing that song tonight because they realise that no one would fall for it. Not only have we experienced the worst recession in any industrial country in 25 years, but we have experienced the largest rates of business failures in the country since the war.

It is horrifying to contemplate the statistics. Business failures in the 1970s peaked at about 10,000 per annum. In the 1980s, they exceeded 21,000 each year. In 1992, they climbed to 63,000. There has not been a scale of business failures of that magnitude in this country in the post-war period. No wonder Conservative Members are reluctant tonight to speak in the Chamber about how they "understand the business community". They have put the business community through the worst recession in living memory.

[Dr. Roger Berry]

We are now told that 1993 was slightly better than the year before. It is true. Last year, there were only 56,000 business failures, but there was a scale of business failure that in the 1980s, and certainly in the 1970s, would have been regarded as inconceivable. Today, as Dun and Bradstreet and others confirm, every week 1,000 businesses go bust.

In my region, the south-west, the latest recession has hammered our businesses even more severely than those in the rest of the country. That is probably why, for example, the availability of industrial floor space in Bristol is at its highest since the property slump of the mid-1970s. Even last year, 1993—not quite the unmitigated disaster of 1992—there were more than 7,000 business failures in the south-west. That figure is greater than the national figure for business failures throughout most of the 1970s. Last year, in the south-west region alone, businesses were going bust at a rate that was greater than that for the country as a whole thoughout most of the 1970s. That is the record of a Government who "understand business".

The most recent figures are also very grim for my region. In 1993, the number of business failures decreased by a mere 4 per cent. It was the smallest reduction in business failures of any region in the country, equalled only by the north-east. In those circumstances, it seems to me that if anyone, whether it be the Minister on his own or the Minister with perhaps one or two colleagues in support, were to present the Bill as evidence of the Government's concern for, and understanding of, business, they would have about as much credibility as the aforementioned "back to basics". The Government have destroyed more businesses, more jobs and, as a result, more families than any Government since the 1930s.

My third argument about the Bill was made by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and will continue to be made. The Bill provides no guarantee that shortfalls in the business rate pool will be made up from central Government funds. Like my colleagues, I do not want to sound disrespectful and I certainly do not wish to imply that hon. Members are saying things in the Chamber that might subsequently necessarily turn out to be inaccurate. However, when a Minister comes to the Chamber and says, "Yes; it is not in the Bill, but do not worry; there is no question whatever of local government not being reimbursed for any shortfalls in the pool" and one has the assurance, "We have no plan, we have no intention of doing that", so soon after the imposition of VAT on fuel, when, of course, there was no plan and no intention to do that; so soon after an increase in national insurance contributions for employees, after a categorical assurance that that would not happen; and so soon after the biggest tax hike in British history after an election at which we were told that the Conservatives would reduce taxes, I think that the average person in the street might wonder how reliable some of those assurances are.

If the Government will make up any shortfalls in the business rate pool, why on earth cannot that be set down in the Bill? It is a matter of record that, since the Minister sat down, not a single Conservative Member has stood up to answer that question.

Given Government policy towards local councils during the past 13 or 14 years, it would be foolish for hon. Members simply to accept that bland assurance. Obviously, we fear that those shortfalls that might occur will not be made up and that local councils will be confronted with the usual choice. As a result of Government decisions, they will either have to jack up the council tax or make further cuts in services.

The largest local authority that provides services for my constituents in Kingswood is Avon county council. I know that the Government have plans to abolish it, as they have for local councils in one or two other regions, but, given the cuts in the budget of that local authority as a result of Government expenditure capping, those questions need to be answered. Last year, Avon was forced by the Government to cut £37 million of services—7 per cent. of its budget. The party that thinks that "back to basics" is about improving education and about improving good neighbourliness was the party which forced my local council—like many others—to cut our children's opportunities in schools and to reduce day care and home care for the elderly.

This year, my council is likely to be confronted with another £18 million of cuts and Conservative councillors on Avon county council are saying that more education cuts should be implemented to meet that target.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. This is not a general political debate. He wove in one or two general points, which is perfectly fair, but I should be grateful if he would get back to the Bill.

Dr. Berry: Given those difficult, not to say intolerable, circumstances in which my council and other councils find themselves, if there is any fear that the Government may not secure the business rate pool, resulting in a reduction in funds being redistributed via that mechanism to local councils, we should seek further assurances.

My final argument is on a subject that was mentioned by some of my hon. Friends—the control of the business rate. The Bill tackles a situation in which the Government have removed from local councils the power to set the business rate. That power was removed as part of a general attack on local councils and has to be viewed in that context, as part of a financial attack on local councils—an attack which has also taken the form of direct attacks on services and the abolition of some tiers of local government.

When we debate the financing of local councils, we must first be sure what we want local councils to do. If we want our local councils to be important participants in a pluralist democracy—as all parties used to believe—it is necessary not only to take the shackles off local councils, in the sense of allowing them to make democratic decisions properly and freely, but to ensure that they have the financial resources to finance their decisions.

As long as such a large proportion of the revenue that accrues to local councils is directly under central Government control, as is non-domestic rates income, local government will decline further. It is important that, along with the debates about future funding and transitional arrangements, those who support local government make it perfectly clear that non-domestic rates should not be under central Government control but under the control of locally elected, democratic councils.

For those reasons and many others, hon. Members should support the Labour amendment. I look forward to hearing contributions from Conservative Members and

shall sit here interested to see whether they deal with any of the points raised this evening or whether they have gone on strike.

7.30 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): The national non-domestic rate was introduced in April 1990 along with its ugly sister, the poll tax. Both were essentially attempts by the Government to control the amount spent by local government. The national non-domestic rate has been with us ever since.

It is a bad tax because it is cumbersome to administer. Previously, local authority treasurers would set a rate, the treasurer would notify businesses, businesses would pay the rate, and that was that. Nowadays, councils do not set the rate. Instead, it is set by the Government and councils are then notified. Councils must then send out demands, collect the rates, and transmit them to London where they are shared out among all the councils. That is a cumbersome procedure and must cost the Government a lot of money.

That system of taxation seems unable to exist without transitional arrangements year after year. After all, the tax started in April 1990 and we are now in 1994 and still talking about transitional arrangements four years' hence. Can a tax be satisfactory or acceptable if it is never paid in full by everybody to whom it should be applied? The whole system seems to be fundamentally flawed.

That leads to terrific confusion because people cannot understand why a business down the road pays less tax just because the owner was in that property before they were in theirs. It seems to be fundamentally unfair. If it were ever unravelled so that everybody paid the correct amount, the rate might be more acceptable, but we seem unable to reach that position. Revaluations every five years will clearly carry that on. The confusion then leads to appeals and, as other hon. Members have pointed out, the appeals system is clogged up. People wait for years to have their appeals heard.

This is a thoroughly bad tax because it is difficult to administer, to make properly accountable and to justify as fair to everybody paying it. Nevertheless, that is not my main complaint about it. My main complaint is its impact on local democracy, particularly in towns and cities. Cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and even my small town of Ipswich grew because of the virtuous circle. Local business people paid rates, which were used to develop the town's infrastructure. In Ipswich, a considerable amount of the town centre was built on land that had been drained by the local council. That was paid for out of rates, the town centre developed and the town grew. Ipswich prospered and the town's taxation base grew with it. If the town shrank, as Ipswich did during one period in the mid-1800s, so did the taxation base. Its buoyancy went with business.

The Government have severed that connection. The money received by the council bears no relation to the prosperity or otherwise of local business. That cannot be right. The virtuous cycle no longer exists, which means that, all too often, the public sector limps along falteringly behind business. Business grows—Ipswich boomed at the end of the 1980s—but what happens to public infrastructure?

As business grows, there is a need for more car parks, public transport schemes and pollution control. Many facilities need to be provided by local authorities. However, now when business grows, the taxation base of local authorities remains the same, rigidly controlled in Whitehall. A town's success is now penalised because it brings problems that public authorities do not have the wherewithal to solve. That is pernicious and cannot be right.

The Government should do what the Prime Minister said a few months ago that he would do—stop the warfare against local authorities, trust councils to get on with their business and free them so that they are locally accountable and flexible. I believe that an opportunity to do that will arise when unitary authorities are introduced, because then, for the first time for goodness knows how long, we shall have a system of local government in England that is the same from one end of the country to another. We shall have unitary authorities in the big metropolitan areas, London boroughs, rural areas and shire towns. The Government must free those unitary authorities, as they used to be free, to raise money from local business and the ordinary people of the town through council tax. That is what should be done for the future.

The introduction of a national non-domestic rate was justified by some because it controlled local authorities' demands on local business. It was argued that local businesses in some parts of the country were being unfairly penalised by having to pay more rates than those in other parts of the country and that that was wrong and needed to be controlled. Although there was some truth in that argument, we are now in a different position from five or six years ago. Now, no council leader would want to be responsible for a business man saying that his business might have to relocate. It would freeze his heart and, if it got into our vigorous and vibrant local press, would ensure that he was not leader of the local council for much longer.

Every council that I know of—I know of quite a few—works with local business as much as it can for the prosperity and future of the town. Many businesses cannot understand why their local authority does not receive the rates that they pay and why the rates cannot be spent on their town's infrastructure. Again, the virtuous cycle has been severed.

The future of local government is at a crux. If we continue as we are, within two or three years we shall simply have a system of local administration in the same way as the Department of Social Security is locally administered. Is that really what we want and is it what the Government set out to achieve in 1979 when they said in their manifesto that they wanted to free local government from central Government interference? We have gone a long way from that statement—a long way in the wrong direction. I hope that today we can at least start to reverse that foolishness.

7.39 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Bill is important because it deals with local authorities and the financial resources that they spend on extremely important public services. They have seen those resources reduced in real terms throughout the 1980s as a result of a series of Government measures. They are under pressure to continue to provide a good standard of basic services for their constituents. They are also under pressure to avoid the

[Mr. Clive Betts]

necessity of making people redundant at a time when many of their constituents are facing redundancy in the private sector.

The Bill is important for small businesses, especially when one considers the number which have gone to the wall in recent years, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) amply illustrated. For many small businesses, the recession has not come to an end. I know that many in my constituency are still under pressure. Even though there is the faint prospect of increased demand, small businesses are still saddled with the financial burdens imposed in the past three years. Many of them were able to keep going only by building up debts and those debts must still be serviced. Because of that pressure, they are concerned about the impact of business rates on them. They are anxious about the impact of the Bill on the next financial year and in the future.

The Bill is important to my constituents who still face the problem of an above-average unemployment rate. In the past few weeks they have seen job possibilities go as United Engineering Steels announced 500 redundancies and Sheffield Forgemasters, where many of my constituents work, announced a further 100 redundancies. My constituents are concerned about job prospects in the private and public sectors, especially since the public sector receives its funding from, among other sources, the business rate. They are also concerned about the services that they receive from their local authorities.

The Bill is far too important to my local authority, local businesses and my constituents to be rushed through in a day without proper parliamentary consideration. Presumably the Government have decided to rush the Bill through its various stages in one day because they, too, believe in its importance. I can only assume that that is the case, given that they have decided to give the Bill priority and to rush it through far quicker than Opposition Members believe appropriate to the proper exercise of the democratic functions of the House.

It is of great concern to me, my constituents and those of my hon. Friends who have participated in the debate that only one Conservative Member—the Minister—has so far managed to stay in the Chamber, despite the Bill's importance to the Government. I am aware that others have come and gone, but only one Conservative Back Bencher has contributed. I do not know how the Government square the importance that they obviously attach to the Bill, given that they are trying to rush it through in a single day, with the lack of importance that virtually all other Conservative Members seem to attach to it.

It appears that most Conservative Members are not interested in business, local authorities, the services they provide and the proper democratic function of the House. No doubt they will turn up in due course to troop through the Lobby to ensure that debate is restricted and the Bill is forced through. They are so uninterested in the Bill's importance to their constituents that, with the exception of the Minister, none of them has bothered to come to listen to the debate.

The Bill is important for the Government because it deals with revaluations, which have always been extremely important. The Government might like to have had the opportunity to think again about the revaluations that were made in Scotland in the 1980s. The panic that they caused in the Scottish business community spread into the Conservative party. That led to a further panic measure, despite all the advice contained in the Layfield report and the Green Paper on local government finance that the Government produced in the early 1980s, when the Government took steps to avoid subsequent revaluations of domestic rates in Scotland with the introduction of the poll tax. It was then introduced in England as well. Revaluations obviously have a particular place in the history of local government taxation and local government finance and it is important that we subject them to proper detailed scrutiny and adequate consideration.

I am not opposed to revaluations because as time goes by and circumstances change it is often necessary to consider how the burden of taxation should be spread between businesses. Revaluations do not determine the total size of the Government take to fund taxation, but they determine how much money different businesses should pay towards the agreed total. Revaluation take into account changed circumstances and it is important that it is thought out properly and subjected to detailed scrutiny.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) that we should have some form of site valuation instead of the current system of business rates. A site might be valued in terms of what could be expected from future development, which could prove extremely damaging to small businesses. A site might offer attractive alternative purposes and that might lead to an increase in its valuation. That increase would penalise small businesses on that site, already providing jobs for the local community, which did not want to move. I would caution the Liberal Democrats on that policy because they have not thought out its likely impact.

I accept that a gain from a particular site might be subject to taxation, and perhaps that will be the subject of a review of the tax law. Perhaps we should tax on planning gain so that the public sector can benefit. We should not, however, change the whole business rate system, as proposed by the hon. Member for Newbury, which could cause immense damage to small businesses.

Periodic revaluations are made as business circumstances change in order to determine what each business should pay towards the total business rate. We must have some system, however, that reflects the fact that those changes can be substantial. That is why transitional relief was introduced, but the Bill is now attempting to change that. That relief is appropriate, however, because although revaluations are part and parcel of a proper exercise, they tend to have a lumpy effect. They may be conducted once in five years, 10 years or 20 years, and they try to reflect in one go all the changes that may have occurred in that given time. That being so, it is not fair to expect small businesses to absorb, at one go, the impact of changes over a period. So transitional relief is a reasonable response to the problem.

Opposition Members have no objection to a system of transitional relief backing up a system of revaluation. We have no quarrel with the Government over that. The problem comes with deciding how the relief will be applied. The Government want to give themselves powers to determine by regulation the nature of the transitional relief. We know that Governments rather like handing out goodies to businesses, not taking them away. If Ministers can go round their constituencies pointing out how much extra taxation they have saved businesses, they can make

themselves popular. If, on the other hand, they promise to limit the amount of reduction in a business's taxation following revaluation, they will not be so popular.

The temptation is always—the same applies to this Bill—for Ministers to seek to cap rises following revaluations but not to seek to limit reductions from which businesses will benefit following revaluations. Having set a certain poundage, if the Government limit revaluations upwards but do nothing about revaluations downwards, an asymmetry leading to a shortfall in the money to be raised from the business sector will result.

Here we come to the crux of our objections to the Government's proposals. If the Government are tempted to cap rate increases that businesses may suffer as a result of revaluations but take no action to limit downward movements, and if a shortfall results so that the money canot be passed on to local authorities, who will make up the shortfall? We have argued strongly that the provision in the Bill stating that Ministers "may" make up the shortfall is inadequate. We say that the Government must make it up, and we have tabled a simple amendment to that end. If the Government truly intend not to make the constituents of local authorities pay for any shortfall that is created, all that they have to do is to accept our simple amendment.

I could not follow the Minister's argument. He claimed that until he has brought in the transitional arrangements which the legislation empowers him to put in place he cannot agree to legislation stating that the Government will make up any shortfall that the arrangements may create. His argument that he cannot in this legislation prejudge what he will do later by regulation does not seem logical. We do not need to know exactly what the transitional arrangements will be before we are given a commitment in legislation that any shortfall resulting from those arrangements will be made up.

The only reason I can detect for the Minister's claim that such a commitment cannot be given in legislation now is that he may know of circumstances in which it may not be possible or convenient for the Government to deliver that commitment. He may give the House his word in all honour that he has no plans not to make up the shortfall once the legislation is passed, but unfortunately my constituents have heard Ministers say such things in the past, and then later to say that circumstances had unfortunately changed so that the original commitments could not be honoured. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) clearly said, the Minister giving the House these commitments tonight may not be the Minister in charge in two years' time when they are not honoured.

I must also tell the hon. Member for Newbury that he is displaying funny logic when he says that we should not vote against Second Reading on the ground that we should trust the Government to bring in another Bill later. My constituents cannot trust the Government because the Government have broken promises in the past, especially during the election, and they would sooner not trust the Government now. We should not allow the Government a Bill that relies on trust, or trust them to introduce another Bill in due course. The House may express the wish not to give the Bill a Second Reading because the Bill is inadequate; it does not give us a commitment that a Minister "shall" make good any future shortfall. It is therefore better to vote the Bill down and then argue the case for a different Bill. Even better, we might persuade the Government to accept our amendment, and then we can all have done with the problem.

I cannot return to my constituents and tell them that I voted for Second Reading because I trusted a future Conservative Secretary of State for the Environment. Such a remark would leave me in danger of deselection. No Labour Member can trust a Conservative Secretary of State for the Environment with local government finance after what the Minister's predecessors have done to local government finance and services since 1979. Any Labour Member who gave such trust would find it difficult to convince his supporters in the constituency that he had not temporarily taken leave of his senses.

What would happen if the Bill were passed and the shortfall not automatically made good but left to the judgment of a future Minister? What would be the consequences for local authorities and their constituents? Local authorities would face a choice. They raise almost all their own revenue, with the small exception of charges which, outside the statutory housing account, are fairly limited. If the business rate does not provide the resources and the Government do not increase the revenue support grant, the council tax will have to be put up to compensate.

Contrary to certain misunderstandings, the Government do not limit the amount of council tax: they cap relevant expenditure. If the business rate is reduced and the relevant expenditure is unchanged, the council tax can be increased to make up the difference. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Newbury, who said that the Government can fiddle the figures as they choose in order to make up any shortfall in the business rate—for instance, by altering accordingly the relevant amount of revenue support grant. We should be trying to render Government actions transparent and to limit their opportunities to switch between headings in a way that disadvantages local authorities.

This will be a difficult choice for local authorities to make, but I know what Ministers will say. If any Labour-controlled authority faced a reduction in business rate that resulted in a shortfall and then sought to increase the council tax, the Secretary of State would castigate that authority. We can easily imagine which authorities will head the list, according to their political unpopularity at the time——

Mr. Mike Hall: Wandsworth, Westminster——

Mr. Betts: Those names do not exactly spring to mind, although given how Westminster has spent public money in the past it may well spring to mind tomorrow when the report is produced. If as a result of the measure local authorities had to increase the council tax, I know what the Minister's reaction would be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn spoke about the understanding of business leaders of the current difficulties facing local government. Ministers do not address the enormous problem of gearing, which is central to local government accountability and democracy. When local government revenue is cut by 1 per cent., council tax has to rise by 5 per cent. That is because council tax accounts for less than 20 per cent. of local government revenue. The gearing factor is difficult to explain to constituents. Perhaps that is why Ministers do not bother to address it: they know that it is unpopular, but ultimately it is their responsibility.

[Mr. Betts]

The Government might decide to tamper with the capping rules, especially by way of the year on year expenditure increase, to try to constrain local government from passing on, by increases in council tax, any shortfall in the business rate. I would not put that past the Government. If local authorities decide, for reasons particular to their areas, that an increase in council tax to support a reduction in the business rate is inappropriate, they can reduce expenditure. But that would be a most appalling prospect for my authority.

It is easy for Sheffield to calculate the impact this year, under a transitional arrangement, of a shortfall of £90 million which is not made up by the Secretary of State. As Sheffield is approximately one hundredth of the country, it would lose about £900,000. That is not a large sum compared with the reduction that my authority currently faces. A clear, concise and well argued report from the city treasurer points to a potential shortfall next year of between £30 million and £40 million in the authority's resources to deliver the current standard of services.

That report is not a political gesture to frighten constituents or to push the Government into a more favourable settlement of the rate support grant. It is not a case of doing away with luxuries in Sheffield, unless the Government think that nursery education, which is not statutory, is a luxury. Some Tory authorities such as the one in Gloucester have never provided that service even though they have had the rate support grant to pay for it. Such services, which the Government regard as luxuries, are threatened in my constituency.

A shortfall of £900,000 would add to a serious and desperate situation. I shall spell out in simple terms what it would mean for people in Sheffield. It would pay for about 90 home helps. That is one of the most important services provided by local authorities because it allows the elderly to be independent and to stay in their homes. I understood that that was what care in the community was all about, and home helps are a vital part of the process.

Such a shortfall could mean the closure of three or four primary schools, and that is on top of the review already undertaken by the council. The report of that was sent to the Secretary of State several months ago, but we are still waiting for an answer. The shortfall could mean the complete abolition of nursery education. It could close every library in my constituency and mean the end of refuse collection. Compared with the vast amount that the Government spend each year, £900,000 may not seem like much, but it can have a serious effect on a local authority. Of course, there will be no such effect if we trust the Secretary of State for the Environment, whoever he may be in two years if the Government are still around.

My constituents have good reason to tell me not to trust Ministers but to argue for guarantees to be written into the legislation so that people will not suffer further increases in council tax or reductions in expenditure. That could happen if Ministers find that plans which they have no reason to implement now may be necessary in the future.

All our debates on local government finance suffer from the process that went on during the 1980s when the Government's intention was to reduce local government expenditure. They thought they could do it initially by enforcing reductions in rate support grant and became rather upset when Labour authorities raised the rates to compensate and were returned with larger majorities. The Government thought that Labour authorities would have to cut expenditure or impose massive rate increases and be voted out of office. But in the end the Government got the blame and decided to introduce a panoply of measures on capping and on restricting the creation of local authority companies.

Ultimately, the Government decided to remove from local authorities the power to levy a business rate. When the business rate was centralised the Government realised that they would be criticised when revaluations raised it. They did not like that very much and sought to introduce transitional arrangements. However, the Government have a problem with transitional arrangements which work in only one direction because that creates a potential shortfall and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, the Treasury is not prepared to underwrite it permanently. That is the crux of the argument.

The Government have passed one piece of legislation after another and have not thought about the consequences. Their sole objective is to control local authorities because they do not agree with the principle of local democracy and accountability and the freedom to deliver services. If those services are wrong and the rates are too high, councillors will be voted out of office. In most of our debates on local government there is a fundamental difference on that issue.

On one issue after another the Government re-legislate and the matter has got out of hand as they try to keep local authorities under control. Authorities are innovative and often get around the legislation, forcing the Government to introduce further measures. It is sad that there cannot be a partnership between central and local government. The Government talk about that from time to time, but they are not prepared to put their ideas into practice. Some of my hon. Friends spoke about trusting Ministers, but the problem is that Ministers are not prepared to trust local government. Perhaps I should rephrase that by saying that they are not prepared to trust the people who elect councillors to make the right decisions.

We have heard a good deal about the impact of the measure on business. The hon. Member for Newbury spoke patronisingly about Labour's new-found partnership with business. We have not had much experience of Liberal local authorities entering into partnership with business because there are not many such authorities around.

However, while the Government have been talking about partnership with business at a national level and producing a massive list of 78 projects of partnership between the public and private sectors—but delivering very few of them—the reality is that in the 1980s those business ratepayers about whom we are talking in the Bill have been entering into partnerships with Labour-controlled local authorities up and down the country to regenerate their cities. That was going on in Sheffield. It was going on when the Government produced a policy document on inner city regeneration which did not mention local government or local authorities once.

The late Lord Ridley was Secretary of State at the time and was responsible for that. As hon. Members have frequently said in the debate, it is important that we look at the issue of business rates in that wider context and get that issue back on the agenda. The measure is fundamentally wrong because it continues to presume that business rates should be levied and determined by central

Government, that they should not be levied at local level, that local government should not be entering into real partnerships with business in their community and that they should levy the business rate and have a meaningful dialogue and proper consultation with local businesses about that.

When I was leader of Sheffied council, we had regular meetings with local businesses. They started before I became leader and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie), who is present, can remember those meetings, when businesses used to come in and talk to the council about their finances and the level of business rate for the coming year. That is proper.

I remember one business leader who, once the Government had introduced the changes to centralise business rates as part of their general programme of centralising things to do with local government, taking away local democracy, said, "What is the point in coming? One of the major reasons why we come to talk to you is about the services you provide, and we shall still come to talk about that, but also about the level of business rate."

We used to have a good turnout. Occasionally we had arguments. We certainly had one or two rows in the early 1980s about the level of business rates. But when the arguments came down to what impact the rates had, we had to accept, as was said earlier, that business rates on the manufacturing industry in Sheffield—there were some large firms in the steel and engineering industry there at that time, most of which are either small or non-existent firms now because of the problems of recession during the 1980s—were about 2 per cent. They were relatively small. Therefore, even a significant change of 10 per cent. did not really make any difference. It certainly did not lead to the massive job losses, redundancies and closures that hit Sheffield in the early 1980s.

Mr. Pike: Is it not a fact that the type of situation to which my hon. Friend is referring in Sheffield was the norm between most business communities and Labour authorities throughout the country, and was something that the Conservative party failed to recognise existed for the whole of the period back in the 1970s and 1980s, and that many businesses regret that the Conservative party introduced that legislation in 1988?

Mr. Betts: That is absolutely right. Those discussions, working relationships and the development of partnerships were largely instigated and created by Labour local authorities. It took central Government a long time to recognise that. They preferred to perpetuate the myths of hostility between Labour local authorities and local business.

The reality is that many local businesses, particularly manufacturing, have come to see that the Labour party cares and wants to respond to their problems, and that the Government no longer believe that manufacturing industry is important to the country. There is something crucial and important there and the penny is beginning to drop with many businesses that they have far more in common with our approach to the long-term development of our economy than with the short-termism and wrong thinking that the Government have gone in for with manufacturing industry.

That accountability is important. Those meetings are important. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has said, they are important for local authorities. It is important to recognise that there is something wrong with current legislation, which will be continued by the Bill. Local authorities can gain from development of housing through current legislation because if there are more houses, there will be more people living in them and therefore more potential to pay council tax.

In south Yorkshire we have a policy throughout all local authorities to try to get small firms to grow. The south Yorkshire pension fund has been active in that regard and the pension authority there has a policy of allocating, over a period, 10 per cent. of its pension fund specifically for the purpose of trying to develop new firms and help small firms to grow. But if one has such a policy to attract new business to the area, to help small businesses to start up and grow into medium-sized firms, there is no return at all. The business rate goes off down to the centre.

What a ridiculous system. Local authorities are collecting all that money around the country. Then it goes back to the Treasury. Then, if we are lucky, and if we can trust the Secretary of State for the Environment, it all comes back to local authorities. It is not in any way distributed according to the success of that local authority in attracting business to its area, but is paid out purely on the basis of per capita allocation which, again, encourages local authorities to take measures perhaps to build houses and bring more population into their areas.

The issue of the centralisation of the business rate and the continuation of that centralisation, as contained in the Bill, reflects the attitude of the Government. They are not bothered about local authorities getting involved in the promotion and development of their local economy, in working with business to create a successful climate for business, in helping small businesses to grow. None of those things appears to be important to the Government —or, if they are, the measures that the Government have taken by centralising business rates have done nothing whatever to assist in that process.

I do not understand the Government's arguments against returning business rates to where, in my view, they properly belong—with the local authority, which can then legislate properly in its area, take account of local circumstances and get some benefit from being successful in developing an industrial and economic policy for its area where businesses grow and are created. I should have thought that the Government would want to encourage local authorities to do that, but there is no sign in their policy and no sign in the Bill that their intent will be carried through in the way the proposed legislation is drawn up.

In the early 1980s, when business rates appeared to pose such a problem for the Government, they eventually took steps to bring them in on a standard basis throughout the country. That was purely because of the arguments about the level of rates that local authorities were levying in response to the cuts in revenue support grant being made by central Government at that time.

I made the point earlier that we were being elected with bigger majorities where Labour was in control because we were defending local services from the reductions that central Government brought in. In fact, domestic rates were rising faster than business rates at that time, for the simple reason that we had domestic rate relief—the protection that was given at that time for domestic rates. But in the early 1980s, the Government froze that relief at a standard amount and therefore any increase that was levied on rates, because domestic rates were at a slightly lower level than business rates, posed a bigger percentage

[Mr. Betts]

increase for domestic rates than business rates at that time. Therefore, it appeared that local authorities were simply transferring expenditure on to the business ratepayer. The Government knew that in most cases that ratepayer did not have a vote in local elections, so it was an easy way to raise money without democratic accountability. That was totally wrong, as business rates were linked to domestic rates and the percentage increases for all authorities because of domestic rate relief were higher in the domestic sector.

If central Government wanted to link business rate increases to council tax increases to ensure that the people who vote in local elections were also tied directly into any increases in expenditure that local authorities went in for, there is no reason why that should not be the case once again. I do not necessarily argue it, but if the Government are concerned about that, there is no reason why it could not be done.

As I have outlined at some length, it is important that the Government should think again about the essence of what they are proposing. It is clearly an important measure, although it might seem dry and technical. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn outlined some of the problems that any constituent might have in digesting, at first glance, some of the wording of the clauses and in understanding what they mean. Despite the convolutions, the Bill could have major consequences for all our constituents if the shortfall in any form of transitional relief were not made up. That would have an impact on our already hard-pressed local authorities, so that they would have to increase council tax further, or cut services further, with implications for jobs.

That important issue should make all of us stop and think twice about the measure. All that we need to remove all those fears and worries is a simple commitment—from the Secretary of State, the Minister for Local Government and Planning or the Under-Secretary of State—to change one word. Instead of saying that the Secretary of State "may" make up the shortfall if he chooses, we should have the word "shall". If that were done, we should have no worries about cuts in local authority expenditure or increases in council taxes resulting from the Bill. We would be safe and secure in the knowledge that small businesses were protected by transitional relief, which would be proper and right, without the impact on local authorities that many of us are worried about. Many of us are not prepared to trust this or any other Tory Secretary of State to deliver on that in the future.

8.21 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The important issue in the debate is trust. Members of Parliament are being asked whether the Government are to be trusted to do what they have said that they will do if there is a shortfall in the unified business rate pool. That issue is particularly important given the Government's record on local authority finance over the past 15 years.

With the exception of the Minister's speech, all speeches tonight have come from Opposition Members. While listening to them, I tried to think of one word that would sum up that record, given that they are asking us to trust them. The only description that I could come up with was lousy. On any criteria, their handling of local authority finance, including the unified business rate, has been not only abysmal but costly. If but a fraction of the resources that the Government have wasted in trying to prop up their discredited policies on local government finance had been available for investment in jobs and industry, unemployment might be lower.

The Government's policies on local government finance have also been about centralisation. The unified business rate was a centralising measure. The Government, deliberately and unjustifiably, set out to pillory local government, saying that it was untrustworthy and inefficient. The history of local government over decades proves that that was a fallacy, but the Government succeeded in shifting the blame for the problems that they had created on to local government. The Government had to bring in a mechanism that put their prejudices into reality and hence was born the unified business rate.

The Minister of State, who has just come back into the Chamber, said that the Government wanted to build on the success of the unified business rate. I do not know where the Minister has been over the past few years. I know that some time ago he was in the European Parliament, because that was where we first met. The businesses in my constituency would not agree that the unified business rate has been a success. Their view is that it has been an unmitigated disaster. However, even I am prepared to concede a little glimmer of success to the Government in this abysmal saga. It is that they have made local businesses ask for the return of the old rating system. It has put local government in a good light because businesses realise that they were getting a good deal when authorities set and collected the business rate. It was only when the Government got their dirty fingers on the system that business rates rocketed.

I am advised that the Minister of State is due to visit Stoke-on-Trent shortly to address the local chamber of commerce. We welcome that and we look forward to seeing him there. He will have the opportunity to explain why he is telling the House, the country and the local business community that they can trust the Government to use their discretion, if there is a shortfall in the pool, to make a contribution to meet it. I shall be interested to see what sort of reaction he gets. He would be well advised not to place too much faith in a positive reaction from the businesses in my constituency. I guess that that would apply no matter which part of the country he visited with that message.

The record does not stack up. The Government have no justification for saying that they are trustworthy. Because of what has happened with the unified business rate, businesses in my constituency are openly saying to me and their councillors that they were duped. The Government said that they would give them a good deal and control their outgoings on the business rate, but the minute they got their hands on it, it rocketed upwards. Businesses were also told they should not trust local government because it was inefficient and would make a mess of it. Now, those businesses are asking for local authority control back, because they got a better deal, and knew to whom they should go.

Businesses are also asking authorities for discretionary relief, but there is less and less of that available as a result of the cuts in standard spending assessments and the cuts imposed by the Government on local authorities. When they go to the town hall, the treasurers, councillors and Members of Parliament say, "What can we do? It has nothing to do with us; it is those people in Whitehall. Some

of you may have voted for them on the basis that, in terms of the uniform business rate, Whitehall knows best". In Whitehall they say, "We can decide what is best for you here. We may be 500 miles away; we may know nothing about your area; we may be completely ignorant about the problems of businesses in your area, but we know best". We are being asked to trust the Government on a record that simply does not allow any reasonable person to offer that trust.

The Minister of State will have an opportunity to explain to businesses in my area how they have benefited from the uniform business rate. I cannot wish him luck; that would be against my political beliefs. I am sure that he is a skilful person, but I can advise him that he is in for a rough ride. When the Minister comes to Stoke he may well say to local businesses, "Most of the increases in the uniform business rate that you have suffered were not really our fault at all. It was all because of that damned revaluation. It had not been done since 1973 and those Labourites never did it either".

We are told that 75 per cent. of the increase was due to revaluation. Let us accept that. Let us be generous to the Minister of State.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): Let us not do that.

Mr. Stevenson: I am prepared to give way, but I notice that my hon. Friend is not pressing the point.

Let us accept that 75 per cent. of the increase was due to revaluation. Any mathematician would say that, if 75 per cent. was due to revaluation, 25 per cent. must have been for some other reason. That other reason was the Government.

I have read Conservative manifestos over recent years, and I cannot remember any manifesto statement that said to businesses, "Do not worry, when we introduce the uniform business rate we will increase your business rates by 25 per cent. as a direct result of our actions". The Minister of State will have an opportunity to explain that, to the businesses in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Minister will also have an opportunity to explain something else. Why is it that, when we are debating a vital issue to every business in Britain, and, if I may be a bit parochial, certainly to the businesses in my constituency, we look across to the Government Benches and at times during this important debate there has not been a single Conservative Back Bencher in the Chamber. I am sure that the Minister of State will want to explain to the businesses in my constituency why there is no interest among Conservative Members in an issue that directly affects their future.

Mr. Cryer: May I point out to my hon. Friend that, while he is speaking, there are no Conservative Back Benchers whatsoever in the Chamber? A Minister connected with the Lord Chancellor's Department has just left, having rested en route through the Chamber, leaving only the Whip on the Front Bench and the Minister of State. That is the minimum number with which the Government can carry on business. There is clearly a massive dearth of interest in this vital topic.

Mr. Stevenson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. It underlines the point that I was making. The Government may want to camouflage the fact that there is obviously no interest on the Government Benches in this important issue. I promise, and I am sure that it is a promise which all my hon. Friends will make, that we shall ensure that businesses in our areas are fully aware of the bankruptcy of interest in this important issue.

Mr. Pike: Is it possible that there are no Government Back Benchers in the Chamber because the Government Whips have persuaded them not to come in because they know that, if they made any comment in the debate today, they would not be able to defend their position at a later date, so it is better for them not to make a comment that they cannot defend outside the House?

Mr. Stevenson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is particularly the case when we consider the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn about the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) earlier today. I could not agree with him more.

If we accept that 75 per cent. of the increase was due to revaluation, the remainder must have been due to other factors such as the economic madness that led to the property boom of the mid and late 1980s which was directly attributable to Government policies.

If the Government are foolish enough to think that, because they are basing the 1995-96 uniform business rate proposals on 1 April 1993 valuations, that will not create problems, they are in for a great shock.

It is inevitable that, in a system that tries to impose centrally, as this does, a uniform business rate, there will be massive swings throughout the country. The swing that occurred when it was first introduced was a result of the massive property boom, particularly in the south and the south-east. That led the Government directly to thinking, "Hang on a second. We cannot make the transitional arrangements self-financing. Too many of our voters will be affected by that, so we had better change it. We have to ensure that there are transitional arrangements. If there is any shortfall we will pick up the tab out of taxation because we do not want our traditional voters to be affected too badly".

All the evidence suggests that the next regional shift will be from the south and south-east to the midlands and the north. I hope that, as a relatively new member of the House, I avoid the accusation of being cynical, but I will risk that this evening by making the following comment: is it a coincidence that, when the effect of the uniform business rate was going to be detrimental to the south and the south-east, the Government changed from self-financing transitional arrangements to topping up the pool if it was necessary?

Now that the regional shift is in favour of the south and the south-east and detrimental to the north and the midlands, the Government seek to change the system to one of discretion. Is that coincidental or has it something to do with political calculations? I hope that even the present Government are not that cynical, but it is certainly a factor that we have to bear in mind when we consider the Government's record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) was absolutely right to point out the possibility that, with the changes that are taking place, there is bound to be some shortfall in the pool because of the reduction in property values. Now the Government are seeking to change the obligation to a discretion that will allow them the opportunity to creep away from accountability. Who

[Mr. Stevenson]

will they try to blame when council tax payers are faced with additional burdens because the transitional contribution to the pool is not there? They will obviously blame local authorities.

I have another message for the Government. They have got away with blaming local authorities for 15 years, but they will not get away with it again. That record is played out. Businesses know who is to blame for the costs and problems that they face and it is not the local authorities.

The massive regional swings in the uniform business rate are inevitable because it has no flexibility. It does not allow local areas, regions or local authorities to say what is best for their areas. It prevents them from saying, "We know what we are doing. We will put our proposals to our businesses and, if they do not like them, they will vote against us next time and tell us about it." A uniform business rate has no flexibility, so it is in the Government's interest to take this opportunity to look at the principles behind the uniform business rate which have so clearly failed.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes a good point. That lack of flexibility is reflected in the legislation that we are asked to examine tonight. The Minister is asking for authority to introduce further regulations which will be placed before the House but which the House will not be able to amend. If the local authorities were responsible, there could be a debate, a proposal made or an amendment considered and voted on. However, we have to take the whole lot or nothing at all. Therefore, as my hon. Friend says, this is an extremely centralised and inflexible imposition.

Mr. Stevenson: My hon. Friend makes the point in his usual direct way perhaps better than I could ever hope to, for which I am grateful.

Mr. William O'Brien: The Minister should have regard to the fact that the Government are now engaged in capping local authority expenditure and, if they apply a strict cap, as they suggest they will, and then expect local authorities to find the resources in 1994-95 to top up the pool, they are being grossly unfair.

Mr. Stevenson: That is right. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. The Government cannot have it both ways. If they are determined to protect the council tax payers from any burden that may fall on them as a result of the Government's inability to top up the pool, or lack of commitment to doing so, they must make either a clear statement today that they "shall", not "may", do it and enshrine that in the legislation—in other words, maintain the obligation rather than changing it to a discretion—or ensure that local authorities are not penalised by the potential additional burden that will fall on council tax payers if the Government choose not to exercise the discretion that we are being asked to give them this evening based on the trust of the House and the country.

Mr. Curry: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to arrest him in the middle of such a theatrical moment. I wish to help him out in answering the question put by the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who was clearly overwhelmed by the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric. In 1994-95, the Bill provides for compensation in the top-up. There is no question of that being dependent on any hypothetical powers. That is in the Bill. The hon. Gentleman does not understand the Bill, but, in the light of his speech, that is not surprising.

Mr. Stevenson: I am grateful to the Minister for that extension of his opening remarks which were confusing to many of us and remain so after that intervention. However, I am encouraged because I recall an intervention on another matter by the Minister in a previous incarnation when he said that my speech was lengthy and boring. It is now theatrical, so I seem to be making progress. That is more than I can say for the Government.

But, seriously, I know the Minister from contacts that I have had with him elsewhere. I have always found him to be an honourable man, so it pains me to have to question whether he is serious in his commitment to the Government's contribution to the pool when he is bringing forward legislation that changes, for the third time in three years, the basis of Government involvement.

First, the measure was self-financing. Then, when the Government faced electoral disaster, as well the Minister knows—I can tell by the smile on his face; all I need now is for his glasses to steam up and I shall know I am there —they changed it. They had to have an obligation written into legislation in order to help the people in the south and south-east who faced disaster. But now, because the burden seems to be shifting to the midlands and the north, we have the third change.

All that I ask from the Minister when he replies is to be clear on this issue, which is central to what we are talking about. If the Government have changed their colours three times in three years, is it any surprise that we question their sincerity now? If the Minister, as I think he said when he opened the debate, is fully committed to ensuring that the pool is topped up, and given his latest intervention, why in heaven's name does not he stand up and say, "Yes, I will accept at least that part of your amendment that puts back the obligation rather than making it a discretion"? Why, oh why?

We appear to agree on this. Therefore, knowing the Minister to be the honourable man that he is, why on the one hand does he say that that is his intention while on the other hand he wants to change the legislation from an obligation to a discretion? Then, speaking on behalf of the Government, he says, "Trust us."

Mr. William O'Brien: While the Minister is in a frame of mind to respond to interventions, will my hon. Friend press him once more to rise and say at the Dispatch Box that he will guarantee that in future years the Government will continue to top up the pool? Will he press the Minister to guarantee that that topping-up procedure will be carried out in future years?

Mr. Stevenson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that further intervention. It is a message that I and other hon. Members have tried to get across. If the Government are sincere in that commitment, why change the legislation?

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend puts his finger on the crucial issue. Clause 3(3)(a) clearly changes the position from 1996, by substituting the compulsory "shall" to "may". The Government have not explained the reason for that change—which is of considerable concern because if the Government had commitment and honesty, they could completely delete that provision from the Bill.

Mr. Stevenson: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's further intervention. I hope that the message has got across clearly and that the Government will make that commitment this evening to the business community in my constituency, which—in common with others the length and breadth of the land—suffered so badly as a result of the madness of the Government's economic policies and the uniform business rate. The Government tried to blame local authorities and they got away with that to some extent—but they will not do so in future. We want clear answers from the Government.

Another aspect of the uniform business rate which is central to Government philosophy is that it apparently makes sense to gather in money locally, using local authorities as a kind of unpaid tax collectors, and send it to Whitehall. The Whitehall mandarins will then get to grips with it on the basis that they know best, and will apply an obscure, convoluted formula before sending some of that money back. What a way to run a chip shop, as people would say in my constituency—and I have no criticism of chip shops.

The chippies in my constituency would tell the Minister what they think about the uniform business rate. When the Minister visits Stoke, he can talk to the chap who owns my local chippie. That will give him a feel of what real people think of a convoluted Whitehall system that applies an obscure mechanism and says, "We are sending some of the money back. Aren't we good?" That mechanism takes away flexibility, local accountability and the ability of local authorities to identify the needs of their areas. The fundamental logic of that system is that this country needs more Whitehall centralisation and less local government.

The uniform business rate is damaging and wasteful of resources, administration and the knowledge that people have of their own areas. Having been a Member of Parliament for what seems a long time but is in fact only 18 months or two years, I have listened to many Government speeches about choice and diversity. Why must choice and diversity be denied to local government? Why is it thought essential elsewhere, but that the only way to operate local services is to have them controlled directly from Whitehall? Where is the logic in that?

Mr. Pike: Would my hon. Friend be concerned to know that there are more Conservative Back Benchers in the Strangers Gallery than there are in the Chamber listening to his speech?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has forgotten that the rule is that right hon. and hon. Members do not refer to anyone in the Gallery.

Mr. Cryer: Are we allowed to refer to Government Members who are in the Bars and absent from this debate?

Mr. Stevenson: I am grateful for your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take it that you were not addressing me. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that Conservative Back Benchers are to be found somewhere in the precincts of Westminster.

Why do the Government base their policies on choice and diversity, but when it comes to local government demand a form of centralisation—based on the premise that Whitehall knows best—that would not be out of place in some totalitarian states? The country, rightly, does not accept that.

The comments made earlier by the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) were difficult to understand. On the one hand, he rightly criticised Government policies in respect of local government and the uniform business rate —but he said also that there is no point in supporting the amendment in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend because he distrusts the Government more than he thinks we distrust them. That does not make sense. If the hon. Gentleman supports the Government this evening and not the amendment in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend, he will be trusting the Government, Secretary of State and Minister to use their discretion in the way that they said.

I said earlier that this is a matter of trust. If the hon. Member for Newbury is prepared to trust—and I make no apology for using that word again—the Government to do anything that they say, he will have to justify that to his electorate, and I am pleased that I will not have to help him. The hon. Gentleman's statement was difficult to understand in that regard. I found it difficult to understand in another sense, too. Having said that he did not trust the Government, but, nevertheless, would not support the Labour amendment, he rightly referred to important areas that the Government's proposals do not address, which we need time to address. He talked of transitional relief. That is not addressed in the Government's proposals and will not be. There is no time to do so, because, once more, the Government are abusing the procedures of the House by rushing through an important measure and denying any reasonable consideration of the important points to which the hon. Member for Newbury referred. I urge the hon. Gentleman to reconsider his views, not because of anything that I or my hon. Friends have said, but because of what he said. If he were to reconsider it in that light, he would come to a different conclusion.

There is time for the Government to allow the House to consider such important issues, instead of trying to bulldoze the Bill through. After all, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said, the entire matter could be dealt with by the end of February. In my time in local government, I have witnessed occasions on which there has not been a settlement on the rate support grant until a week or so before we were due to set the rates. Sometimes, the settlement even came afterwards. So time, in that sense, is not as critical as it has been on other occasions.

The Government are trying to rush through a system that will operate up to 1995-96. It is not a short-term issue, but one that will be with us for some time—not as long as some Conservative Members think because I am convinced that there will be a change of Government before then. I am sure that the businesses that will be affected by the UBR will find it difficult to understand and will not accept that decisions on costs to their businesses, which will have such a profound effect, are being rushed through by the Government in such a way. What have the Government got to hide? Why are they apparently scared of open debate? Is not that what this House is about? If we add together the facts that the Conservative Benches are still empty and that the Government are rushing the Bill through, one is bound to be suspicious of their intentions in wanting to curtail the debate. They know that they are sitting on a time bomb and they have not got any answers to the problems with which that time bomb will confront them.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that by rushing the Second Reading and other stages through so rapidly the Government are effectively preventing the consideration of two important sources of opinion that are directly affected by the Bill: the number of small businesses which will be affected—the Government claim to support small businesses and inaccurately claim that they have increased their number—and the collectors of taxes, the local authorities, which I am sure would be only too anxious to make representations about the progress of the Bill if the ordinary channels were available? Will my hon. Friend comment on that vital issue?

Mr. Stevenson: That is another important reason why the Government should, even at this late stage, reconsider their basic approach to such an important piece of legislation. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that issue.

The Government's policy, based on centralisation the like of which the country has not seen for generations, is wasteful, damaging and unaccountable and is being forced through by what I can describe only as an abuse of the rights of the House. If that is what right hon. and hon. Members want, they should vote against our amendment and support the Government. If hon. Members believe that it is too important an issue to be bulldozed through on a wave of prejudice as the Government are doing today and believe that the issues demand, not just deserve, reasonable debate, for goodness sake let them vote for the amendment in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

9.4 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) graphically described the pitfalls that will result if the Bill is enacted in its present form. As he said, the problems currently besetting businesses of all kinds—large, medium and small—are a consequence of the procedures involved in the Government's introduction of the UBR in 1990. At that time, the revaluation was based on a valuation made in 1988, when the value of properties was at its peak. That led to rates that people simply could not afford. They could not understand why the Government had introduced such a system at such a time.

Many businesses in my constituency, and throughout the Wakefield metropolitan district council area, appealed against their assessments, following legal advice. There were so many appeals that some have still to be heard. Many businesses are still reeling.

This is about the 60th local government Bill to be considered since the Conservatives came to power in 1979. Each of those Bills has reduced the influence, authority and democracy involved in local government, and the accountability of local authorities to their electorates and the business fraternity. I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South about what the chambers of commerce are saying.

In the days before the UBR, there used to be dialogue between business organisations and local authorities about what services should be provided and what rates should be levied to provide those services, and there was general agreement between businesses and authorities. That was healthy, constructive and democratic. Under the present Government, all that has been taken away; the connection between businesses and local authorities has been reduced, because Conservative Members voted for the UBR. The majority of them are now not interested in the UBR's future; Opposition Members have noted the failure of Conservative Back Benchers to speak in today's debate.

I pointed out earlier that two civil servants were present for every Conservative Member. The Conservative Members who are absent tonight voted for the 60 local government Bills that have constituted no less than an attack on local government and an attempt to reduce its democracy. It is clear that the Conservative party has no interest in a debate that affects local businesses throughout the country.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that when passing those 60 pieces of major primary legislation the indifference of Conservative Members was such that they allowed huge delegated powers to be passed to Ministers? For example, during 1992, 3,500 statutory instruments were issued by Ministers; many of them, although obviously not all, were concerned with local government. Far too many Conservative Back Benchers adopt a complacent attitude and are willing to hand over the control of local government virtually lock, stock and barrel to a handful of Ministers and their civil service advisers.

Mr. O'Brien: It is right that my hon. Friend should draw attention to the fact that local government is now being administered by order through the Department of the Environment and the Secretary of State. Throughout the 60 pieces of legislation to which my hon. Friend referred there are references, particularly in connection with the unified business rate, to the fact that the Secretary of State "may" or "will be able" to issue an order. Every clause in those Bills gave additional powers to the Secretary of State for the Environment, reducing the authority of local councils to administer their services on behalf of local businesses and the community.

During the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South the Minister intervened and said that in 1994-95 there would be protection for businesses from any increase that may occur. He gave an assurance that any increase during that period would not affect the capping of local authority expenditure. Is the Minister prepared to give us a guarantee that that will continue for as long as this legislation applies? The Minister was quick to reassure us about the 1994-95 period, but will he tell us what will happen after that? That is what our amendment is about.

If the Minister believes that we are wrong—that is what he implied when he intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South—I am prepared to give way to him so that he can tell us how we have got it wrong. We are seeking a guarantee about what will happen. The Minister seems to be refusing my invitation to intervene. That suggests that he is not prepared to give us that assurance. Was he wrongly advising us when he said that there would be protection in the Bill for local authorities so that they would not have to top up the pool? He is not prepared to take up my challenge.

Mr. Curry: As I have repeated twice already—I shall do so again for the hon. Gentleman—for the financial year that we are approaching the Bill makes provision for the deficit in the pool to be made up by a direct contribution from the Exchequer. For future years, the Bill would provide the Government with the power to make regulations which would mean that instead of having to

find compensation for any shortfall from within the system, which is what happens now, we would be able to make contributions directly from the Exchequer.

I said earlier that we regard the business rates as hypothecated to local government finance, so if we implemented the regulations and if that action led to a shortfall compared to what would otherwise have gone in the pool, we should take measures to ensure that the shortfall was made up. I cannot be clearer than that. As the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) has had his worry beads, or his prayer beads, out of his pocket three times, at least twice induced by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson), I think it is about time that the Opposition got that point under their belt.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister is again shadow boxing. He is saying that if the Secretary of State does not want to make up the shortfall within the confines of local government finance it can be made up by the Exchequer. I want the Minister to say that it will not fall to local taxpayers to meet the shortfall and that any future shortfall will be met by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Minister should stop trying to fumble his way around or fudge the issue as has happened so often in our debates on local government legislation. He is saying that the Secretary of State "may" make up the difference from local government funding or "may" make up the difference from the Exchequer. That is not an answer to the question. When the Minister returns to his seat, will he give us a straight yes or no? Will he tell us that the funding will come from the Exchequer and that local taxpayers will at no time be called on to make up the funding? Will the Minister respond to that particular point?

Mr. Cryer: The wide-ranging powers to which the Minister referred include the ability to produce regulations that may make different provisions for different areas. In addition, the Secretary of State has to deal with the issue of the aggregate income of the revenue only as far as is "reasonably practicable". The powers are very wide ranging and the mere fact that the Minister says that the Secretary of State has regulation-making powers does not impose on him a tightly restrictive duty but gives him great discretion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) will recall that the wide powers to which the Minister refers as though they placed on him a narrow obligation are not subject to amendment by the House.

Mr. O'Brien: Again, my hon. Friend's contribution explains some of our fears that we shall lose the opportunity to raise with the Minister any anomalies or concerns about the unified business rate expressed to us by our constituents; all the power will rest with the Secretary of State. That is not what the House is about—the House should debate the issues that concern our constituents. I am asking for an assurance that at no time will any expense incurred in topping up the pool be borne by local council taxpayers, and that is the assurance sought in our amendment.

I said earlier that many authorities are now considering their budgets. In doing so, they are mindful of the fact that the Secretary of State for the Environment has warned them that if their expenditure exceeds a certain limit set by him, he will cap them. Many local authorities are considering the situation and they cannot afford to be left in doubt about what will happen in the succeeding year and the year after that. That is what the legislation is about. We want assurances that local authorities will not only be allowed to set their budgets annually, but can look forward to a level of expenditure that will allow them to plan for their services.

Mr. Stevenson: Does not my hon. Friend find it strange that, on the one hand, the Government will cap a local authority in an attempt to control its expenditure which, in part, may emanate from decisions of that local authority, but, on the other hand, the Government seek to impose further expenditure on a local authority, which would form part of that capping total, by not making their full contribution to the pool?

Mr. O'Brien: That is the argument that we made earlier, when we tried to extract information and assurances from the Minister on the subject of the Government ensuring that any income required into the pool will be borne by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and not by the local council tax payers. We have not received that assurance tonight and, therefore, we must assume that it is the Government's intention to make the local council tax payers responsible for any shortfall in the pool for the distribution of the uniform business rate caused by the fact that the Government will not be levying a rate that will cover all the requirements to provide the services that local businesses—local shopkeepers, and so on—need to meet their business commitments.

I must also ask the Minister what consultations about the legislation took place with the local authority associations and the small business assocations. If there has been consultation, perhaps the Minister will advise us of the views that were expressed by the small business associations and the local authority associations. Those are the people at the coal face, as I would term it, when we discuss businesses and the uniform business rate.

When we were discussing the legislation in 1988, and when other local government Bills were discussed, I suggested that there should be a type of rate rebate for local businesses and small businesses which fall on hard times, similar to the rebate for the ordinary domestic ratepayer. Labour Members could see no reason why small businesses should be allowed to fail because they could not pay their rates. That has happened under the Conservative Government for years, but if some assistance from local authorities had been allowed, many of the small businesses that fell on hard times could have survived. Local government was asking for the power to help small businesses.

Because the Government created unemployment, people received redundancy pay. Baroness Thatcher, when she was Prime Minister, encouraged people to invest in small businesses. Those people invested all their savings or their redundancy pay in small business, only to be told later that, as a result of the recession, there would be no help for them. Many people lost their business and their home.

Families were broken up because the Government did not help those small businesses to survive a difficult period. Labour local authorities wanted to help those businesses over the difficult period, but the legalisation enacted by Conservatives who are absent from the Chamber tonight prevented them.

It should be placed on record that those who introduced legislation that crippled small businesses are not here to listen to, and participate in, a debate which we hoped

[Mr. O'Brien]

would help to salvage many small businesses in the future. It is sad to relate that that apathy exists among Conservative Members.

In rural areas, the shortfall in help is even greater. The demise of small businesses in rural areas has been greater under this Government than under any other. Local post offices and stores have been driven out of rural areas because of the Government's policies, including the unified business rate. Any Conservative Member representing a rural constituency should have been here tonight to defend his community and help it to retain its businesses.

The Labour party is pleading with the Government either to support the communities that they profess to defend or to withdraw completely and allow a Labour Government to take over and follow through the promises that we have made to secure and defend small businesses throughout the community, particularly in rural areas.

The final clause in the Bill says that the measure applies only to England and Wales. As a Member with an interest in Northern Ireland, I know that the Bill will be imposed by order on businesses in Northern Ireland. We shall have to accept that the issue will not be debated and no amendments will be made. That is totally unfair and undemocratic, and does not help to sustain a good relationship between the regions of the United Kingdom. Tonight, we are discussing the unified business rate only for England and Wales. The Government have many issues to address with regard to statutory instruments on the provision of services in Northern Ireland. Everything in Northern Ireland is done by quangos and the Government are responsible for that.

If the Minister has any semblance of support for local government, he should give us the assurances that we seek tonight. Will he assure us that the shortfall in the pool will not be made up by local council tax payers but will be borne by the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Failing that, we shall have no alternative but to vote for the amendment.

9.28 pm

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) suggested that the Conservative Benches may be empty because the Government do not want their supporters to open their mouths and put their feet in it. I think that that is a rather kind explanation.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): He is a big softie.

Mr. Purchase: That is true. I have a rather different explanation, because I believe that Ministers do not want their rather naive and innocent Back-Bench colleagues to see what a "fine mess they have gotten us into, Stanley."

The origin of that fine mess is Mrs. Thatcher, as she then was, who stamped her feet in the mid-1970s and determined that her policy and that of her subsequent Government should be designed to do something about the rating system. Those who recall the arguments, the discussions and the frayed tempers will also recall the common saying, "We pay our taxes in sorrow and our rates in anger."

At that time, our rates fell through the letter box on to the mat with a resounding thump. Mrs. Thatcher decided there and then that something had to be done to protect those she felt she represented—the middle-class, property-owning democracy. It never occurred to her that that was a contradiction in terms, but we can let that pass.

It is sensible to remind ourselves of the original system that was so hated by the Conservatives, who have tried three times to make sense of it according to their own plans. That rating system had the perfect properties of all sensible taxes. First, it was cheap to administer; historically, less than 1 per cent. of the total take from the old rating system went on the administration and collection of the rates. Secondly, it was easy to collect, because it was based on property that did not move about from place to place, so the rates could be levied with certainty and collected with ease.

In my time in local government, the amounts written off under the rating system were extremely small. We used to talk about a few thousand pounds being written off about three years after a company had gone into liquidation or someone had absconded with the money. That represented a tiny proportion of the amount collected.

For all the criticisms of that system, it was broadly progressive. It was based upon the size of the property or the premises occupied, and that was a good indicator of wealth and ability to pay. Once rebates were introduced, the system became even more sensible, and progressive into the bargain.

The Governmen's failure to revalue the rates are borne out of disgraceful gerrymandering. They knew that the weight of that revaluation would undoubtedly fall on the Tory heartlands. They put if off year after year. In the early 1980s, Government decimated the industrial manufacturing base of the west midlands in particular. I do not mean that they reduced it to one tenth of its original size, but they certainly caused great damage.

As a consequence, the rateble value in the west midlands and in my borough of Wolverhampton was extremely high in comparison with that set in other parts of the country. Had a revaluation been made at a proper time and in a proper way, the west midlands, the north-west, Yorkshire and the north would have benefited.

As it was, those regions suffered from the changes brought about by Tory loony economic policy, which wiped out the value of properties and premises in those industrial heartlands. That revaluation would have moved the burden, as it properly should have been, to those regions in the south which were then still exceedingly prosperous. During that period, the west midlands moved from being the second wealthiest region in the United Kingdom to being the second poorest—second only to the poverty and deprivation of Northern Ireland.

This sort of financial gerrymandering was not confined to revaluation. The formula for the distribution of revenue support was changed from what had been a relatively scientific process, based on historical costs and unavoidable growth, to a wholly subjective formula that was intended to favour the counties and the Tory voters. While trying to give the appearance of being fair, rational and scientific, the formula became so convoluted that no computer installation in this country could handle it, and the job was carried out in Houston, Texas—such was the mess that the Conservatives got the country into by trying to change the way in which the tax fell.

It soon became obvious that this gerrymandering affected not only domestic ratepayers; in the inner cities it

pulled down companies, so there were fewer and fewer jobs, people became poorer and poorer, and it was more and more difficult for companies to pay the rates.

We have often made the point that proper services are worth paying for. The rates used to form only a minor part of an industrialist's costs—certainly that was true under Labour Governments. No more than 2 or 3 per cent. of a company's raft of costs was dedicated to paying the rates. Of course, no industry wants to pay any additional costs that do not appear to work to its advantage immediately, but the services that companies used to receive in return, and the education that their workers received, made the costs seem well worth while.

Even 2 per cent., however, when no profits are being made, can begin to seem an impossible burden, and when that rises to 4 or 5 per cent., it becomes absolutely impossible for any company to bear. So industry's screams for mercy had to be answered in some way, and we saw the start of the cynically dishonest process of blaming local government. We were told that local government was putting up the rates.

The Government were not prepared straightforwardly to tell the people that their own gerrymandering of the revenue support grant formula had hit industry and commerce hard. Instead, they blamed local authorities, using the dreadful ploy to which we have now become accustomed. Nothing is ever the fault of this morally bankrupt Government—it is always someone else's fault.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Has my hon. Friend noticed that the scourge of local government, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), has not been here throughout the debate, but will no doubt appear, like rain-sodden pulp, to file through the appropriate door?

Mr. Purchase: I dare not disagree with my hon. Friend's elegant point, which no doubt will bear examination at a later date.

It is perhaps interesting to consider whether we can actually trust the Government to be fair. We know that we cannot. The enterprise zones are an example. Sir Geoffrey Howe, now Lord Howe, had a splendid idea about enterprise zones which would not have to pay rates.

If the Government had bothered to read a few lines by Ricardo, that long-ago economist, they would have learnt about the nature of rent. As one set of costs fall, landlords inevitably increase the rent to make up the difference. That is what happened in the enterprise zones. When the Government ended the rates that enterprise zones had to pay, the rest of us had to meet the increase in rent, and there was no advantage to anyone.

How can we trust a Government who cynically use that system to prevent a proper input from the Treasury to make up the shortfall in the rate support grant? The Government are mealy-mouthed. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) prods and pushes, how can we trust a Government whose record throughout the 1980s was to take from local government, which had to pay for initiatives out of whatever was left? We cannot trust them, and shall vote against Second Reading.

9.41 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): In the six and a half years that I have been here, I cannot recall a major Second Reading debate in which not one Conservative, apart from the Minister, has been prepared to support the Bill. Conservative Members usually prattle on about how companies are under great strain from the burden of business rates. Where are those Members now? They are either so embarrassed at their thinking being proved wrong, or they have so little confidence in their Government that they are not prepared to be here to support them. It is probably a combination of the two.

This important Bill affects every business and the ability of every local authority to raise revenue and use it to provide the services that people want and need. We are extremely concerned about the procedure and the timetable adopted by the Government. They amount to no less than an assault on the democracy of the House. It is an outrage that the money resolution was taken yesterday before the principles of the Bill were discussed on Second Reading. That is the first time that that has happened since the poll tax debate in 1991.

It is also outrageous that the Bill may go into Committee immediately after Second Reading without any organisation in the land having had time to reflect on what has been said by the Opposition and to make representations and promote amendments.

Mr. Curry: This "outrage" was announced before the Christmas recess. Will the hon. Gentleman explain why Opposition Members were on a one-line Whip, and 59 of them turned up to vote last night?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman's intervention is quite irrelevant. The issue is that the procedures of the House to enable democratic debate to take place have been negated by the Government. That is the real issue. It is presumptuous to believe that the House will go in a certain direction before the debate takes place. That amounts to a contempt of the House, and that point has been reinforced by many of my hon. Friends.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, there is no argument from the Labour party on the general need to introduce a timetable to deal with business rates, because the previous procedure was costly and created instability among the business community. But there is no excuse for the Government to introduce their timetable on the Bill. They do not even have the support of local authorities.

I have a letter from Birmingham city council that makes it quite clear that it does not need to have the figures until the middle of February to calculate the appropriate rates. I do not need to bring forward the representations that Birmingham city council has made, because the Department of the Environment has made those representations in a letter of 30 November 1993 to the chief executive of local authorities around the country.

In it, the Department says that authorities will be required to calculate their provisional contribution in January on the assumption that the pre-Budget transitional limits will apply, and that it will not be possible to make calculations that anticipate the passage of the Bill in case it is delayed. The letter also says that regulations will be introduced once the Bill is enacted to enable authorities —this is the key phrase—to recalculate the amount of their contribution to take account of the changes.

Government officials themselves are accepting that there is no need to rush into regulations and legislation early in January, because local authorities have to make provisional estimates and then re-do them once they know the transitional arrangements that have been made.

[Mr. Henderson]

The argument that the Government used last night, which they were again using when the Minister of State opened the debate—that it is necessary to expedite the introduction of changes in the business rates—is totally without foundation. That is why there is such anger among Labour Members and among all those organisations which would want to make representations on these important matters.

There are many things that I would want to say in relation to the Bill if I had more time, but we are pressed for time. I shall summarise the position of the Opposition. There are serious concerns not only about parliamentary democracy and the timetable but about economic circumstances. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) has said, the Government have been forced into introducing further transitional changes because the economy is not strong enough to take the impact of the revaluation.

That point has been made by many business organisations, ranging from the CBI, the Institute of Directors and many of the chambers of commerce to the TUC. There is clearly agreement in the country that the business community is suffering from the economic recession; that there are virtually as many businesses going bankrupt this year as there were in those dreadful years 1992-93; that there are major regional variations in the way that the economic recession impacts, and consequently on the way that there is a need for different treatment on rates; and that there are also a number of different solutions proposed.

We have serious concerns on the long-term movement in business rates. What will happen after 1992? Will the transitional relief continue? On what will it be based in 1995? We have serious concerns about the future structure. Will the Government introduce further transitional arrangements? If so, will they top up the rating pool so that local authorities will not suffer? If they do that, will they account for that in the calculation of their external financial limits?

Those are crucial questions. I believe that people who are affected by the proposed legislation, in making a judgment on whether the provisions for this year are appropriate, will want to know what is in store for future years, because it is impossible to make a sensible calculation without having that information before us.

We then have to ask whether the system is the right one in the first place. All the evidence that I have collected from a wide range of institutions, again including chambers of commerce, the Institute of Directors and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, the ex-Tory leader of Westminster city council, shows that it is far better that those matters are determined at a local level. In that way, local businesses can have some influence on the rating provisions affecting them, and local authorities can be influenced by business organisations in their community.

Apart from that, there is a basic democratic issue at stake. Where decision making can be devolved to a local level to make it more sensitive to the needs of local people, that should happen. There is no need for the excessive centralisation incorporated into the Bill and many of the Government's other approaches to local government matters.

The Opposition are not opposed to the purpose of the Bill. We recognise that there is a need for transitional relief. We are not even arguing that there should be different transitional arrangements. We are arguing that all right hon. and hon. Members, including Ministers, should be prepared to listen to the representations that people might want to make before making a decision on how appropriate the proposals are.

This evening, the House can accept either the Bill or the reasoned amendment. The latter stands for giving local communities a chance, giving the business community a chance to make its views known, and giving democracy a chance both in the House and in the country.

9.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The debate has been characterised by rather a lot of polished perturbation and some unpolished perturbation. Although it has taken all day, only four points have been raised—objection in principle to the non-domestic rates, concern about the procedures for dealing with the Bill, a continuous argument about the difference between duties and powers and the question why we should have the scheme anyway. Perhaps I should briefly look at each of those four points.

If hon. Members were ever concerned about why the business rates were introduced in the way that they were, it would be worth their while going back and reading some of the documents from the mid-1980s. I have refreshed my memory of what the Association of British Chambers of Commerce had to say in 1986, because it has been prayed in aid quite a lot this evening:

> "A large majority of . . . Chambers support the principle of a UBR . . . The majority of Chambers would prefer to see a genuine national rate—i.e. a business rate."

We have heard a good deal about the relationship between business rates under the old system and jobs. This document, which I commend to the Opposition, who have clearly forgotten it, gives a litany of chambers of commerce making representations about how high increases in rates were destroying jobs in their areas.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), the last Opposition Back Bencher to speak, might be interested to know that, in 1986, the chief executive of the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce and industry said:

> "Discussions . . . in Wolverhampton clearly indicate that the high level of rates in our area is a major deterrent to companies purchasing industrial and commercial property. Indeed, it has been a significant factor in preventing local economic revival. It is, for example, our firm belief that the level of Rates was responsible for one firm (who formerly employed over 600 people) moving out of the area."

If anyone wants to be reminded of why we introduced the non-domestic business rate, he has only to look at the evidence that was there in 1986.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: The Minister has quoted the views of the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce in 1986. Will he tell us what its views are now? Have they changed? I bet they have not.

Mr. Baldry: I have no reason to believe that the views of either the Association of British Chambers of Commerce or the CBI have changed. Anybody who reads *Hansard* tomorrow will notice that at not one point have

the Opposition prayed in aid representations or concerns from any chamber of commerce or the CBI as to how the business rate——

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No. I have considerable ground to cover.

Then there was concern about the procedures for dealing with the Bill. I suspect that everyone on both sides of the House, you, Madam Speaker, and my auntie Flora in Aberdeen know that the concerns raised this evening are fairly synthetic. They owe far more to the fact that there has been a breakdown in the usual channels than to real concerns about the substance of the Bill. The smiles on the faces of Opposition Front-Bench Members are testament to that. They know that, in previous years, such Bills have been dealt with speedily.

As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) acknowledged last night, last year and in previous years such matters have been dealt with almost on the basis of a sweetheart deal. This year, for the first time, we have had a long, protracted debate because the usual channels have broken down and Opposition Members want to make a fuss about it.

Mr. Henderson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No.

The truth is that billing authorities need to send out rate bills from late February. *[Interruption.]* I am not frit. Hon. Members have spoken at great length and they would complain if I did not respond to the points raised in the debate.

The NDR Bill changes will reduce rate bills for some ratepayers. Authorities will need to reprogramme their software so that bills for ratepayers in transition reflect the changes. Obviously, some authorities will be reluctant to do that until after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North banged on about provisional estimates. Provisional estimates are very different from the actual bills that local authorities will have to issue. Of course, local authorities need as much certainty as possible.

Mr. Olner: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not a fact that there is no limit on the debate, so there is no reason for the Minister not to give way to hon. Members who want to make a proper intervention?

Madam Speaker: It is up to the Minister whether or not he gives way. The Minister has the floor.

Mr. Baldry: That was a spurious point of order, following a spurious debate.

Clearly, a delay would cause confusion and uncertainty for businesses. The Bill needs to be passed speedily so that local authorities can deal effectively with the delays.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No.

The other point of substance which the Opposition sought to argue this evening——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that there is no time limit on the debate?

Madam Speaker: The House has first to pass the 10 o'clock motion.

Mr. Baldry: The third concern was about powers and duties. There is an important distinction between the character of the provisions we are seeking for 1994-95 and those for future years. For 1994-95, a specific scheme of relief has been drawn up in detail, and to ensure its implementation in time we must spell out all the detail on the face of the Bill, and we have done that. For years beyond that, we do not know yet whether transitional relief arrangements will be required.

My hon. Friend has made it clear on numerous occasions that, if local authorities' revenue needed to be made up and if there were a shortfall, it would be made up in a way that was not at the expense of council tax payers. I am not sure how many times, and in how many ways, we have to make that clear.

Mr. Betts: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No.

Any reasonable hon. Member looking at *Hansard* tomorrow will recognise that the debate about hours and duties has been totally spurious. As the Opposition readily acknowledged, they are not opposed to the principle of the Bill; they have made it clear that they support the subsidy in the Bill; they are not opposed to the purposes of the Bill; and they know it to be a sensible Bill that will give much needed help to businesses. I commend it to the House, and suggest that, the sooner it is passed, the better it will be for every business in the land.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Madam Speaker: Order. The Serjeant-at-Arms is to investigate a possible hold-up in the Aye Lobby.

The House having divided: Ayes 253, Noes 327.

Division No. 61] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith

Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 325, Noes 138.

Division No. 62] **[10.19 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl'f)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ilsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert

Livingstone, Ken
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Tipping, Paddy
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:

Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made—[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]—and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of bills), That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House:—

The House divided: Ayes 327, Noes 247.

Division No. 63] **[10.34 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Macklnlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John

Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Committee tomorrow.

Mr. Straw: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of the Government Whips has just failed to move the 10 o'clock motion. I have long thought that the Government Whips Office was incompetent, but tonight's action is confirmation of its utter inability to run the business of the House. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. *[Interruption.]* Order. I hope that this is a matter for me, not a statement from the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Straw: Can you confirm that in your experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is extraordinary, if not unheard of, for the Government to introduce a Bill that they claim is important and then for them to be unable to find a single supporter either to sit and listen to Ministers or to speak?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My experience is not a matter for a point of order.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Given that the Government had informed the House that they would go ahead with all the stages of the Bill tonight, but have now not moved the 10 o'clock motion, have you had any indication that the Leader of the House is prepared to make a statement from the Dispatch Box about the reasons for that turnabout and complete incompetence on the Government's part?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No.

Insider Dealing

10.48 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I beg to move,

That the draft Insider Dealing (Securities and Regulated Markets) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

The order is required to enable the insider dealing legislation contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1993 which repeals and restates the law on insider dealing to be brought into force. We plan to commence the Act's insider dealing provisions on 1 March.

The House will know that during the passage of the Criminal Justice Act the House considered at length the broad question of how to prevent insider dealing. It is not the function of the order to address that question. Instead, the issues with which it deals are much more specific and it is to them that I intend to confine my remarks during the course of this debate.

First, the House may find it useful if I set the order in the context of the Criminal Justice Act. Under the Act, the first test of whether an offence has been committed is that an individual has information whose publication would significantly affect the price of a security. Where that is the case, the Act makes it illegal, subject to the exceptions and defences, to do any one of four things: first, for that individual to deal on a regulated market in that security; secondly, for him or her to deal as a professional intermediary or through such an intermediary in that security; thirdly, for him or her to encourage another to deal in that security; fourthly, for him or her to disclose the information with a view to others profiting from it.

I think there is general agreement within the financial services industry that the new legislation represents a sensible broadening of our existing law while carrying forward the thrust of the present regime; that those who possess privileged information should not be permitted to misuse it to the detriment of others.

While the legislation contained in the Criminal Justice Act is an important element in the fight against insider dealing, there are others which I should like to mention briefly. I think that most people would agree that the most effective way to curb insider dealing is to restrict the opportunities which the potential wrongdoer has for misusing information. That can be achieved only if companies meet their obligations under the stock exchange rules to announce, as soon as possible, significantly price sensitive information to the market as a whole, rather than to disclose such information selectively. I know that the stock exchange will strive to ensure that listed companies continue to honour this obligation and I welcome the work which they are leading on drafting new guidance concerning the dissemination of price sensitive information.

Also of importance is the role of market surveillance, which is vital in the detection of possible offences. I am pleased therefore to see that the Securities and Investments Board is taking forward work to build upon the present surveillance system by considering how regulators can be given access to information about activity in all parts of the cash and derivatives markets in equities, comprising transactions done over the counter as well as on exchange.

The order has three functions. First, it specifies the securities to which the Criminal Justice Act is to apply. The effect of the order is to apply the law to securities which are market related, reflecting the fact that the legislation is designed to protect the integrity of the market in its broadest sense.

The order therefore applies to any security falling within schedule 2, that is, shares, debt securities, warrants, depository receipts, options, futures and contracts for differences. A security of those types which is officially listed in a state within the European Economic Area would be caught by the order. In addition, any such security which either is admitted to dealing on, or has its price quoted on or under the rules of, a regulated market is a security for the purpose of insider dealing.

The order also includes alternative conditions for derivatives of shares and debt securities, which are required so that an insider dealer is not able to circumvent the law by, for instance, dealing in an unlisted security of these types which relate to shares or debt securities which are themselves listed.

The second function of the order is to specify what is meant by the term "regulated market", which is important for determining whether a transaction in a particular security is covered by the legislation. Transactions in securities will be covered if they occur on regulated markets; or if they are done off-market in reliance on a professional intermediary. Regulated markets are stock exchanges within the European Economic Area, relevant domestic derivatives exchanges—LIFFE, the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, OMLX, the London Securities and Derivatives Exchange —and the recognised overseas investment exchange, NASDAQ.

Dealings in securities which are traded on these markets will be subject to United Kingdom law provided that they have a significant United Kingdom component. This allows us, for example, to apply the law to an insider dealer in London who tries to avoid the law by buying shares in a company with multiple listing on the Paris bourse rather than on the London stock exchange.

Finally, the order specifies what is meant by the term "market regulated in the UK". That is important, because the Government intend that all dealing which occurs on securities markets operating within the United Kingdom should fall within the ambit of the legislation, regardless of the whereabouts of the dealer. A United Kingdom regulated market is any market which is established under the rules of the London stock exchange and LIFFE and OMLX.

The order brings into effect the legislation that has been considered at length by the House. In doing so, it updates and, I think, significantly improves the existing legislation.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I thank the Minister for his work in this field. Bearing in mind the fact that the single market in financial services and stock exchange dealings has now begun in earnest, is he optimistic that the order and the related legislation in this and other countries will enable us to deal on a common basis with insider dealing infringements in all the markets of the member states?

Mr. Nelson: Yes. I am much more confident that the order goes a long way towards providing an assurance about free and fair markets within the European Economic Union—Community.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Union.

Mr. Nelson: All the pillars of the union will have free and fair markets.

More importantly, the investment services directive provides the passport for investment services from one member state to another. That will come into effect eventually and has been carefully negotiated. I hope to ensure free, fair and transparent markets and, critically, to ensure that this country's financial services industry, which is extremely important and a large employer that attracts significant liquidity and competitive industry from abroad, is preserved and its future competitiveness enhanced.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): The Minister says that he is fairly confident that the protection will work. The order refers to Liechtenstein. Is the Minister aware that Barlow Clowes opened a stock exchange company there in which only the directors and not the shareholders need to be identified? It is not hard to see how insider dealing could work in that country, as Barlow Clowes obviously worked out. How will these arrangements protect investors in that country?

Mr. Nelson: The inclusion of Liechtenstein results from the extension of the ambit and jurisdiction of the order to the European Economic Area. That means that outside the Community it includes Austria, Liechtenstein, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. That is a necessary requirement under the directive.

It is important to understand that the order and part V of the Criminal Justice Act will enable us to investigate and bring prosecutions in cases where people place an insider dealing order through a professional intermediary or on a particular regulated exchange. That is a question of fact which must meet the criterion and must be on one of the regulated exchanges here.

I shall now explain investigation and how the information is obtained. The market surveillance group of, for example, the stock exchange is principally involved in trying to spot—I acknowledge the difficulties at home and abroad—cases in which insider dealing may have arisen. When it is done through nominees at home or abroad, it can present as many difficulties in the future as it has in the past.

The hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) made a fair point. It is extremely difficult in this area and in others to craft catch-all legislation that will deter or prevent all sorts of insider dealing. However, the directive provides significant clarification of the existing law. The fact that it is a directive and that it has been accepted by the members of the European Economic Area means that it is far more likely to work. By signing up to it, those member states are saying that they will comply with the standards of disclosure, investigation and prosecution that we shall apply.

For all those reasons, I believe that the order, which brings the Act into force, marks a significant improvement in legislation. It strikes the right balance between deterring, prosecuting and investigating insider dealing, which is not a victimless crime, and ensuring that we do not deter or inhibit those professional companies that are so important to our financial services industry and the economy.

10.59 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Minister has given us an excellent factual, but theoretical, explanation of how the legislation is supposed to operate, but there is a simple reason for opposing it. There is no point in the House continuing to pass legislation that will not be effective, and will not be enforced in many cases. It is complicated, it is difficult to understand and, at best, it will provide a dripping roast for the many lawyers who make a fortune in a sector where the Government's track record of enforcement is poor.

It is important to put criticism of the insider dealing legislation and of regulation in general into the context of the importance of the financial services industry to the country, both to those working in it and internationally. More than 2 million people are employed in the industry. It produces 18 per cent. of the gross domestic product. Many towns and cities depend on it for employment. In addition, London is still the pre-eminent and dominant market in the world. We enjoy an international reputation, and it is important that we keep it.

Another matter should be considered. Other world financial centres such as New York, Chicago, Tokyo and, increasingly, those in the far east are dominant in their field because of the strength of their domestic economy. In contrast, London's dominant position is despite the performance of our domestic economy. People come to London because of the critical mass of expertise here and the reputation of the City of London. It is important that the House recognises that and acts at all times to ensure that London's reputation, particularly its reputation as a clean market, is upheld. I fear that, unless the Government take action to ensure that legislation is workable and enforceable, it will not act as a deterrent to the minority of people who are determined to exploit the system for their own considerable personal gain.

Insider dealing is far more widespread than the Government care to admit. The record shows that the legislation is little deterrent. Since 1987, 104 cases have been reported. Only 33 have been prosecuted, and only 16 of those cases resulted in a conviction. Anybody operating in the financial services industry will say that insider dealing is taking place all the time, to a greater or lesser degree, not just in London but throughout the world. That is the very nature of the industry. If we are to assert the importance of London, to keep promoting it and the rest of the financial services industry, it is important that the legislation works, and that people know that it is not worth cheating on the system because they will be caught and convicted.

There are problems with conviction, and that is why we must explore the merits of using a complementary system of effective regulation. Apart from anything else, there is a different standard of proof. If one falls foul of the regulatory system, the penalties that may be visited upon the offender may be far greater than those that would be visited upon him by the criminal system. That is especially so when one considers the record of the courts.

It is interesting that the debate is taking place on the Floor of the House because of pressure from the Labour party. If the Government had had their way, the order

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

would have gone through, on the nod, in a Committee. We insisted on the debate because it is high time that the Government stopped their continuing silence on the problems in the financial services industry and their apparent uninterest in the face of obvious difficulties. There is a feeling that there is little chance of being caught, even less chance of being prosecuted, and every chance of getting off if one goes in for insider dealing or other City crimes.

When it comes to sentencing, the law is becoming laughable. Everyone remembers Roger Levitt. Few people will forget him laughing his way out of court after getting community service in the same week as a pregnant woman was sentenced to imprisonment for failing to pay her television licence. Levitt was described as "markedly dishonest" by the judge, yet he got community service.

Ministers were prepared to condemn the fact that a young boy was sent round the world as part of his rehabilitation, yet not one single Minister got up to condemn what happened to Roger Levitt or others convicted of serious crimes. Ernest Saunders was the only man in the world to have got senile dementia and recovered. Terry Ramsden was convicted of £90 million fraud and received a suspended sentence in the same week as a poacher in Scotland got three months in prison for poaching salmon.

The record of sentencing in the courts in Britain is abysmal. In the same week that the Government have been lecturing the nation on law and order and their policy of "back to basics", we have heard absolutely nothing about that branch of the law. We should remember that Gerald Ronson was fined £5 million—*[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members are getting very upset because they know that their record is abysmal. Gerald Ronson had £2 million of his fine paid by his own colleagues. They thought so much of his conduct that they now have him back behind his desk—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. There seems to be barracking from all sides of the Chamber. There is barracking from one side and cheering from the other.

Mr. Darling: I am grateful from your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is interesting that the newly promoted Minister of State for the Armed Forces was leading the barracking and has now slunk out of the Chamber.

When we look at the record, at Saunders, Ramsden, Levitt and Ronson, I cannot understand why Asil Nadir has anything to fear from British justice.

It is not just the Labour party that believes that the enforcement of insider dealing is ineffective. The London stock exchange also believes that we need a new system of enforcement. Representatives of the stock exchange wrote to me last year saying that they believed that a central enforcement body was necessary. It is not their primary duty to take care of such matters, but they detect through their duties under the Financial Services Act 1986 that insider dealing might be going on. They believe that a centralised body is necessary to enforce such matters.

Andrew Large, the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, alluded to the fact that we do not have a centralised enforcement body when he addressed the same conference as the Economic Secretary last autumn. *The Economist*, in an editorial last April complained that enforcement is not taken seriously.

We need to use a judicious mix of the criminal law, where there is allegation of criminal conduct, and regulation, which requires a different standard of proof, but carries far more draconian penalties where conduct falls short of criminal activity, because the wrongdoer can be prevented from carrying on business.

Why will the Government not consider the problem? Why, when they complain about every other aspect of the breakdown of law and order, sometimes justifiably, sometimes not, do they do nothing about an increasing problem which is recognised not just by the Opposition but by respected bodies in the City of London and elsewhere?

I also believe the time has come for the Government to look at the work of the Serious Fraud Office. It has its own problems and operates in a difficult area. However, it is clear from its record over the past few years that the time has come to assess, among other things, its relationship with the City of London police. It has to be asked whether cases are being prosecuted in an appropriate manner and whether indictments are too long.

The Government should take some responsibility, yet we hear absolutely nothing. If we had a new enforcement agency with responsibility for criminal and regulatory powers, that would be a major step forward and I am sorry the Minister has said nothing about it. However, a new enforcement agency could be established only as part of the overall regulatory system. An increasing number of people in the industry believe that self-regulation must be brought to an end now.

The pension scandal, unveiled at the end of last year and, incidentally, detected by the SIB, the direct regulators, not by any of the self-regulating organisations that are supposed to look at such matters, revealed that up to 500,000 people may have been wrongly advised and transferred to personal pensions. The home income plans that emerged in the late 1980s led to thousands of elderly people losing everything.

Surely, when everyone else realises that the system is not working, the Government might show some interest in the matter. But what have we got? We have had three years of horse trading over the new Personal Investment Authority, about which controversy continues. The much respected Jim Stretton of the Standard Life Assurance Company resigned this week. I disagree with the reasons that led him to resign, but I agree with his conclusion that we would be better off with direct regulation.

The problems of Lloyd's show what happens under self-regulation. Surely the time has come for the Government to examine it. When one considers the cost of regulation to the industry and, therefore, to members of the public who pay for it, we cannot afford to limp on for another four or five years when a growing number of people realise that a radical overhaul is absolutely necessary.

Self-regulation must stop and we must have direct regulation by the SIB reporting to Parliament. There is no point limping on. It would be far better for everyone to get the system right now. Let us set up something that gives the public confidence, without which the public will not do business with the industry.

Even on the question of narrow self-interest, the industry should have recognised that proper regulation is necessary for confidence. In the future, more and more

people will want to make provision for themselves, whether through pensions or savings plans. If the Government ask them to do that, they must ensure that regulation works. Effective regulation is not a burden; to coin a phrase, it is a price well worth paying.

The SIB should have direct responsibility for prudential supervision. If we provided for that, together with the reform of banking supervision which is now long overdue, the regulatory system would be seen to be of positive assistance to the industry and a safeguard to the public in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

Yet we have heard nothing from the Government. All that we heard was a well-read resumé of the theoretical position on insider dealing legislation. The Minister does not seem to acknowledge that there is even a tremor of concern anywhere. I assume that he sees the cuttings in the newspapers. I assume that he speaks to people operating in London and the other financial centres in the United Kingdom. Yet he said nothing about that.

Before the hon. Gentleman became a Minister he regularly, and to his credit, expressed great concern about these matters. I understand the problem that he had when he worked under the right hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Lamont), who took a more Thatcherite view of these matters than perhaps the hon. Gentleman did. Yet the present Chancellor, who I know has a reputation for not being interested in the small print of these matters, might have been expected to take an interest in the matter. If the Government do not act, we shall be faced with scandal after scandal until the regulatory system is put in order. Yet the Government sit by as a disinterested spectator.

The Minister got angry earlier today when he and I appeared on television and I suggested that part of the problem is that too many Conservative Members are deeply involved in the City of London for their own personal gain and they cannot see the wood for the trees, and that is why so many of them are reluctant to see any action being taken. But the Government should rise above that and accept that there are problems which must be met now.

The public believe that the Government should act because regulation would ensure that the wrongdoers, people such as Gerald Ronson, would not return to their desks after a brief sojourn in an open prison.

When the Government attack single parents, young people, social workers and anyone who lived in the 1960s, it is surprising that they have nothing to say about Ronson, Saunders and Levitt. We are not prepared to put up with this charade any longer. That is why we shall oppose the order by voting against it tonight.

11.13 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): In order that there should be no confusion, I remind the House that I am a name at Lloyd's. I want to speak about Lloyd's and explain why it should be brought under a beefed-up version of the order that we are debating.

It is widely understood that insurance is a risk business and that, within reason, there are losses as well as profits. For names at Lloyd's it used to be reassuring that Lloyd's is a 300-year-old institution, run by men who did much to uphold the City of London's reputation for integrity and decency, as well as being bound by the Lloyd's Act 1871, which states that one of the society's main objectives is "the advancement and protection of the interests of the Members of the Society".

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): What a laugh.

Mr. Marland: I agree—what a laugh.

In 1982, the House reviewed the 1871 Act, but self-regulation continued. As a result of SASSE litigation, members of Lloyd's ruling council ensured that they protected themselves against being sued for negligence —thereby relieving themselves of any duty of care to names at Lloyd's.

How did Lloyd's, free from any obligations under the Financial Services Act 1986 and from any duty of care, exploit its investors by insider dealing? There are many ways in which it did so, but I will explain just three.

First, there were baby syndicates. That was a device whereby a few insiders—usually underwriters, agency directors and their families—got together to form a small syndicate that skimmed the cream off the business going into the main syndicate run by that agency. That favoured group sliced off the best business and, when necessary, reinsured itself into the main syndicate under its control. That ensured that when there were profits, the baby syndicate fared handsomely—and when there were losses, they were picked up by others. It was a win and no lose situation. I may add that I was never a member of a baby syndicate.

All that was done at the expense of Lloyd's external names. At the beginning of the 1980s, there were more than 90 baby syndicates. At Lloyd's one previous chairman was an expert on baby syndicates, as we learned from a television interview on 3 November 1992, in which he denied his involvement. That chairman was on four baby syndicates run by his agency. Three of them—184, 207 and 998—enjoyed huge profits, all at the expense of the members of the main syndicates. That is an utter disgrace.

Furthermore, Sir David Walker's recent inquiry into Lloyd's showed conclusively that many other insiders favour themselves on to the safest syndicates.

The second way in which insiders favour themselves is by churning the market and fleecing external investors. The House will be aware that churning is illegal on the stock exchange, but not at Lloyd's under self-regulation. Lloyd's professionals make money out of commission, which is usually paid at the rate of 10 per cent. each time business changes hands. Business changing hands can be simply a matter of the broker moving from one box to the next. When some Lloyd's brokers wanted to increase their earnings, they simply passed the parcel within the business and helped themselves to the commission—which in some cases they shared with the underwriters.

When, however, the risk had been split up, rebundled and passed on 20 times, all the premium income had gone in commission. In many cases, so vague were the details of what was in the bundle of risk that some underwriters ended up reinsuring themselves.—*[Laughter.]* I agree that that is ludicrous. Proof of that activity emerged after the Piper Alpha disaster. A claim of $750 million gave rise to the movement of $15 billion within the insurance market. The money moved was 20 times the value of the claim. No money was left to pay out—no insurance premiums were left. The insiders at Lloyd's simply turned to the names and said, "Pay up"—and it should be remembered that names are liable down to their cufflinks.

[Mr. Marland]

Instead of stopping that churning, Lloyd's committee —the regulators—participated, as can be seen from the results of the syndicates run by those legislating at Lloyd's. Two thirds of the London market of excess loss money—more than £600 million in 1989—went to the syndicates managed by council members. The Merritt syndicates removed £256 million from the spiral in 1989; the Murray Lawrence syndicates removed £134 million; and the Sturge syndicates removed £120 million—as well as taking vast salaries from the markets.

All of that was done while Lloyd's names were forced to sell their houses. Some regulation that was—some duty of care.

The third way in which the Lloyd's insiders abused their professional knowledge is perhaps the most pernicious of all. In the mid-1980s, Lloyd's agents actively recruited, and were encouraged by the Lloyd's council to recruit, unwitting names, which the regulator allowed to be recruited, on to syndicates already known to be heavily tainted with pollution and asbestosis claims, so that the new recruits were there to be fleeced when they were needed. By the spring of 1982, more than 15,000 claims for asbestosis had been registered at Lloyd's.

Evidence of that practice and of the magnitude of claims has recently emerged in the minutes of an auditors meeting in February 1982 with Ken Randall, who was then Lloyd's audit manager. The auditors were understood to have called the meeting to express grave concern about asbestosis reserves for the 1979 accounting year and warned that some syndicates held inadequate reserves. The auditors claimed that if proper reserves were made the market would effectively be bankrupt.

As a syndicate may not close an account with inadequate reserves, the auditors said that badly hit syndicates should leave the 1979 account open. What happened? I can see that you are curious, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All but one of 404 syndicate accounts closed and the market declared a false £229 million profit for the year. It is alleged that some accounts were closed improperly and that the 1980 members inherited liabilities for which reserves were inadequate and that those liabilities were concealed from them by lack of disclosure.

Nevertheless, the 1980 names were enrolled in droves with the promise to clean up at Lloyd's after the Lloyd's Act 1982 and many existing names were persuaded to increase their capacity.

At more or less the same time, the show of wealth required to join Lloyd's was reduced to £37,500—not the £250,000 of which we hear talk. From Lloyd's point of view, that exercise was a great success because from 1983 to 1988, Lloyd's capacity doubled to £14 billion—a growth rate of 15 per cent. compared with an annual growth rate of 3 per cent. between 1967 and 1983.

An example of one of the new recruits was Mr. George Aldrich who joined in 1984. Mr. Aldrich is a retired chemist from Evesham who sought to augment his pension and protect his life savings from inflation. One of the things that Lloyd's agents used to say was that investment in Lloyd's was inflation proof. He was a man of modest means and now he is a man of virtually no means. He enjoyed a couple of years with small profits, but then demands for payment and cash calls began rolling in, which exceeded by 100 times what he had been told was the worst possible scenario. He has been well and truly fleeced, as were so many others.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give an assurance that no Members of the House were involved in the baby syndicates?

Mr. Marland: I cannot possibly give that assurance. I do not know the identity of the people who were in the baby syndicates. I have taken the trouble to research one or two, but I do not know who all the members were.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): No Members of the House were members of the baby syndicates.

Mr. Marland: I am grateful for the intervention of my hon. Friend. It was a job for the insiders. I am glad that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) is following what I am saying so closely because it is a serious matter.

Imagine the horror of the names who had been fleeced when they learned that Mr. Robert Hiscox, the deputy chairman of Lloyd's, had said when referring to Lloyd's names:

"If God had not meant them to be sheared he would not have made them sheep."

In order that there shall be no misunderstanding, I will repeat that. The deputy chairman of Lloyd's said of his investors:

"If God had not meant them to be sheared he would not have made them sheep."

That is backed up by another member of the Lloyd's regulatory body, whose identity I know, but I am not sure of the quote and therefore I shall not accredit it to him. He was heard to say, in effect, "If we find a mug, we use him." That is the way in which the Lloyd's regulatory authority refers to its investors. There is not much duty of care there.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Would my hon. Friend care to repeat what he has said this evening outside the House?

Mr. Marland: I should be happy to repeat it, but the quotation from Mr. Robert Hiscox is on the record. I am sorry that my hon. Friend thinks that this is not on the public record; it is all on record—it is all in the newspapers. I can produce chapter and verse for all that I have said, and I can back up what I am going to say to show just how disgraceful are the goings on at Lloyd's.

The Lloyd's hierarchy put it about that they do not make people bankrupt. In the recent past, Lloyd's has made 169 people bankrupt—except those whom it has forced into independent voluntary arrangements—and has levelled similar threats at a further 3,500.

What is so misleading about the statement, "We do not make people bankrupt", is the fact that the banks do it for Lloyd's, through the bank guarantee offered to Lloyd's as security by those who struggle to qualify. Lloyd's then calls the guarantee; the bank then asks the Lloyd's investor how he will service the borrowings, and if he cannot do so the bank makes him bankrupt.

I suppose that, strictly speaking, it is true that Lloyd's does not make people bankrupt; but, to quote Lord Armstrong, that is being very economical with the truth. The horror continues when we realise that the regulators at Lloyd's have been fiddling the unregulated system, and that until very recently the chairman of Lloyd's and the Lloyd's regulator was one and the same person.

Lloyd's investors are not shrinking violets: they have been to court and secured a judgment in their favour about duty of care. But can you believe it? Lloyd's appealed. It was in the Court of Appeal that the negligence of the Lloyd's regulator was clearly exposed. No less a person than Sir Thomas Bingham, Master of the Rolls—sitting with Lord Justice Hoffman and Lord Justice Henry on 13 December 1993—made the following statement:

"The Managing Agents owed a tortious duty to the Names to take reasonable care not to cause them economic loss. It was not easy to think of a non contractual commercial relationship in which a duty of care more obviously ought to exist than the relationship of Managing Agent and Name".

Sir Thomas then threw out the Lloyd's appeal against the duty of care.

It is greatly to the credit of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) that, when he was a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, he saw and understood what was going on at Lloyd's and appointed Sir David Walker—then chairman of the Securities and Investments Board—to investigate what was going on. The chairman of Lloyd's tried to convince the world that he had appointed Sir David Walker to investigate, but that simply was not true.

What did Sir David find? He found that Lloyd's had kept no records. He had to design his own computer system to find out what had been going on there, despite the Boydell undertaking given to the House in July 1981 that within two years Lloyd's would adopt true and fair accounting practices. Twelve years later, Sir David found that Lloyd's had done nothing. It had no measurement of risk against premium; the Lloyd's professionals were doing substantially better than the external investors. The LMX underwriters, he found, were considered a "soft touch", and the regulator had done nothing about it. On the contrary—the regulators were helping themselves to the funds, as I have already mentioned.

Sir David found that there was little consideration of duty of care by Lloyd's insiders in regard to names' interests. It will come as no surprise that a majority of names are either in litigation or threatening litigation against the Lloyd's professionals, and that the Serious Fraud Office is investigating the activities of Mr. Anthony Gooda and Mr. Derek Walker while they ran Gooda-Walker, now one of the most notorious agencies at Lloyd's.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The hon. Gentleman is describing a massive case of not merely insider dealing but corruption on a grand scale. As he has demonstrated very eloquently, insider names—underwriters and managing agents—have protected themselves and dumped all the losses on external names. The question that he and, surely, the Government Front Bench must answer is this: why did the Government not institute a proper inquiry into Lloyd's to ensure that this corruption, fraud, mismanagement and insider dealing was rooted out and the culprits prosecuted?

Mr. Marland: I hope that what is going on in the House tonight may stimulate the Government into action. The hon. Gentleman has put his finger right on the point.

I believe that it will surprise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I tell you that so far more than 30 Lloyd's investors have killed themselves or died early as a direct result of their Lloyd's losses and Lloyd's attitude towards them.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I, too, am a name at Lloyd's, although I have never taken part in or been involved in any baby syndicate. My hon. Friend is expressing a clear argument. Does he agree that the conclusion is that insider dealing and other financial manipulations are rife within Lloyd's and that the whole system of self-regulation in Lloyd's and other parts of the financial market has failed? It is totally unreasonable to expect the self-interested to be self-regulating. It is time that not only Lloyd's but the other parts of the market which do not come under the Financial Services Act 1986 were brought within that Act.

Mr. Marland: I appreciate that intervention. That is precisely the point that I am trying to make and I am glad to have my hon. Friend's support.

Sir Richard Body: Does my hon. Friend agree that the House was deceived by Lloyd's when we considered the Lloyd's Bill? When some of us, on both sides of the House, queried whether Lloyd's should be regulated from outside, massive arguments and much persuasion were used to dissuade us from any regulation. We were deceived factually.

Mr. Marland: I agree with that. That is another helpful intervention. The proof of that is the fact that the Boydell undertaking which was given in 1981 was never implemented. Twelve years later, Sir David Walker went back to investigate Lloyd's and found that nothing had happened. It had said that within two years it would tidy up its act.

Mr. Darling: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the proposition that, while he and others who are Members of the House and members of Lloyd's agree with the view that he is expressing, they are in the minority and that the majority of those who are Members of the House and members of Lloyd's do not agree with him? Does he agree that when the House discusses the regulation of Lloyd's it would be better if all members of Lloyd's who are Members of the House took no part in the proceedings? There should not be the taint of self-interest when we are discussing regulatory matters.

Mr. Marland: That is a valid point and perhaps it should be discussed at a later date. There is no doubt that a great deal of elbow clutching went on in the House during the early 1980s when the Bill went through. We were told, "Don't worry, old boy, it will all be all right. Would you like to come and have lunch with the chairman?" Many of us were put through that treatment.

I want to return to the 30 people who killed themselves or died early as a result of Lloyd's losses. Mr. Harold Weston, a 51-year-old solicitor, hanged himself from the bannisters of his home in north west London. Several others have hanged themselves. Some have shot themselves and others have gassed themselves in their cars. I will spare the House the gruesome details, but my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) will be reassured to know that they have all been written up and reported in the newspapers.

There were two further suicides in Canada which Peter Middleton, Lloyd's chief executive, admitted were as a direct result of their Lloyd's losses.

This is only the tip of the iceberg. Thousands of families up and down the land and across the world are facing trauma and massive anxiety as a result of the goings on at No. 1 Lime street.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): To help those of us who do not completely understand the position, can the hon. Gentleman tell us whether those who took their lives because of what had happened to them relieved their families of responsibility by doing so?

Mr. Marland: That is a very good question and I am coming to it. The fact is that Lloyd's liability continues beyond the grave. As I was saying, many families across the land are facing trauma because of the goings on at No. 1 Lime Street. Even those names who want out cannot get out if they have been hoodwinked into open syndicates. As I said, Lloyd's liability goes beyond the grave.

Why am I making this speech in a debate on insider trading? In a few words, I am doing so because events have shown that insider trading was rife at Lloyd's and there is no evidence to suggest that insider trading is not still rife at Lloyd's. I have had many letters and telephone calls from all over the world about financial malpractice at Lloyd's, urging the Government to do something about Lloyd's internal practices.

Like many others, I have immense respect for Peter Middleton, the new chief executive of Lloyd's, but reform is a lonely business and setting right the wrongs of the past is a difficult task, especially if the sinners have friends in high places.

It is proving very difficult to get justice at Lloyd's for those who have been wronged and the victims need my hon. Friend the Minister's interest. Leopards do not change their spots, so one should not hold one's breath waiting for Lloyd's to reform itself. I urge my hon. Friend to keep a watchful eye on what is happening at Lloyd's. I ask him to insist that the Government have regular updates on proposed changes at Lloyd's and that the changes are monitored closely to ensure that they come about.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I declare an interest as an underwriting member of Lloyd's since 1973 and as a member of the council which has regulatory responsibilities for the past two years. I understand my hon. Friend's deep concern about Lloyd's and the fact that he is deeply interested in the matter as he has described. However, he is not paying proper tribute to Lloyd's importance to the City of London and to the export business as leader of two out of five insurance risks in the City. I must also say that if my hon. Friend were to repeat his speech outside the House I think that he would find himself subject to a number of libel writs because much of what he has said is simply not true.

Mr. Marland: I am not the least bit surprised that my hon. Friend has intervened because, as he said—I hope that we all heard him—he is a member of the Lloyd's council. I hope that he is deeply ashamed of what his friends in Lime street have been up to. I also hope that when he goes there tomorrow he will be man enough to tell them what the House thinks of their deceitful ways. Lloyd's may have historically contributed to the balance of payments, but things are changing and now it is the other way around. I hope that my hon. Friend will be man enough to tell his friends on the council at Lloyd's what the House thinks of them.

I want my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure among other things that Lloyd's——

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Gentleman alleged that there had been "elbow clutching" when the House took a decision. Does he mean that improper influence was brought to bear on hon. Members during a debate? If so, it is a very serious allegation and one that the House must examine. Is that what he meant by "elbow clutching"?

Mr. Marland: I meant that a member of the Lloyd's council who was also a Member of the House at the time tried to reassure other hon. Members that if the Lloyd's Act 1982 was passed everything would be put in order. However, as I have explained, it did not happen.

I am anxious that my hon. Friend the Minister should ensure among other things that Lloyd's is solvent. If the Government were seen to conceal insolvency at Lloyd's, they would be guilty of concealing from policy holders the fact that Lloyd's was insolvent. In all likelihood, the Government would be liable to pay up. As I understand it, Lloyd's today faces future liabilities standing at more than £8·5 billion.

11.38 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I do not propose to follow the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) or to comment on what he said other than to say that his remarks will echo in Lloyd's and in many other places in the country for a long time to come, with consequences that are not as yet foreseen for not only Lloyd's but perhaps for the Government.

I bring to the Minister's attention one small matter that has been put to me. It concerns the capacity of some analysts who work in the City of London. It has been put to me that some analysts are of such ability and reputation and are so respected that the publication of their investigations into a company will cause its share price to rise substantially. Would such a person's employers be guilty of insider dealing if the information were made available to their clients, who acted on it knowing that, when it is more widely available under the analyst's name, the price will rise substantially? I am told that that applies especially to non-FTSE stock where the market size is limited. A number of City firms feel that they cannot deal in such stock for some days after the information is published, but their clients could then say that the firm had not acted in their best interests. I appreciate that this is a grey and difficult area, but some guidance should be given.

11.40 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I declare an interest as an elected member of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council.

Much of what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said needed to be said, but I did not agree with everything that he said by any stretch of the imagination.

The debate has ranged perhaps wider than it should have within the confines of the order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall be the judge of that, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me.

Mr. Greenway: I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A number of the scandals to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central referred did not relate to insider dealing. He is right to be concerned, as all of those who are involved in regulation in the City are, about the reputation of London and of the insurance and financial services industry, but it is far too soon to leap to the conclusion that the Financial Services Act 1986 has failed and that we need

statutory regulation. The one thing that proponents of statutory regulation have not shown is the benefits that it would bring.

The problems that were revealed in cases such as that of Roger Levitt, which caused much anger throughout the country and in the House, had much more to do with the criminal justice system than with whether we should have self-regulation or statutory regulation of the financial services industry. The way in which that case appears to have been handled by the Serious Fraud Office and the Crown Prosecution Service and the complexity of prosecuting fraud trials under the jury system are what need to be considered and addressed. The case is not evidence that self-regulation is not working.

It is too soon to say—my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary knows my views on this—whether the proposed Personal Investment Authority can succeed. The House must recognise, however, that it is probably the best option that the industry is likely to have for some time, and it behoves everyone to try to make it work. There is, however, as Mr. Jim Stretton's resignation from the shadow PIA board showed yesterday, disagreement in the industry about what needs to be done.

Scandals such as Roger Levitt's were unearthed by the self-regulatory system that was set up under the Financial Services Act. It is, therefore, the criminal justice system that needs to be addressed. Is not it a strange coincidence that tonight the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central attacked such scandals, yet last night his party did not support the Second Reading of a Bill that sought to address some of the weaknesses in the criminal justice system which are the cause of the difficulty? *[Interruption.]* I will not be interrupted. Mr. Deputy Speaker, day after day in the House the Labour party demonstrates its tunnel vision.

Mr. Darling: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I will not give way.

Labour Members demonstrate tunnel vision when they complain one day about one issue, and the next day they say the very opposite of what they said the day before.

I suppose we should ask my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) whether the surveillance of insider dealing and of the financial services in the City by the Securities and Investments Board will be adequate and whether, when fraud or malpractice is unearthed, they will be prosecuted as vigorously as they should be. That question lies at the heart of the measure. I fervently believe that it is to the criminal justice system that we need to look for yet more reform to make that effective.

11.45 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Gentleman just made a curious argument, because if he is saying that we could deal with the problem through the criminal justice system he is leaving out of account the obscene spectacle of many fraudsters and criminals—people who have been responsible for defrauding shareholders and for the collapse of companies, with the consequent suffering of all the stakeholders—who have escaped scot free at the end of their activities. There was the case, for instance, of Levitt, who received an unimportant, minute sentence of 180 hours community service at the end of a massive fraud trial. Many others who have gone before have escaped scot free.

The argument that was made by the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) was much more serious and telling. He was illustrating the consequences, and the consequences on the institution of Lloyd's, of the spectacle of insider trading.

The Minister gave a polished performance. He always gives us a polished performance with a high intellectual content, but it is usually an apology for inadequate policies, and that was what it was tonight. The policies that are proposed to solve the problem will not do so; they are totally inadequate. The legislation is ineffectual; it simply will not work. It might be that that is a faithful reflection of what the Government want, because there has been no indication by the Government in 14 years in power that they want to deal firmly and strongly with the obscenity of insider trading.

The people who have been defrauded are the smaller shareholders. The people who the Government want to buy shares in companies, the people who the Government want to invest in the system, are being defrauded by those who have privilege, power and insider information and are using it to enrich themselves. A Government who want to encourage a shareholder democracy should put that problem at the forefront of their priorities and propose effective methods for dealing with it.

The problem distorts markets and swindles the shareholders. It reduces the reputation of the City of London, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) pointed out, depends now, not on a powerful manufacturing economy, which is behind the American share market, but on its international reputation and its skills. That international reputation is being reduced by the spectacle of scandal and fraud that has grown in the past few years and is still not dealt with.

I have only one central argument tonight: the proposals are ineffectual. The only way in which we shall solve the problem is by substantial reform. It is interesting to hear the voices on the Conservative Benches now speaking in favour of that; it is interesting to hear the growing chorus of demand for an end to a system of self-regulation which has not worked, is not working and cannot be made to work because the vested interest of the self-regulators precludes them from regulating in the wider public interest. The Mafia cannot regulate the Mafia in the way that is proposed.

We should have a system similar to the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States, a statutorily based independent regulator, properly staffed, properly paid, with the power to carry through its decisions and the power to deal directly and immediately with that type of crime against the system. We should scrap the structures of self-regulation that were introduced in the Financial Services Act 1986. The Opposition warned against that in the Committee which debated the legislation. Indeed, the Minister supported us in some of our warnings as we tried to strengthen the Bill. Our basic argument was that self-regulation could not work unless there was a statutorily based independent regulator, freed from the vested interests of the sector that it regulates.

As self-regulation has failed to deal with the problem of insider trading, we must now return to the drawing board and say, "Let's build a new structure which, alone, can deal with that problem." Like the United States Securities and

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

Exchange Commission, such a new structure would answer ultimately to the House but would have independent authority. Working under that commission and chaired by commissioners would be regulators of the different sectors of the economy. We need a banking regulator—a banking commission—because the Bank of England is an inadequate regulator for banking. It must be freed from its Bank of England role and banking regulation must be given to a banking commission. We need an accounting and audit commission and an effective Securities and Investments Board to work under our securities and exchange commission. Each of these regulators would work in its own way.

Answerable to the whole structure, and working for the commission, should be a powerful enforcement agency that can fine, disbar, punish, proceed by civil and criminal action, and strike at crimes as they are committed, as effectively as the Securities and Exchange Commission does in the United States in a much bigger and more complicated system.

Until the Government return to the drawing board and bring to the House proposals for which their own Members are calling, and for which an increasing number of voices in the City are calling—indeed anyone concerned with the reputation of this country's financial sector and with putting an end to the squalor—the measures that we are discussing tonight will be ineffectual.

11.51 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I rise in response to the speech by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) because, to hear him talk, one would think that the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States had eliminated fraud. But the problems with junk bonds still exist and other financial frauds involving savings are still committed. Fraud and crime will always exist, whatever the policing or regulatory regime.

I have no interest to declare, but I have a background in this subject. For five and a half years prior to coming to the House, I worked in financial services compliance. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, I am no longer commercially involved in that area, but I was working closely with the regulatory authorities, the Securities and Investments Board, and am now heavily involved in the all-party group on financial services and insurance, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway).

My experience in those areas leads me to believe that we need a gradual improvement in regulatory regimes, which is already well under way. I hold no brief for the bureaucratic nightmare that the Financial Services Act 1986 created, but we are now seeing an improvement in the regulatory structure, with the core principles of the Securities and Investments Board, the streamlining of new subsidiary regulatory bodies, and a new Personal Investment Authority getting rid of the problems of regulatory arbitrage.

All the problems cannot be solved overnight. There will always be financial frauds, as there are on a much larger scale in the United States under the system of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which is so vaunted by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

This country is moving gradually towards an improved regulatory regime. There may be some scope for further statutory regulation. I believe, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) does, that there have been massive problems in Lloyd's of London, but we have every opportunity to continue to see the City of London develop, as it has for many years, as an enormously important contributor to the British economy.

Despite all the fine words of Opposition Members, the number who support the City of London because of what it contributes to the British economy and who do not vote consistently for policies which would undermine the City could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Until there are Opposition Members who understand the positive contribution of the City, their words cannot be taken seriously.

I hope that the Government will not be persuaded by the fine words, which butter no parsnips, of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby and his hon. Friends. They do not understand the City. They do not believe in the system that has done so much for the country. It is not perfect, but the last thing we want is to replace it with an equivalent of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which has not prevented far worse abuses in the United States.

11.55 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I hope that the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) will forgive me if I do not comment directly on his speech.

It has been curious for the Opposition to hear so many Conservative Members declare their interests in financial services. We have heard trenchant criticism of self-regulation, because those who self-regulate tend to be self-interested. As I heard Conservative Members declare their interests, I wondered whether they are confident that they are capable of commenting objectively on the order. We have criticised self-regulation. It follows that those hon. Members who are self-interested to the extent that they must declare their financial services interests must have some difficulty—I say that with the greatest respect to Conservative Members—in dissociating their own self-interest from the relevant legislation. That is a matter of considerable concern in relation to Lloyd's.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): If hon. Members are not allowed to talk about particular subjects in which they might have an interest, is it possible that certain Opposition Members should not contribute to debates on trade unions and other subjects in which they may have some interest?

Mr. Hoon: The difficulty about that argument—*[Laughter.]* Perhaps I should try to answer the question before Conservative Members descend into hysterical amusement. I am talking about financial self-interest. Conservative Members derive financial benefit from the interests which they are then required to declare according to the rules of the House. There is a clear difference between that and interests connected with trade union legislation. If Conservative Members cannot understand that, I feel sorry for them.

I am surprised that Conservative Members are not calling for tougher legislation on insider trading, because that would ensure a free market in securities. Insider dealing prevents the operation of that market. Conservative Members stress the need for such a market for everything else that I have heard them speak about. I understand that

it is one of the central pillars of Conservative party belief. Why have those Members not demanded tougher legislation to ensure a free market in the sale of securities, which is prevented by insider trading? When the Opposition argue for tougher regulation and enforcement, they are arguing for more effective operation of free market forces in the sale of securities.

The main debate in the European Community about the issue has been concerned with enforcement and whether existing rules and practices in each of the member states represent sufficient compliance with legislation such as the order. The Community wants to establish whether there is sufficient consistency between the practices of different member states to ensure that there is a single market in securities, and, importantly, a single system of regulation.

Statistics on enforcement in the United Kingdom are instructive, given the importance of the United Kingdom's financial services to the rest of the Community. We have had legislation against insider dealing since 1980, since when only 22 people have been convicted of the offence. Only 17 people have been convicted since 1987, despite the fact that 104 cases have been referred for prosecution by the stock exchange in London. If he has time to wind up, I hope that the Minister will refer to the disparity between the number of cases referred and the number of convictions secured.

Mr. Mudie: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is sad that this measure has not been introduced in response to the scandals since 1986, but has been brought here simply in order to implement a 1989 EC directive?

Mr. Hoon: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not pursue his point, but I thank him for making it.

When this matter was discussed through the legislative process in the European Community, there was an argument for a European-style SEC, an institution that would regulate insider dealing right across the single market. The Government presumably support the idea of a single financial market in the Community, yet I understand that in Council meetings it was the British Government who most strongly resisted the idea of a European institution to try to regulate the sale of securities across the single market. I hope that the Minister will comment on the Government's attitude to the European-wide enforcement of these regulations.

If we are to have a single market in the sale of securities, it is important also that there be a single market in the enforcement of this sort of legislation. Without consistent enforcement, it is highly unlikely that the legislation will be effective. The statistics that I have mentioned tend to suggest that the enforcement of the legislation in the United Kingdom has been less effective than we might have liked.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Does the hon. Gentleman think that one reason for the lack of successful convictions might be the fact that the burden of proof required under our criminal justice system is just too great, so the extension of the civil law into these matters might be helpful? That is a far cry from what the hon. Gentleman suggests—even tougher legislation.

Mr. Hoon: That point has already been made. We need a more sophisticated approach and more resources to ensure that insider dealing is investigated. The Government should commit themselves to a body of enforcement and investigation along the lines of the SEC, as my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) suggested. That sort of body would expose far more cases of insider dealing and would provide the prosecuting authorities with the sort of support and back-up that they enjoy in the United States.

I hope that the Minister will agree that this should be the next stage: a more sophisticated system of enforcement. I hope that the Government will state tonight how they intend to ensure that this legislation is properly enforced.

12.3 am

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) suggested in a courageous speech that "elbow-clutching" has been going on—undue influence exerted. He identified Lord Kimball, the former Member for Gainsborough, as the man he was talking about.

We must look to the reputation of the House and the influences brought to bear on it. It is true that 14 per cent. of Opposition Members have financial interests outside the House, according to the latest survey, but 85 per cent. of Conservative Members have such interests. When votes are taken on matters in which hon. Members have a direct financial interest, we should apply the rules that apply to local authorities whose members have to declare their interests and may not be allowed to vote.

Another group of people have been greatly hurt by the system of self-regulation, the death knell of which will sound from the Chamber at the end of this debate. They are not the hundreds or perhaps thousands at Lloyd's, but the millions who have been robbed by the lack of regulation in the system. Some of those people were identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) when he spoke about the 500,000 people who were tempted to transfer from occupational pensions to personal schemes. At least 2 million others were tempted to leave the state earnings-related pension scheme and now have personal pensions that run counter to their financial interests. In 10 or 20 years' time, those people will find that they have been robbed. Those are the real victims, the innocent sheep who have been sheared by the failure of the regulatory system.

I should like the Minister to have sufficient time to answer fully the charges that have been laid. Therefore, I conclude by saying that the system of self-regulation has failed in the City, and its death knell must be sounded.

12.5 am

Mr. Nelson: I passionately believe that all Members are honourable. As a Back Bencher who now sits on the Front Bench, I urge the House to be extremely careful about limiting the voting rights of hon. Members. People with a personal interest often bring experience to our debates and decisions and as long as the interest is transparent and overt, we have nothing to fear. By sectioning ourselves we have a great deal to lose.

Mr. Darling: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Nelson: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. I have a limited amount of time and I wish to do justice to hon. Members who have spoken. He will have other opportunities.

The hon. Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) raised the serious

[Mr. Nelson]

issue of personal pension plans, and I wish to touch on that. The Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation reported its concerns to the Securities and Investments Board; the SIB commissioned a study of the subject; shortcomings in the marketing of personal pensions were discovered and are being acted upon, and the SIB has presented proposals for the co-ordination of remedial action to those who may have been sold inappropriate personal pensions. That shows that the system is working. One cannot decry as inadequate a system that uncovers and seeks to redress wrongs. It could be criticised if it covered them up or did nothing about them.

I am the first to admit that there are shortcomings in our system of regulation. But anybody who suggests that we should switch to a system of total statutory control and that that would in some way be a panacea for all our ills and would change the attitude of the door-to-door salesman with a variety of investment products and would change overnight the practice in individual markets needs his head tested.

As the United States and other countries with statutory systems have found, it will always be difficult to ensure absolute, high standards of investor and depositor protection. One must always try to approximate. I can speak with some confidence from the Dispatch Box because people know my background before I became a Minister. I am not wedded to an absolute statutory system. I should like to see our system toughened by evolution, and that is what I have been about.

I can point to many things that have been done in the past two years significantly to improve standards of investor and depositor protection. To engage in revolution rather than evolution of the system would not only visit great uncertainty and cost upon financial services industries, which, at the end of the day, are paid for by the industry's customers, but would lead to a blight of uncertainty that would not be in the interests of that great industry, which provides benefit and employment for our country.

My official advice is not to say anything about Lloyd's because it is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, but I shall speak about it, because it concerns the House. I wish to reflect carefully on what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland). He will be aware that I cannot say much about Gooda Walker, which is the subject of a Serious Fraud Office inquiry, or about the affairs of Lloyd's generally, which are for the Department of Trade and Industry. However, I can say that the Government are concerned about the probity and reputation of major financial institutions, including Lloyd's. Of course we shall not stand by and see people ruined and misdeeds going on without taking an interest. That applies to the Treasury in co-operation with the DTI.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) said, there is much that is good as well as much that is bad. Sir David Walker's inquiry showed that, while much of the internal dealing led to some advantage to professionals within the organisation, it was not necessarily of a massive order above the names outside. It is also a fact that the Neill report significantly increased the representation of outside names and their representatives on the council of Lloyd's. That should provide some reassurance.

Mr. Darling: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nelson: I will not, because I shall not be able to comment on the speeches made by hon. Members if I do so. The hon. Gentleman had a good opportunity and made a long speech at the beginning of the debate, and I wish to refer to some other points.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked about analysts' reports of companies, and asked whether if companies issued reports to clients in advance of issuing them to the market they would be liable for insider dealing. The answer is that, assuming that the information supporting the recommendation is in the public domain, by virtue of section 58(2)(d) of the Act, the information will not be insider information, even if it is price sensitive.

Further, dealing based on the logic underlying the recommendation will not be prohibited because it would have taken place, regardless of the fact that when the recommendation is published the share price is likely to move. Dealing in such circumstances is, therefore, covered by the third of the general defences set out in the legislation. I hope that when the hon. Gentleman studies those words they will provide him, and thus those who have made representations to him, with the reassurance that he seeks.

I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) for the measured and sensible contributions that they made to the debate. They recognise that nothing is perfect in the present regime, but that it would be foolish to toss it aside. There is a great deal of benefit in a sensible process of change and toughening up of investor protection where it is necessary. I believe that the proposals promulgated by Andrew Large, the chairman of the SIB, for improving regulation and the interface between the SIB and the self-regulatory organisations and for significantly improving the monitoring and the coming down hard in cases where that is justified will bring a stepped change in the perceptions and the delivery of investor protection. If it does not, the House will have to look at it again. I do not have a closed mind. I am not ignoring the long-term possibilities of what may need to be done because of short-term difficulties in introducing a toughening up of the present situation.

However, many people give of their time and have to be attracted into the difficult process of regulation of our financial markets. I am not about to pull the rug of authorisation from under their feet when they are trying to institute much-needed changes to ensure that we have the standards and reputation that the industry requires, and that reputation requires that we provide free and fair markets. Therefore, I am not opposed to evolution of the system, but it is irresponsible in the extreme to suggest that we toss all that aside while we are trying to deliver significant improvements in investor and depositor protection and lurch into an uncertain statutory future without much greater consideration of the matter.

The problems of delivering such protection to investors and depositors are not just about the regimes that we set up here, whether for Lloyd's or the investment industries. At the end of the day, they are about the people who sell the products and about the efficiency and effectiveness of the

people who regulate. One does not necessarily get a satisfactory solution in statutory change. Therefore, I welcome what my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale and for Blackpool, South said in that regard, particularly what my hon. Friend the Member for Rydale said about the importance of adequate surveillance of insider dealing. The stock exchange surveillance market group is significantly improving its surveillance of that matter, and working closely with the SIB to determine how best that can be done.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) said that the order was not sufficiently tough and others suggested that the Government had introduced the measure simply to conform with a European directive. However, in 1980 it was a Conservative Government who made insider dealing a criminal offence for the first time and in 1985 consolidated the legislation and changed and improved it.

A Conservative Government have again come forward, not just to comply with our European obligations under the directive, but to move beyond the minimum requirements, to conform with existing legislative responsibilities and to move with the times to ensure that certain products that were not included in the previous legislation, such as debt securities and certain derivative products, are covered.

We have not been inactive. We are not soft on City law and we abhor and are concerned about the invasion of investor and depositor rights. At the end of the day, the decisions of the courts in such cases as Levitt and Ronson, which have been mentioned tonight, are matters for the courts.

The House knows better than I that the courts have minds of their own. If somebody is given a community service order instead of what the law could provide—up to seven years' imprisonment—it is not for a Minister of the Crown to question the decision of the court.

We have provided the penalties for the courts and the mechanisms to ensure that those who are responsible for defrauding others are detected and brought to book. Whether it is the Serious Fraud Office, the SIB or my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the President of the Board of Trade—all of whom have prosecution and investigation obligations in that regard—we will not flinch from the responsibility of ensuring that the high standards of investor and depositor protection are maintained.

For all those reasons, I commend the order implementing insider dealing legislation to the House. It will bring improvements and perceptive changes in the free and fair markets for which Britain is well known and we shall ensure that the legislative changes that have taken place in recent years are respected.

I was asked in particular about the number of convictions and prosecutions that have been brought. Some 22 individuals have been convicted of insider dealing, out of a total of 49, but what is much more important is the deterrent message that that sends to a wider audience. *[Interruption.]* Of course it is. All company law, including regulatory control, is more about the deterrence in the message that it sends than picking up the pieces afterwards.

We must have laws and systems in place which ensure, through deterrents and the ability to detect and use those penalties, that we provide high standards of investor and depositor protection. That is what the order and the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice Act will do and I commend them to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 232.

Division No. 64] **[12.17 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael

Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Roe'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John

Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Insider Dealing (Securities and Regulated Markets) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Business of the House

12.32 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement. The business for tomorrow will now be as follows: timetable motion on the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, followed by the conclusion of the Committee and remaining stages of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill. The Opposition day previously announced will now be taken on another occasion.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The House and the country will observe that the Leader of the House has not even bothered to offer any justification for what is an absolutely ridiculous step taken by the Government. The debate so far, as the right hon. Gentleman will recognise, has been a Second Reading debate curtailed at 10 o'clock, as is the norm in the House. Does not he recognise that the country will see that the Government are running away, first, from a perfectly normal process of debate on matters which are of considerable interest to British business in every constituency, every town and every village in the country and, secondly, from a debate on the health service? *[Interruption.]* There has been no debate on the health service in Government time since 1991. If the Government are so confident of their position, why are they so gutless tonight?

Mr. Newton: The last Bill of the kind that we have been discussing today took three hours from beginning to end. Already, this Bill has had far more time than that and anybody who has been present today will understand why the motion has been moved.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Is not it quite outrageous—*[Interruption.]* It is all well and good for Conservative Back Benchers who came nowhere near the debate to boo and coo, especially the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who has been up to no good this week. It is an abuse of the House. It is quite impossible to get in touch with local government at this stupid time of night and it would be far better were it left to next week. It is quite scandalolus.

Mr. Newton: The Bill has been available since before Christmas.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Since the Bill is rather necessary to business and ought not to be delayed, is not it rather difficult to choose between synthetic indignation and Government vindictiveness?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman may find the choice difficult. I think that it is absolutely clear that the Government are simply trying to proceed in a reasonable fashion.

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Skinner. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This is my college tie, Madam Speaker.

A week before Christmas, I warned the Leader of the House that he should use all the available time for parliamentary business when he pushed through two measures on a guillotine. Instead, this Tory Government —who do not know whether they are on this earth or

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

Fuller's earth—decided to pack up and have an extra week's holiday. As a result, they cannot get their legislation through. This is a direct attack not on Members of Parliament, but on the 1 million people who are on national health service waiting lists. The Government have not the guts to debate that.

Mr. Newton: If I may say so, the Opposition's tactics are an attack on the interests of both local authorities and British business.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Am I right in thinking that, because no "usual channels" exist now, no one had any prior knowledge of the contents of the right hon. Gentleman's statement? If he is to decide when the Opposition parties take their Opposition days, does that mean that he will also decide the subject matter?

Mr. Newton: We did warn the Opposition.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Leader of the House answer two questions? First, he referred to the Opposition's tactics. Why did not a single Conservative Member speak in today's debate? How does the right hon. Gentleman justify, in the context of the Opposition's tactics, Conservative Members' refusal to join in the debate on an important Bill that affects every local council in the country?

Mr. Newton: Conservative Members know that the Bill is helpful to business, and needs to be passed quickly.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Most hon. Members who are present tonight will find it remarkable that, the more the Government abuse the rights of the House, the funnier Conservative Members find it. Most of them——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is question not statement time. May I hear a question from the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Stevenson: This is my question, Madam Speaker. Why is a guillotine motion necessary, given the serious point made in tonight's debate? It was pointed out not only that there is time for adequate consideration to be given to this important measure, but that local authorities say that there is time for that to happpen without any curtailment of their ability to set the rates accordingly. There is no question of businesses' being penalised; the Government are running away from the issue.

Mr. Newton: The motion will provide for adequate consideration.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): What a farce it is when the Leader of the House comes here——

Madam Speaker: Order. I need a question, not a statement.

Mr. Bayley: Is it not a farce, Madam Speaker, when the Leader of the House comes here at half-past 12 at night to rearrange tomorrow's business? What other Parliament in the western world would have a Leader of the House tearing up the following day's agenda, and denying the Opposition the opportunity to debate an important issue involving the national health service? I have put in for it myself. What other Parliament in the western world would behave in a way that makes a mockery of our democratic system?

Mr. Newton: What is a mockery is the way in which the Opposition have tried to delay business needlessly.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is not the Leader of the House admitting that the Government wanted to push through the measure without adequate debate in the Chamber? Does he object only to the fact that, this afternoon, it was Opposition Members who wanted to question and scrutinise the legislation? The right hon. Gentleman talks of what happened this afternoon. Is he aware—Conservative Members simply would not know —that, during large parts of the debate, not a single Conservative Back Bencher was present to listen or participate?

Mr. Newton: I was here on various occasions and I heard what was going on.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): On a point of clarification——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me put the House in order. This is a narrow statement. Hon. Members must ask questions only on the subject matter that has been raised by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Bates: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it has twice been said that no interventions were made during the debate on the Bill? I made two interventions during the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and did not receive an answer to my questions.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Apart from one hour, since half-past four I have been here in the House throughout, except for 10 minutes to pay a call. That is more than can be said for any Tory Member except for three Front-Bench Members and the one Member who made an intervention. I was not called. The reason for that——

Madam Speaker: Order. I keep reminding hon. Members that I need a question, not a statement. Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on what he wishes to say and put a question to the Leader of the House?

Mr. Michie: Does the Leader of the House agree that I was not called to make my speech on the important issue of industrial rates because the Conservative party was frightened to death? They have not allowed enough time to debate these matters. Not only are we not allowed to speak tonight, but we are guillotined tomorrow.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman should have plenty of opportunity to make his speech tomorrow.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Is not it an outrage that debate on a subject that is crucial for businesses in the west midlands, where I come from, as well as throughout the rest of the country and for local authorities is being curtailed in a way that prevents hon. Members from voicing their severe concerns about what the Government are proposing? Should not the

Government get their act together to enable hon. Members to fully debate this piece of legislation and to express the views of their constituents?

Mr. Newton: The Committee stage of the last such Bill took 20 minutes.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is the Leader of the House complaining because debate on the Bill was taking more than three hours? If that is the case, why did the Government table the 10 o'clock business motion to allow the business, "though opposed", to continue "until any hour"? Surely the Government must have expected it to go beyond 10 o'clock. It was their decision, not ours, not to move the 10 o'clock business motion. Does not it seriously undermine Parliament if the Government decide to impose a guillotine if something takes more than three hours? Surely that is an abrogation of democratic rights. Even Mussolini made the trains run on time. The Government do not even do that.

Mr. Newton: I do not agree with that. In the light of what happened today, we considered the Opposition's evident intention to delay unnecessarily the passage of this necessary legislation.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Why are we going through the Government's procedural farce when, since 18 July, the House has sat for only 39 days in almost six months? Surely there is sufficient time for us to be able to debate matters correctly. Perhaps if we were here a little more often, the Tories would not get themselves into such a mess while we are away.

Mr. Newton: There is enough time; that is what the motion provides for.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Leader of the House or the Prime Minister plan to make a statement after business questions tomorrow? At what time does the Leader of the House expect the guillotine debate to start and finish and what time does he expect to be allotted to the fo[illegible]mendments—with Divisions—that have been selected so [illegible]?

Mr. Newton: We shall have to see tomorrow but the less time taken on the guillotine, the more time there will be for the Bill.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): It is disgraceful that the Minister who replied to the debate this evening would not give way so that hon. Members could ask questions——

Madam Speaker: Order. I require a question.

Mr. Olner: Why was the 10 o'clock motion not moved in order to allow a proper debate? Does not the Leader of the House agree that it is disgraceful that there is not to be a debate on the national health service when the Government have not held such a debate since 1991 and when we all know about the problems that are prevalent within the service?

Mr. Newton: The motion was not moved for the reasons that I have already given several times.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Leader of the House reflect on the fact that the title of his office is "Leader of the House of Commons"? Is it not a pretty shabby way of leading the House to move guillotine motion after guillotine motion on Bill after Bill? How does he intend to serve the House in future?

Mr. Newton: My role entails enabling the House to take decisions in a reasonable and orderly manner. That is what I am doing.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): The Leader of the House has attempted to justify the guillotine motion on the basis of what happened last time. If he had been present during the debate he would know that there are significant differences between the Bill that we were discussing today and the previous one, the most significant difference being that there is no commitment in this Bill to protect the rating pool from a shortfall. That is the real issue. Why are not the Government allowing it to be properly debated in the House?

Mr. Newton: I was here on several occasions and I have already made it clear that my case rests on what happened today, not on what happened last time.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): As the Government are clearly frightened of a debate on the national health service, and as the Leader of the House is prepared to manipulate the business to the Conservative party's advantage, will he find time tomorrow to ask his colleagues from the Department of National Heritage and the Treasury to make a statement——

Madam Speaker: Order. That does not relate to tomorrow's business.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Does not the Leader of the House realise that his statement tonight renders him unfit to hold the title "Leader of the House"? He is not the Leader of the House; he is merely the lackey of a discredited Government who should be voted out of office at the earliest opportunity. Let us get back to the real basics and have a general election and get rid of the lot of them.

Mr. Newton: No, I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman's position and I do not think that anyone else will.

Mrs. Beckett: May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us something that has not emerged from our exchanges so far? Why is it necessary this year to guillotine in January a Bill that has not passed through the House before May in previous years?

Mr. Newton: Because of the change in the timing of the Budget.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I check with you that it is the case that we have heard a statement getting rid of the supply day today? [HON. MEMBERS: "Tomorrow."] It is today in real time, although it may be tomorrow in Parliament.

Secondly, I asked about the timetable, but the Leader of the House has not yet told us when we might complete the guillotined Committee stage tomorrow. As my question has not yet been answered, is there any way that he can answer before we finish today?

Madam Speaker: That question should have been put to the Leader of the House at the time.

Salmon Farming (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

12.49 am

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Before the House disperses, may I raise a major constitutional point? Am I to understand that if, in future, the Government do not like the conduct of the Opposition, they will make a business statement seeking to destabilise the normal process and to rearrange business? If so, we might as well not sit at all.

Madam Speaker: That is a question for the Government's business managers; it is not a question for me. It should be raised with the Leader of the House

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): This is a welcome Adjournment debate as it affords an opportunity, albeit a brief one, to discuss the future of the Scottish salmon industry. I thought that the House was packed to hear about this important industry, but it appears that the ranks are depleting. Nevertheless, I am grateful to hon. Members on both sides of the House who have remained to hear the debate.

The Minister is well aware of the background to the debate. He has received a host of representations and has been good enough on at least two occasions in recent weeks to meet delegations from my constituents, who have been ringing alarm bells about the future of the industry.

Quite simply, the industry believes, with good evidence to back it, that overproduction of salmon in Norway has led to dumping on the European market, which has driven down prices to below the cost of production. Indeed, in the eight weeks before Christmas, Norwegian producers are believed to have exported to the Community as much farmed salmon as the entire Scottish annual production and almost three times as much as was exported in the same period in 1992. The prospect for 1994 is worse, with an expected additional 50,000 tonnes coming on to the market.

It is obvious that, if such market conditions persist, the viability of the industry will be threatened, at a cost of 6,000 jobs in areas where alternative sources of employment are few and far between and at a cost to our national balance of payments.

What have the Government done when confronted with that threat to such an important national industry? It is true that Ministers have voiced concern and have indeed asked the Commission to talk to Norwegian Ministers and the industry in Norway. No doubt this evening the Minister will tell the House that on 16 November the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote to Commissioner Paleokrassas expressing concern about the market and asking the Commission to take appropriate action.

The uncharitable analysis would be to say that the Secretary of State has acknowledged the seriousness of the situation but has failed to discharge his duty to the industry by asking the commissioner to take action only when it was open to the Government to follow the example of the Irish Government and to seek to invoke safeguard action under article 24 of the European Community regulation, as the British Government did in November 1991.

Perhaps, however, one may subscribe to the more charitable view: that the Secretary of State for Scotland recognised the seriousness of the situation, wanted to invoke safeguard action—indeed, Scottish Office statements have been sympathetic to the industry—but was blocked elsewhere in Government. Indeed, in writing to the commissioner on 16 November, the Secretary of State for Scotland took collective responsibility to its very limit.

Whichever is the more accurate version of events, the Minister owes the House an explanation of why the Government did not formally ask the Commission for safeguard action to be taken. Was the blockage in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of Trade and Industry or the Treasury? Where was the blockage and what are the reasons behind it, because no one in the industry can understand why action that was appropriate in 1991 and, the industry believes, would be more appropriate in 1993 was not sought by the Government?

I shall not be satisfied this evening, and nor will people who have an interest in the industry, with the response that eventually a minimum import price was imposed. The Scottish Office was well warned of the ineffectiveness of such a measure. That was based on experience of events in 1991-92, when there was a minimum import price, and is borne out by present experience. Indeed, shortly after the minimum import price was imposed the Scottish Salmon Growers Association was quoted as saying:

"the effect of the European Union Minimum Import Price . . . has been to lower the price in the substantial French market to that level"

of the MIP.

Furthermore, the message with which representatives of the Scottish, Shetland and Irish industries came away after a meeting with Commission officials in Brussels in December, at which officials of the Scottish Office were also present, was that all likely survival routes for the industry depended on the support of the United Kingdom Government. That was support which, until now, has been voiced often enough but has been substantially lacking in the arenas where it matters.

I also expect the Minister to tell us that, from 1 January, the European Union has had a reference price in place. In another place yesterday the Lord Fraser of Carmyllie told their Lordships that the Scottish Office representations had resulted in the reference price being fixed at 16 per cent. above the minimum import price. Nevertheless, even at that level, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), is on record as expressing his disappointment that it was not fixed at a higher level.

Any reference price is virtually meaningless unless it is backed up by a political will to take the appropriate action when the market place undershoots the reference price. Yesterday Lord Fraser indicated that the reference price was a type of benchmark against which future safeguard action can be considered. Will the Minister please give the House a clear statement whether and in what circumstances the United Kingdom Government will seek safeguard action if, as has been the case since the new year, the market price falls below the reference price?

Will the Minister take the opportunity to confirm that, under article 19 of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, a tariff concession can be withdrawn or modified if produce is being imported into the European Union

"in such quantities and under such conditions as to cause or threaten serious injury to domestic producers"?

Does the Minister accept that such conditions currently exist—that we are in a situation in which there is a threatened serious injury to domestic producers? Will he acknowledge that as trout, for example, are subject to a 12 per cent. charge at the point of entry into the European Union, but salmon does not have such a charge, that is a concession? Is that a concession which the Government intend to modify or withdraw in current market conditions?

The Minister will be aware that, under article 11 of the GATT rules, a countervailing charge is available as a remedy, but only if there are measures in place in the European Union to control domestic production. In other words, at the very least there should be a voluntary producer organisation in place in the European Union, with production controls and an extension of those controls to non-producer organisation members through what is called the extension rule.

The Minister knows that the concept of producer organisations commands widespread support throughout the industry and the European Union, but the Government, to say the very least, have been lukewarm in giving that development active encouragement and have not been prepared to take the necessary measures to enforce the extension rule to make them effective. In a letter that was sent just before the new year to the chairman of the SSGA, Mr. Payne, the Secretary of State for Scotland effectively ruled out any moves on the part of the Government to enforce an extension rule.

Quite apart from the critical role which producer organisations can play in rendering the reference price effective, I believe—and indeed the industry believes—that they also offer an effective way of smoothing out the recurring boom and bust cycle of the industry, while ensuring, through market intelligence and research, that producer organisations have the flexibility to respond to market developments. With production control aimed specifically at smolt placements, there is plenty of scope for competition and a premium for the efficient producer.

It is sometimes said by Government that at the present time it would not be effective to have producer organisations because the Norwegians are not interested. In the December issue of the Norwegian Fish Farming magazine, the Norwegian Fisheries Minister, Mr. Jan Henry Olsen, said:

"The fish farming industry needs to be guided. We need to have growth in the industry which is under control . . . You quickly find out that a free market does not solve any problems in the industry. That is why the Norwegian Fish Farmers Association should continue to discuss Producer Organisation cooperation rather than abandoning the work which was in progress. If we are to get a solution to the market situation in Europe, we must have cooperation."

It would appear from that article that producer organisations are still on the Norwegian Government's agenda.

Has consideration been given to the possibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland meeting the Norwegian Fisheries Minister to discuss how that olive branch of co-operation might be taken further? I should welcome hearing from the Under-Secretary this evening that he is willing to re-examine the producer organisation issue.

I do not believe in sudden conversions, but the industry has been disappointed by the negative nature of the Secretary of State's letter to Mr. Payne. It questioned whether, in some important respects, the Secretary of State proceeded on a factually correct basis.

I hope that the Government are prepared to re-examine the producer organisation issue and allow the industry to present the facts of the case to the Secretary of State. Will the Minister acknowledge the fact that, if the reference price is to be effective, the Government must be willing to give real political backing to the measures that will make it effective, including the role of producer organisations? It will simply not do constantly to pass the buck to Brussels. The Commission has said that the implementation and impetus must come from the member state.

We shall no doubt also hear from the Government exhortations to the industry to come forward with specific allegations of dumping. The industry will no doubt try to do that. Indeed, it has already given a considerable amount of information to the Scottish Office and is in regular contact with the Commission's anti-dumping unit. It has been pumping information into the Scottish Office on the Norwegian costs of production, in support of its dumping allegations. What is being done with that information?

I have also received details from a company in my constituency about a scheme intended to defeat the minimum import price. I shall pass it on to the Minister, but we should not necessarily flag it up in public as it might give people ideas about how to circumvent that. However, it should be recognised that companies have difficulty in finding real evidence. What are our embassies, particularly our embassy in Oslo, doing to try to get some of that back-up information to substantiate the case? Ultimately, it should be the responsibility of the Government and the Community to enforce the rules which the Community has made. We may be stretching the concept of neighbourhood watch too far if we try to make the industry the policeman in this case.

I should welcome an assurance that the Government will encourage the Commission to investigate the extent to which Norwegian state aid to its banking sector has directly or indirectly led to subsidies being channelled to its fish-farming sector.

There is a widely held view within the Scottish and Shetland industry that competition has not been fair. Banking failures have resulted in a substantial part of the banking sector in Norway being taken over by the state. Regional aid schemes in Norway result in 50 per cent. loans being guaranteed. There are cases of fish farms folding one day and, because the fish are still there, the industry proceeds under a different name the following day with a substantial part of its capital debt written off. Those matters merit close attention by both the Scottish Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

I can do no better than to finish by quoting the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dumfries, (Sir H. Monro), in a Scottish Grand Committee debate on fishing and fish-farming in Scotland, initiated by my hon. Friends in the Liberal Democrat party. He said:

"We must deal with the dumping of salmon from Norway . . . We cannot have salmon which sells at £1·50"—

today's industry would say, "If only it would sell at £1·50", given that we have minimum import and reference prices far below that. The Under-Secretary, who was then a humble Back Bencher, said:

"It will destroy the immensely important fish-farming industry—especially in the west and north of Scotland—which means so much to us.

It would be a total waste of the money that the Government and industry have invested in the fishing industry if action is not taken. I have read the correspondence and listened to debates in

[Mr. James Wallace]

the House, but it is action that is needed to deal with the Norwegian dumping."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 11 July 1991; c. 31]

It is action that the industry has long awaited from the Government.

1.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I welcome the debate because the salmon farming industry is of considerable importance to the Scottish economy, in particular to that of the Highlands and Islands.

Fish farming, partioularly salmon farming, is one of the most successful new industries built up in Scotland during the 1980s. We have more than 250 marine salmon farming sites in Scotland. Some 6,000 jobs are dependent on the future of the industry. Perhaps only 2,000 are directly dependent on salmon farms, but the number is significantly above that when one includes those connected with feed suppliers, medicines to control disease, packaging, processing and distribution. Most jobs are located in our remote communities in the north-west of Sutherland, Lewis and Shetland.

I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has initiated the debate. Considering what the Government have done in the past year to help fishing in the Shetlands, however, particularly the salmon industry, it was rather sad for us to have to put up with the criticisms of the past fortnight. Those criticisms are disappointing when one considers that the Government rightly and willingly went to tremendous lengths to establish the environmental committee to monitor any ill-effects of the Braer disaster, to help in connection with the exclusion zone for fishing and to offer support for the salmon industry and the bridging loans. We went to every length that we could to ensure that the watchword from Shetland was that only quality fish would be sold. We made it clear that we would do all that we could to help Shetland achieve that aim.

In eight years, Scottish salmon production has expanded more than tenfold, from 3,900 tonnes in 1984 to 40,600 tonnes in 1991. In 1992, output dropped to 38,000 tonnes, reflecting more difficult trading conditions. In 1993, Scottish production increased rapidly again to around 45,000 tonnes, an increase of 18 per cent. That is dwarfed, however, by the Norwegian production, which expanded even more rapidly in 1993 to around 180,000 tonnes, an increase of 28 per cent. Its projected production for this year is yet higher.

The Government are well aware that the industry faced very difficult market conditions in the final quarter of last year, following the large surge in Norwegian production and imports of farmed salmon to the European Community. Overall, the European market is increasing only relatively slowly because of the recession. It is unable to absorb those rates of increase in production without significant falls in prices.

Salmon prices on the European market fell rapidly, particularly during October and November 1993, by up to 50 per cent. for some categories of fish compared with September. Average prices for the largest category of round salmon, at 5 kg and more, fell from £1·74 per lb at the end of September to as low as £1·11 by mid-November, with reports of even lower prices for some consignments.

We expressed serious concern about the fall in salmon prices on the European market to the Commission in Brussels. A number of meetings were held and ultimately the Secretary of State wrote to Commissioner Paleokrassas on behalf of the United Kingdom Government expressing this concern—as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland mentioned—and asking for appropriate measures to be taken. Following that letter, the Commission introduced emergency safeguard measures in the form of minimum import prices on 20 November Minimum import prices for round salmon were set at £1·20 per lb, for gutted salmon at £1·33 per lb, and for gutted salmon without heads at £1·46 per lb. We welcome this decision as a step forward, providing as it does a temporary floor for the market while the longer-term problems facing the industry can be dealt with.

The minimum import prices will have effect until 31 January this year. They will be reviewed by the Commission before the end of January in the light of market trends. I spoke to Commissioner Paleokrassas on 20 December and urged him to extend the MIP to 31 March and to press Norway as hard as possible on the issue of dumping.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Mr. Pattinson tells us that, at these prices,

"the Scottish industry will continue to lose £1 million revenue each week, and more jobs and communities will be put at risk."

Is he right?

Sir Hector Monro: I do not know. I could not possibly tell the hon. Gentleman whether the industry will continue to lose £1 million a week or not. I hope not.

There has been some recovery in market prices—for example, the average price of round salmon over 5 kg had increased from £1·11 per pound in mid-November to £1·31 per pound at the end of 1993. Round salmon of between 3 and 4 kg increased in price from £1·18 to £1·44 at the end of the year. That is above the reference price of £1·38.

I do not underestimate the problems that the industry faces, but it is interesting to note that round salmon sales to the continent in November were 677 tonnes and in December 1,130 tonnes, an increase of 73 per cent. There was also an increase in the sale of gutted salmon of up to 53 per cent. That certainly gives the impression that the MIP has helped to stabilise the market, albeit at a price that I think is too low. It is pushing up the market price towards the reference price.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is the Minister hinting that some of the problems that the industry faces are market oriented, or does he accept that the problem is being caused by the dumping on the market of Norwegian salmon?

Sir Hector Monro: Of course it is. I have not yet come to dumping, but it is crucial. Without the enormous importation of salmon from Norway into the Community, the problem would not arise. Of course dumping is the root cause of our problems and I do not disguise the fact.

The reference price is important and I am glad that the Commission introduced it on 1 January 1994 at a level above the MIP, although I should have preferred it to have been higher than £1·38 rising to £2. We made as many representations as we could, and the figure was set at 16 per cent. above the minimum import price.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Does the Minister accept that for the reference price to be effective there must be producer organisations? Will he therefore offer his wholehearted support to the setting up of such organisations?

Sir Hector Monro: I do not agree that the reference price is in any way related to the producer organisation issue. The key issue is the attempt to get Norway to adopt a reasonable attitude and to get the Commission to agree that Norway is dumping salmon. We must put an end to that as soon as possible and get the Norwegians to understand that there has to be a fair market. It certainly is not fair now and that is the target of all our efforts.

My officials are going again to Europe next week and I am going the week after to talk to Mr. Paleokrassas. I hope that we will be able to make progress towards action on the anticipated Norwegian dumping.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on securing the debate. Will the Minister bear it in mind that the adverse effects of dumping on the Scottish industry also have an effect on my constituency which has Northern Ireland's only salmon farm?

Sir Hector Monro: When we go to Brussels or Luxembourg we do our level best for the Northern Irish fishing industry, in the same way as we do our level best for that of all the United Kingdom. We have the welcome support and co-operation of the Irish Government who are as concerned about low prices affecting their fish farms as we are about them affecting ours.

It is for the Commission to consider whether, under article 23 of EC regulation 3759/92, a countervailing charge should be introduced for imports of salmon to the European market if prices fall below the reference price. We understand that the Commission considers that to do so may risk a challenge under the GATT arrangements. We are in close touch with the Commission to try to resolve that dilemma.

Market instability is in no one's interest, including that of Norway. Regulations are in place in the Community to ensure fair trading between member states. If and when Norway becomes part of the EC, she will be required to operate within the Community rules.

There is a history of allegations by the Scottish and Irish farmed salmon industry that Norwegian producers are trading unfairly by dumping salmon on the European market at prices below the cost of production. A complaint made in 1989 was investigated by the Commission, which concluded that there was evidence of dumping by Norwegian producers.

A further complaint was made in 1991, but the Commission has yet to carry out an investigation based on that complaint. The Government have consistently argued that the Commission should carry out such an investigation, and this remains our position.

Last year, the Commission invited the salmon farming industry to update the information previously provided to the Commission in 1991. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland implied that it was the Government's duty to produce all the facts and figures. We will gladly help the industry, but it must help us. It is not easy to produce the facts and figures and we must work together to provide the information as quickly as possible so that the Commission can decide what to do to stop further massive importation into the Community of Norwegian salmon. As the hon. Gentleman knows from various discussions and meetings that I have had with him, I am keen to resolve this matter in the interests of the Scottish farmed salmon industry, and I shall add a word for Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: Northern Ireland, please.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall add a word for Northern Ireland and for Ireland as well.

It will not be easy to get a quick solution. I have to attend Commission and Council meetings and the rate of progress in getting almost anything achieved in the Council of Ministers is frustrating. We have to work at it as hard and as quickly as we can to help an industry that is in a serious position because of prices that are so much below the cost of production.

I have said that prices have been creeping up since the autumn, and thank goodness they have, but we still have a long way to go before the industry reaches profitability.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and other hon. Members have mentioned compulsory producer organisation. The Government believe firmly that we could proceed much more quickly by having a voluntary producer organisation and there is no reason why the industry should not get together and get started on that right away. We would be able to give some financial help towards the adminstration of a voluntary producer organisation. However, no producer organisation, despite what the hon. Gentleman said, will be effective unless we can get co-operation from Norway.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nineteen minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 13 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime

1. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in response to his 27-point plan to reduce crime in the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I have received a large number of representations and comments on my 27-point plan, including one from the chairman of the Police Federation, who said:

"My message to the Home Secretary is what you have proposed is first-class. It will help tremendously in the fight against crime."

Mr. Dowd: Will the Home Secretary tell the House why, after almost 15 continuous years of Conservative Government, and within but a few months of his appointment, he felt compelled to introduce a package of such dubious complexity? Does that indicate the indolence and ineptitude of his Tory predecessors or his own desperation in the face of a national problem, which, throughout those 15 years, despite their fatuous pretence to the contrary, the Government have done nothing but exacerbate?

Mr. Howard: It may take me a little time to work out whether "dubious complexity" is an improvement on a "series of gimmicks". The truth of the matter is that, whatever phrase the Opposition attempt to fasten to the package that I announced, and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which implements it, they could not make up their mind what to do about it on Tuesday—they could not say yes and they could not say no. They simply abstained at the end of the day.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall reading that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said that we should not be hesitant to praise the Government when they got things right? Has my right hon. and learned Friend received any sort of praise or representations from the hon. Member for Sedgefield as a result of those points?

Mr. Howard: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. I have received no praise, but lots of hesitancy. Hesitancy is the watch word of the Labour party.

Mr. Blair: Does the Home Secretary agree that there is no more serious cause of crime than the link between crime and drugs and drug abuse, particularly among young people? Is he aware that the police estimate that, in certain parts of the country, 70 per cent. of crime is linked to drugs, and that last week the Home Office report said that there was an urgent need for a national programme of drugs education and prevention through the country? In those circumstances, why did he take the Tory party to vote against Labour's amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which included precisely that, among other things?

Mr. Howard: I certainly agree that there is an important relationship between crime and drugs. We must take the influence of drugs on crime very seriously. That is why the Government have introduced into the national curriculum comprehensive education for children in our schools on the question of drugs.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if a suspect refuses to answer a simple question in a police station, the courts should be told and be allowed to take that into account?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend will be aware of our proposal to enable the courts to draw the appropriate inferences from the silence of those who are asked questions. He will also know that it has been warmly welcomed by the police, the public and the majority of the judges who gave evidence to the royal commission.

Television (Violence)

2. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies he plans to commission into the effects of violence on television and video on children and young people.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): We intend to examine the results of research into the viewing behaviour of juvenile offenders which has been commissioned jointly by the British Board of Film Classification, the Broadcasting Standards Council, the BBC and the Independent Television Commission. Pending the outcome of that examination, the Government have no plans to commission further research on the subject.

Ms Lynne: As research figures show that 118,000 children under the age of 16 saw Child's Play 3, the film mentioned in the James Bulger and the Susan Capper trials, is the Minister in favour of amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to make a new classification of "unsuitable for home viewing" for particularly gratuitously violent films and videos, particularly as, unlike the Minister, I do not believe that current legislation is operating successfully?

Mr. Lloyd: We will consider all the ideas that come up, but, as I just said, we want first to see the results of the research which I believe is due in March. The hon. Lady is right to say that we should look at the classifications under the 1984 Act, and no doubt there will need to be a great deal of discussion on that, but we have the strongest law on video classification in the world. It may well be that it could be stronger, but it would be wise to obtain all the information that we can to see how it can be effectively strengthened, rather than giving an immediate reaction to a particularly horrid case about which we all know so much.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Is my right hon. Friend, whom I congratulate on his recent honour, aware that this is a matter of concern not just for parts of the House but for the entire House and the entire adult population of Britain, and that the time has come not for studies but for action to stop child pornography and child violence coming on to the screens at times when children can watch it?

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his kind remarks. He referred to child pornography coming on to the screens, but the law is extremely tough against child pornography. It is being strengthened by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. However, what I think he is referring to, about which the great majority of people on both sides of the House and in the country at large are concerned, is the continual diet of violence on programmes of the broadcasting organisations and on videos. The difficulty is that, as I think my hon. and learned Friend will agree, any one particular item will, for most people, do no harm whatever; it is the cumulative effect and the repetitiveness that are dangerous. The law may well be strengthened, but the first line of defence is the editorial good sense of broadcasters.

Cleveland Police Authority

3. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the resources available to the Cleveland police authority to fight crime in the area.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Provision for policing in Cleveland in 1994-95 will increase by more than 4 per cent.

Mr. Mandelson: Is the Minister aware that crime in my constituency has risen by 132 per cent. since the Government came to power, burglary by 148 per cent. and auto crime by 281 per cent., resulting most recently this morning in a tragic death in the town? As my constituents have almost despaired of anything being achieved to stop that crime wave, will the Minister give a clear answer to the question this afternoon: will the Government's new Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill cut crime for my constituents or not? Yes or no?

Mr. Wardle: First, I join the hon. Gentleman in the regret that he expressed about the death to which he referred. I know that he prides himself on his presentational skills, so it is a pity that he did a disservice to the House. In the year to 30 June 1993, crime fell in the area of the Cleveland constabulary by 2 per cent. The hon. Gentleman has not told the House that, for the current year, Cleveland's police standard spending assessment increased by 3·9 per cent., but the county council cut the police budget by 2 per cent. and, in nine of the past 15 years, has not even applied for an increase in its establishment. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question of course is yes.

Mr. Devlin: Turning to another aspect of the Cleveland police, is my hon. Friend aware of how pleased the police in Stockton are that they are to be testing the new side-handled baton, which they called for and which the Home Secretary was only too ready to grant them? Will my hon. Friend further congratulate the police in Stockton on the greatest fall in burglary rates in Cleveland?

Mr. Wardle: I happily join my hon. Friend in congratulating the police in Stockton. He is right, too, about the value of the trials of the baton to which he referred. I am sure that both he and the House will be aware that the Cleveland force has done an excellent job. Not only has crime fallen by 2 per cent. throughout the area of the force, but the clear-up rate is better than the national average. Civilianisation is proceeding apace; by the end of

1992, 100 uniformed officers had been released by civilianisation, and it is planned to release another 40 for operational duties this year.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: Whatever may be happening in Cleveland, are not large numbers of constabularies, including Warwickshire constabulary, facing budget cuts —in the case of Warwickshire, of 2 per cent.—as a result of Government policy? Does not the Minister understand that if the Government fail to deliver to constabularies the resources that they require to put officers on the beat, that is a false economy? If we do not provide police with the resources that they need, we will pay the price in higher insurance rates and in the rise in crime over which the Government have presided for the past 14 years.

Mr. Wardle: As the hon. Gentleman knows, provision for police spending will increase by 4·4 per cent. What local authorities do with their budgets, having received their police SSAs, is a matter for them. If some Labour local authorities are willing to spend more on social services and less on their police budgets, that is a matter for them and a matter for which they will be answerable to their electorates.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Gyles Brandreth. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] Order. Mr. Roy Hughes.

Police Reorganisation

5. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he has had with representatives of police committees concerning reorganisation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ministers and officials have had many meetings with representatives of police authorities about our proposals for police reform.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister appreciate that delay and speculation about reorganisation are undermining morale in the police service at a time when the police need to be ever more vigilant in the fight against crime? Will he recognise the greater efficiency of smaller forces such as those of Gwent and Dyfed-Powys? Given such efficiency and high levels of crime detection in these forces, is not the message to leave well alone?

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recall the answer that I gave on 13 May last year to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)—that as a result of local government reform in Wales, some changes in the policing arrangements as between south Wales and Gwent are likely to be necessary. Home Office officials have already met the police authorities and chief constables and are making a detailed assessment of the options.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern that there should not be unnecessary delay. That is why the consultations are already under way and, as soon as the detailed assessment is completed, decisions will be taken.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my hon. Friend consider it correct if police authorities undercut the morale of their own police forces by spreading rumours about the ill effects of the new police authority formation, as is happening in my hon. Friend's and my county of Sussex?

Mr. Wardle: There is a lot of needless scaremongering about the reforms. As my hon. Friend knows, the new police authorities will be small, efficient bodies able to focus on key strategic tasks. A statutory obligation will be placed on them to consult locally, to draw up with the chief officer a local plan or strategy, and then to be answerable for that by reporting the results of policing every year.

Tariff Sentences

6. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to relinquish his powers to impose tariff sentences on those sentenced by the courts.

Mr. Howard: I set tariffs only in relation to those persons who have received a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. I have no plans at present to change that arrangement, but I am still considering the recent report of the Committee on the Penalty for Homicide, chaired by Lord Lane.

Mr. Madden: Does not the Home Secretary agree that the case of Abdul Qayyum Raja and Mohammed Riaz illustrates the urgent need for decisions on the duration of mandatory life sentences to be left to the trial judge, who is in possession of all the facts and the legal arguments? Is that not better than the Home Secretary's exercising power in an arbitrary and unaccountable way—which, in this case, has extended those two men's sentences far beyond those delivered by the trial judge?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's assertion. Of course full weight is given to the opinions of both the trial judge and the Lord Chief Justice, but the final decision in such cases is a matter for the Home Secretary.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise the huge support in north Hertfordshire and the country as a whole for tougher sentencing powers to deal with persistent young offenders? If they are locked up, they cannot commit offences. Will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure my constituents that these excellent proposals will not be watered down by the Opposition, in Committee or elsewhere?

Mr. Howard: Subject, of course, to the will of the House, I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. We certainly have no intention of watering down the powers, because we appreciate full well that the public need to be protected from the activities of the relatively small number of young offenders who commit a disproportionate number of offences. That is why we are introducing these provisions, which we intend to implement as soon as possible.

Jury-nobbling

7. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding jury-nobbling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no recent representations. We are determined that criminals should not be allowed to escape their just deserts because of interference with jurors. As soon, therefore, as the necessary details can be worked out, we intend to ask the House to approve provisions which, if approved, will allow retrials to be held after proven instances of jury nobbling.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Let me add my congratulations on his recent elevation.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the nobbling and intimidation of juries, like the intimidation of witnesses, is a serious abuse of the criminal justice system and seriously undermines justice? Does he agree that the weight of prosecution evidence that now has to be disclosed to defence counsel is leading to an increase in the number of such abuses, and that disclosure needs to be reviewed carefully in accordance with what our senior policemen are telling us?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, of course that is true.

Mrs. Roche: Does the Minister agree that more support schemes for witnesses are needed in the Crown courts to deal with jury nobbling and the intimidation of witnesses? Why are the Government cutting such schemes, rather than expanding them?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Lady is entirely wrong; we are expanding them.

Lenient Sentences

8. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made on preparing an order on referral of lenient sentences.

Mr. Howard: I can announce today that an order will be laid shortly which will extend the Attorney-General's powers with effect from 1 March. The order will bring within those powers offences of indecent assault, cruelty to children and making threats to kill.

Mr. Oppenheim: If the policy of referring lenient sentences is central to the fight against crime, how seriously should we take the representations of those who like to claim the moral high ground on the law-and-order issue, and who constantly pontificate about the need for the Government to take tougher action on crime, but who bitterly opposed and voted against the referral of lenient sentences? They include the Opposition home affairs spokesman.

Mr. Howard: The seriousness with which we can take the Opposition's attitude can best be tested by recalling what was said by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—then shadow Home Secretary—when the powers were first introduced. He said:

"It is quite wrong that a man or woman should be required to serve the longer of two sentences imposed on them. It is wrong that the obviously political intrusion which this system provides should be introduced into our legal system. It is wrong that the Attorney-General should be subject to the campaigns inside and outside this House."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 693.]

He was followed into the Division Lobby against the measure by all senior members of the Opposition Front Bench and all members of the present Opposition home affairs team, including the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I can well understand why the hon. Gentleman does not like to be reminded of those facts.

Mr. Grocott: In line with his tough view on sentencing policy, what does the Home Secretary think would be an appropriate sentence for the squandering, waste and misappropriation of £21 million of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that is a matter for the district auditor. *[Interruption.]* It is still under consideration by the district auditor and it is a remarkable illustration of the Opposition's attitude to justice that they are anxious to leap in on the basis of provisional representations before the law has completed its course.

Custodial Sentences

9. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has conducted into the effectiveness of custodial sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The research and statistics department of the Home Office regularly publishes material relevant to the consideration of the effectiveness of sentencing, including custodial sentencing.

Mr. Clappison: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the value of custody lies not only in giving the best possible protection to the public from serious and persistent offenders but in improving the effectiveness and credibility of non-custodial sentences by giving a sanction to the courts against those who refuse to comply with non-custodial sentences and who will not respond to them but commit further offences? Are not those who talk about whether prison works ignoring that fact and are they not inviting house burglars, car thieves and the like to cock a snook at the courts?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is precisely because of the point that he has raised that the figures that we derive from our research consistently underestimate the deterrent effect of imprisonment.

Ms Ruddock: Does the Home Secretary know, however, of the calculation made by the head of research at the Home Office to the effect that it would require a 25 per cent. increase in the prison population to achieve a reduction of 1 per cent. in crime? Surely that would cost in the region of £1 billion. Given the fact that only one in 50 crimes leads to a conviction, would it not be much better for the Government to have a comprehensive crime prevention policy, which would be not only cheaper but much more effective in reducing the rate of crime?

Mr. Howard: The point that the hon. Lady makes is thoroughly absurd. Of course, most offences and most offenders should not be subject to sentence of imprisonment so to compare rates of imprisonment with all offences committed, as she has done, is of no relevance to the argument. Much more relevant is the research which shows that between three and 13 offences could be prevented for each convicted domestic burglar who is imprisoned for a year rather than sentenced to community service. That is the relevant statistic—why do the Opposition run away from it?

Elderly People (Attacks)

10. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people aged over 70 years have been attacked in their own homes in 1993.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I regret that the information requested on people aged over 70 is not available from statistics of

recorded crime. However, data from recent British crime surveys suggest that those aged 60 and over are less likely to suffer incidences of violent crime in and around the home than those in younger age groups.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware of the circumstantial link between drug addiction and the growing number of cases of elderly women in their own homes who are being badly battered, raped or, in one case, locked in a cupboard, thrown face down and left to die? Does he not think it is time that the House had a full day's debate on drug addiction and the growing number of innocent people made victims because we are trying to prevent silly people taking drugs and destroying themselves?

Mr. Maclean: Elderly people are vulnerable and they fear crime more than younger people. Many of them are afraid to go out at night for fear of burglary or mugging. There have been despicable and cowardly attacks on old people, which we all condemn and deplore, but statistics clearly show that people under 24 are about 20 times more likely to be victims of crime than those aged over 60. It might seem—although we cannot go only by anecdote—that junkies and others are targeting their own age group rather than the elderly. I assure my hon. Friend that we are doing more research, but whether a debate is held is not a matter for me.

Mr. Allen: As the Minister has had a couple of days to think about the answer, will he tell elderly people, hon. Members and people watching on television whether the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will cut crime? It is a very simple question. Will the Minister answer today since he could not do so the other day?

Mr. Maclean: I will tell the Labour party what the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, on which Labour abstained, will do. It will make our criminal justice system the most effective possible, and of course we shall see results. We want cautioning to fall and, following the issuing of new guidelines by my right hon. and learned Friend, it is starting to do so. We want to see fewer police officers behind desks and more on the streets, and with cuts in their paperwork and less middle management that is exactly what we shall see. We want to see persistent juvenile offenders off the streets and in custody and, with our new secure training centres, that is what we shall see, yet that is what the Labour party abstained on. Above all, we want a criminal justice system in which everyone—the public, the police and the courts—can have confidence, and that is the yardstick by which I shall judge the Bill.

Mr. Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware that many elderly people fall prey to young violent criminals, including those under the age of 15 who are now subject to the Children Act 1989? Will he confirm that the secure training orders envisaged in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will put such young thugs behind secure bars and locks for the first time, which will give some reassurance to the elderly, who fall prey to them?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which was given a Second Reading on Tuesday and about which the Labour party could not make up its mind, gives courts for the first time the power to send directly to secure accommodation youngsters aged under 15 who have a history of persistent offending. That will give some peace of mind not only to elderly people but to many in villages, towns and housing estates throughout the length and breadth of this country and in Labour constituencies. I am not sure how Labour Members will be able to face their constituency executives tomorrow night and tell them that on this major measure, which affects their constituents, they did not know what to do.

Sunday Trading

11. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional police officers he estimates will be rostered for duty on Sundays as a result of the partial deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of police officers rostered for duty is an operational matter for chief officers.

Mr. Bayley: Does the Minister accept that it will be necessary to roster additional police officers, environmental health officers, street cleaners and trading standards officers to police Sunday trading? Who will pay for them?

Mr. Lloyd: The Association of Chief Police Officers suggests that the resource implications for policing are minimal and manageable. I think that I prefer the police's judgment of the matter to the hon. Gentleman's.

Neighbourhood Watch

12. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on neighbourhood watch schemes being involved in street patrolling.

Mr. Howard: A number of neighbourhood watch schemes already patrol as part of their voluntary crime prevention activities. To encourage such local initiatives, I have asked for a code of practice to be drawn up in consultation with the police.

Mr. Winnick: Does not the Home Secretary realise how ridiculous and dangerous it is to advise neighbourhood watch schemes to get involved in street patrols? Has not he been told that the police consider it to be very dangerous? Why does not he admit that what he wants is for residents increasingly to use private guards, which is another form of privatisation of the police service?

Mr. Howard: No. The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. If anyone really wanted to see the Labour party's attitude towards such matters he should have observed the manifest derision of Opposition Members when I recounted to the House on Tuesday the work being done by Town Watch in Sandwich, patrolling the streets to reduce crime in the area and to escort elderly citizens who want to be taken out at night to visit their friends and neighbours. I went out with Sandwich Town Watch on Sunday night, and I was greatly impressed by what I saw. Such work should receive a tribute from the Labour party, not the derision that we saw on Tuesday. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down. There are far too many noisy conversations going on. *[Interruption.]* Order. The House must settle down now.

Mr. Paice: Is not it true that people who become involved in the patrolling schemes alongside neighbourhood watch understand clearly that the idea of people

patrolling and keeping watch is a major deterrent to those involved in much of the petty crime that besets our housing estates? Is that not the real reason why my constituents in Cottenham, and people in many other places, have become involved in such schemes? They are a means of helping to keep down crime, especially in rural areas. Do they not represent a sensible way forward, alongside the special constable scheme, which is also being widely welcomed in my constituency?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend but such schemes are of use not only in rural areas. I have told the House of my experiences in Sandwich on Sunday night; last Thursday night I patrolled in a similar way with a group of concerned citizens in Washington DC. They said to me, "People behave differently if they know that they are being watched." *[Laughter.]* That is the principle behind neighbourhood watch.—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Howard *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order now.

Mr. Howard It is astonishing how reluctant the Labour party is to take seriously the safety of people on our streets and in their houses, and the extent to which the active citizen can make a contribution towards achieving those objectives.

Mr. Michael: I assure the Home Secretary that he is being watched. Does he not accept that patrolling our streets is part of the job of a constable, which demands training and expertise?

Our derision is not for those good citizens who, out of fear and frustration, patrol the streets, but for the Home Secretary who fails to support the police. He is putting at risk those who undertake such patrols, and other citizens, too. Why has a Home Secretary from a party that promised 1,000 extra police this year delivered a cut of 224 instead? We hear constant promises of support for the police, but the citizens to whom the question refers would be in bed at night if the Home Secretary would only deliver that support.

Mr. Howard We have fully discharged our manifesto promise to increase police numbers. If I have failed to support the police, why did the chairman of the Police Federation say about my speech in Blackpool,

"My message to the Home Secretary is that what you have proposed is first-class. It will help tremendously in the fight against crime"?

The people who patrol the streets of Sandwich do so not out of fear and frustration but out of a public-spirited concern for their community that the Labour party will never understand.

Police

13. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers will be returned to operational duties by his plans to cut paperwork and to reduce the number of police middle managers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: That is a matter for chief officers to determine in the light of the particular circumstances of their own forces, but my right hon. and learned Friend has made it possible over time for some 5,300 police officers to be redeployed to front-line operational police duties.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he tell the House what support he has had for the proposals and is he aware of the many forward-looking police forces that are developing computer software programmes, which are now cutting administrative burdens and putting more police officers back on the beat?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend will be aware that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has received widespread and enthusiastic support not only for those two reform proposals, but for all his police reform proposals, because they will provide a modernised and more effective organisational structure, allow chief officers the freedom to deploy financial resources as they see fit —whether on equipment, on computer technology or on personnel—and allow for free-standing budgets that cannot be poached by local authorities. More officers with less paperwork will be getting out from behind their desks to the beat on locally focused operational duties. They will help to prevent crime, tackle crime where it occurs and protect the public.

Ms Glenda Jackson: If the reduction in paperwork is bringing such enormous benefits, why is my constituency of Hampstead and Highgate threatened with the removal of 22 police officers? Surely one of the quickest ways to bring peace of mind to the elderly who are indeed under threat in my constituency is by not only retaining the present number of police officers but increasing it.

Mr. Wardle: As the hon. Lady will know, the deployment of police in the Metropolitan area is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Judging by the hon. Lady's concern, I am sure that she will support the Bill concerning the police in its passage through the House.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend accept that if we are to get to grips with law and order, we cannot always leave it to the police, but must rely on measures such as those introduced by the Home Secretary yesterday and we must rely on the judiciary to give hobnail-boot sentences and not carpet-slipper sentences?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend provides a powerful endorsement of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. He is also absolutely right to point out that it is partnership which matters in the fight against crime and crime prevention between community groups, members of the public and local authorities working with the police.

Police Recruitment

15. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will lift the freeze on police recruitment in the next financial year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no recruitment freeze. Forces remain free to recruit up to their authorised establishment.

Mr. Clapham: I hear what the Minister says, but does he agree that although the police are free to recruit, they need to be supported by resources? In his reforms of the police, will the Home Secretary consider that they need

further resources, will he ensure that those resources are available and, in making those resources available, will he take into consideration the partnership that needs to be forged between the police, the local community and local authorities?

Mr. Wardle: That is precisely why the police spending provision will increase next year by 4·4 per cent., precisely why 279 extra police posts have been approved in South Yorkshire since 1979—an extra 10 per cent.—and why, since 1979, across the country we have some 16,600 more uniformed police officers.

Mr. Lidington: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's policy of giving chief officers control over the budgets for police officers and civilian staff will enable those chief officers to deploy resources more efficiently in the circumstances of the regions for which they are responsible?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. At present, we have an out-dated system by which police chief officers have to express every bid for extra money in terms of additional uniformed posts. Now, as my hon. Friend rightly points out, chief officers will have the flexibility to decide how they spend their budget.

Operation Cheetah

16. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total cost of Operation Cheetah on Merseyside to date; and whether the inquiry is continuing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Merseyside police expect the total cost of Operation Cheetah to be approximately £2·2 million. The inquiry is now at an end.

Mr. Parry: Is the Minister aware that the chairman of the Merseyside police committee has expressed concern at the number of hours that have been spent on this investigation? Is the Minister satisfied with the liaison between the Merseyside police and the Crown Prosecution Service?

Mr. Wardle: In that case, no doubt the chairman of the police authority will make his feelings known, as I am sure he has, to the chief officer. It is for the chief officer to allocate resources and to deploy officers on operational matters. It must be the responsibility of the police to investigate such allegations.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that wherever there is suspected wrongdoing on Merseyside it is entirely right for the police to investigate it?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right and that is precisely what the police did.

Departmental Efficiency

18. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of his Department.

Mr. Howard: Steps to improve the efficiency of the Home Office and its services include market testing, contracting out, computerisation, better purchasing and greater productivity.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the whole way in which his Department is working now demonstrates the effectiveness of what he is doing and that the new measures which he has announced are exactly what people are looking for?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am sure that he is right. I am gratified by the widespread support that I have received from the public for the measures that I am putting in place. It is a great shame that the Labour party could not support them on Tuesday.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Gillan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the statement by Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein calling for the clarification of the Downing street declaration is just a sickening attempt by the IRA's apologists to shuffle the responsibility for their evil campaign of terror and fear? Is it not time that they faced up to their responsibilities and grasped the challenge of adopting the democratic path?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend speaks for many millions of people in this country and throughout the island of Ireland. I welcome in particular the recent statement by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), making clear that he sees no excuse whatever for continuing violence and appealing for people to devote themselves exclusively to the democratic process. As the Taoiseach and I have made clear on a number of occasions, the joint declaration is not an invitation for renegotiation. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I have gone to great lengths in this House and beyond it to ensure that the joint declaration is fully understood and we shall, of course, continue to do so. We still await a positive response from the IRA.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Prime Minister unequivocally condemn the gerrymandering and wilful misconduct which has cost £21 million of taxpayers' money in what his party has described as a flagship council?

The Prime Minister: Let me say unequivocally to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that if the reported allegations about the council turn out to be true, of course I condemn such activities just as I would condemn malpractice in any council, wherever it occurred. It would be wrong to comment on this case while the auditor is still considering it. The auditor operates independently of Government, has full powers to pursue his inquiries and I have no doubt that he will continue to use them to the full. We should wait and see precisely what the outcome may be. Otherwise, we are in danger of assuming that people have committed malpractice until they are proved innocent. I would think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a barrister, would recognise that that is no way to pass judgment.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister recollect the frequent endorsements that he and his colleagues have offered to Westminster city council, in particular the comment by the Secretary of State for Employment, that Westminster council was one of the Tory's stunning successes and a source of cheer for every Conservative? Taking everything into account, does the Prime Minister think that those endorsements were wholly wise?

The Prime Minister: I have just made it perfectly clear to the whole House that the district auditor's report contains a number of serious allegations. At this stage, they are allegations. There is now a perfectly proper legal process by which the allegations will be examined in depth and the truth arrived at. The district auditor has been at pains to stress that his findings are provisional. I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should wait until those findings are confirmed before he is so swift to judge.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister appreciate that the matter has now been investigated for four years, and what is revealed is a devastating example of financial corruption and an abuse of power by senior members of the Conservative party? Cannot he at least condemn that?

The Prime Minister: I have already made it clear that if the allegations are confirmed, I will condemn unreservedly. But, as has been made entirely clear, this is the start of the legal process. Unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman, most people will prefer to wait until that is completed and not find people guilty until and unless they are proven to be guilty. That is a cardinal principle of British law which I commend to the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Q2. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming yesterday's sharp fall in unemployment? Does he recall that one year ago the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) predicted that unemployment would rise month after month? Therefore, will my right hon. Friend invite the hon. Gentleman to make another such prediction?

The Prime Minister: Most people would probably settle not for another prediction but for an admission from the hon. Gentleman that he got it wrong again and again and again. I very much welcome yesterday's fall in unemployment, which means that the number of unemployed people has fallen by nearly a quarter of a million over the past year. Of course, it is still too high, but the fall of nearly 47,000 on top of the falls in recent months suggests that we are now seeing a continuing downward trend in the level of unemployment. We are the only western European nation to have low inflation, an economy that is growing and unemployment that is falling significantly.

Mr. Ashdown: Does—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. There is impossibly bad behaviour today.

Mr. Ashdown: Does Lord Justice Scott still enjoy the confidence of the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: It was the Government who set up the inquiry and gave Lord Justice Scott the freedom to pursue it as he thinks fit. I have no adverse comments to make on the way that he is doing it.

Mr. Streeter: Does my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the £20 million contract won by Plymouth-based British Aerospace (Systems and Equipment) Ltd. in December, further boosted by a share in the £50 million contract announced by the Ministry of Defence yesterday? Is that not a fine illustration of defence contracts boosting and sustaining British jobs? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that if the Liberal policy on defence were followed, those defence jobs would simply not exist and many people in the west country would be out of work?

The Prime Minister: I am, of course, delighted at the contracts to which my hon. Friend refers. It is certainly the case that if the reductions in defence expenditure advocated by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) or, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition were carried into force, the implications not only for our capacity to defend ourselves but for British industry, not least in the west country, would be very profound. It would be a reassuring change if the Leader of the Liberal party were to say the same thing in the west country as he says elsewhere.

London Hospitals

Q3. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to make an official visit to a London national health service hospital.

The Prime Minister: I shall be making a series of visits around the country, during which I intend to include NHS hospitals, as I have in the past.

Mr. Corbyn: In his visits around the country, will the Prime Minister undertake to explain to Londoners why more than 150,000 people are on hospital waiting lists? Beds are being closed and wards are being taken out of operation, and one night in Bart's hospital more than 30 people had to sleep on floors or on trolleys because there was not sufficient space for them. Are not the Prime Minister's policies of the internal market leading to more and more closures and losses of bed space as the crisis and the chaos get worse? Is not it time for him to intervene to scrap the internal market and give Londoners the health service which they need, deserve and demand? Is not that a basic right?

The Prime Minister: We are certainly seeking to give Londoners the health service which they deserve. In addition, we are seeking to improve dramatically primary health care in the capital and that has been evident for some time.

The hon. Gentleman neglected to mention in his catalogue the dramatic reductions in the times which patients wait for hospital treatment. Since the reforms have been implemented, the number of patients who have been waiting for more than a year has fallen from around 120,000 to just over 70,000, and that figure is on a declining trend. The hon. Gentleman will know of expenditure which has been made in his own area's district

health authority. He ought not to underestimate the work that is being done to improve the health service for all the people who live in London.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Milligan: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the work that is being done in Eastleigh to develop a safer door lock for trains? Such a lock could have averted some of the 300 deaths which have occurred during the past 20 years when passengers have fallen out of trains. Will the Government encourage British Rail to invest in the new technology which would not only save lives on the railways but would also save jobs in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend may know that British Rail is actively considering the technical feasibility and the cost-effectiveness of the system to which he refers. I know how important the decision is for my hon. Friend, and I know how hard he has worked on behalf of his constituents. British Rail is examining the matter at the moment.

Mr. Kaufman: On November 10 1992, the Prime Minister, together with the Attorney-General, announced the appointment of Lord Justice Scott to conduct his inquiry. Will the Prime Minister now express his full confidence that Lord Justice Scott is conducting the inquiry fairly, particularly since he is due shortly to appear before Lord Justice Scott? Is the Prime Minister confident that he will be treated fairly by Lord Justice Scott? Will the Prime Minister repudiate the scurrilous attack on Lord Justice Scott by Lord Howe?

The Prime Minister: I know that it has been a quite noisy House this afternoon, but I seem to recall answering that question a few moments ago. I will reiterate to the right hon. Gentleman that the Government appointed Lord Justice Scott to conduct an independent inquiry. It is therefore for him to draw up his own procedures and it is not a matter for the Government to comment on those procedures. I have no adverse comments to make upon those procedures, as I indicated a few moments ago.

Q5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the continued incarceration of Ron Arad is quite unacceptable? Will he give the House an assurance that the Government will maintain their efforts to secure his freedom?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give that assurance, and we will continue to support efforts to free Mr. Arad. We have raised the case on innumerable occasions with the Iranians, the Syrians and with any others who may be able to help. On his visit to Israel earlier this month, the Foreign Secretary met members of Mr. Arad's family and assured them that we will continue to do what we can to help. My right hon. Friend gave them our warm sympathy for the pain and suffering which they must feel at present.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Prime Minister give us an assurance today that whether or not the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic proceeds to interpret, elaborate, explain or, indeed, encourage Sinn Fein-IRA to respond to the Downing street declaration, he will stand by it and that he expects members of Sinn Fein-IRA to cease their campaign completely and indicate that they will lay down their arms so that they can enter the democratic process?

The Prime Minister: I certainly wish to see them unreservedly and permanently end violence and then enter into exploratory talks that can lead to them taking part in the democratic process. I reiterate again: we are not in the business of clarifying the declaration. The declaration is clear. What is intended by Mr. Adams in his present activities is to seek bit by bit to draw the Government into negotiation upon the joint declaration. That is not on offer to Mr. Adams now. It will not be on offer to Mr. Adams in the future. If he wishes to enter into discussions, he knows how he may do it. He can decide to give up violence. After three months he can enter into exploratory talks. Then he will be able to enter into the democratic talks process itself. That is the route ahead. The only question that needs to be asked is not of the British Government or the Irish Government but of Mr. Adams. Will he stop the violence and enter the democratic process or will he not? Everything else is fudge.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Would the Leader of the House be good enough to give us the business for the forthcoming week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 17 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

TUESDAY 18 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Coal Industry Bill.

Motion on the Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme.

WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY—Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order.

Motion relating to the Education (Mandatory Awards) (No. 2) regulations.

Motion relating to the Education (Student Loans) (No. 2) regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 20 JANUARY—Opposition Day (first allotted day).

There will be a debate on Accountability and Waste in the National Health Service on an Opposition motion.

FRIDAY 21 JANUARY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 24 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill.

Mrs. Beckett: As the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill is a piece of gerrymandering so shameless as to make Westminster city council look like rank amateurs, will the Lord President withdraw it for debate on Monday and put in its place a debate on the Child Support Agency? As he will recall, there has been neither a statement nor a debate in the House on that matter. He will know, as I do, that there is widespread anxiety in every party represented in the House and widespread dissatisfaction at the changes made so far by the Government, which are regarded by all parties as wholly inadequate. That seems to us to be an urgent subject for debate.

In view of the unprecedented attempt by Lord Howe to undermine the independence and integrity of the Scott inquiry, will the Lord President ask the President of the Board of Trade to come to the House so that he can set beyond doubt on the record the Government's complete dissociation from the statements made by Lord Howe and their undertaking that not only the Prime Minister but no Minister or official of the Government gave Lord Howe any support or had any discussions with him before he made that statement to the Scott inquiry?

May I remind the Lord President that we have repeatedly sought a statement from the Home Secretary on the neglect of voter registration in Conservative boroughs such as the London borough of Brent. That neglect threatens to remove from thousands of British citizens the most basic right in a democracy—the right to vote. Will the Lord President bring the Home Secretary to the House to answer on the matter?

Mr. Newton: On the latter question, the Home Secretary has just been here and no doubt there would have been opportunities to raise that matter with him. I shall bring the right hon. Lady's question to his attention.

As for Lord Howe, I am certainly not aware of any discussions that he had with members of the Government before making his remarks to the inquiry yesterday and I am tempted—as my right hon. Friend clearly said in response to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the Chairman of the Select Committee on National Heritage, a few moments ago—simply to refer once again to the two answers that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on the Scott inquiry.

On the Child Support Agency, there has been a general welcome for the changes that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced just before Christmas. There will be opportunities for debate in due course on the regulations required.

I do not accept the right hon. Lady's strictures on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill and have no intention of removing it from the list of business.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Despite all the pressures that will be on my right hon. Friend during these business questions, does not he think that it would be a good idea to get back to basic content and consider one of the most important things that has happened this week —the summit conference in Brussels over the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Western European Union? Does he believe that, perhaps not next week but within a reasonably short time, we should have the opportunity to debate the future of those two organisations and our attitudes towards them?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is certainly right to advert to the great importance of those discussions and he will be aware of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about the outcome yesterday. On the question of a debate, perhaps I can simply undertake to bear in mind my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): May I press the Leader of the House on the Child Support Agency? Will he confirm that the statement made by the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security on 22 December will require statutory instruments to effect the change and that those instruments will be considered under the affirmative procedure? Does the Leader of the House understand that that matter is becoming extremely urgent and that if he cannot find time for a debate to implement the orders next week, hon. Members on both sides of the House will be looking for a statement during business questions next week to ensure that such a debate is organised for the week thereafter?

Mr. Newton: The Government's appreciation of the need to move speedily, especially following the report of the Select Committee, was well illustrated by the speed with which the statement followed the report. Of course, we shall not seek to delay the necessary measures. I would need to check how they fall between affirmative and negative orders.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My right hon. Friend will know that the persistent question of blight has long been one of the most difficult for any Government to resolve. Given the fact that there are more and more public infrastructure projects, many of which take up to 14 years

to complete, and that thousands of people see their property values destroyed by public works, will he consider a debate on that major issue?

Mr. Newton: It seems likely that, given the amount of interest in a number of major projects at the moment and the plans that are well known to my hon. Friend, opportunities for discussion on those matters will occur, but I cannot make a specific promise this afternoon.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): As the Government cancelled today's health service debate and put it on the agenda for next Thursday, will the Leader of the House arrange for a Minister to go to Whipps Cross hospital in my constituency before next Thursday, preferably one evening, so that he can look at and speak to the people in the accident and emergency department who have been waiting for up to 10 hours and perhaps longer for treatment and the other people who are jam-packed on trolleys in the hospital corridors, waiting for a bed? Then the Minister could come to the House on Thursday and explain what the Government are going to do about it.

Mr. Newton: It is not the case that, as the hon. Gentleman put it, the Government cancelled today's debate and reinstated it next Thursday. We offered the Opposition a day next Thursday to replace the one that we found it necessary to take for other business today and they chose to transfer the health service debate that they had tabled for today. Of course, I do not in any way complain about that. On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I shall bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent debate on a policy initiative that commands support across Dartford, Kent and the United Kingdom—the introduction of a national identity card?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that certain issues relating to that are being examined. I will, of course, bring his remarks to the attention, once again, of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On Monday's business, may I say to the Leader of the House, without posturing, that in my 31 years as a Member of the House I have never known a more ill-thought-out piece of legislation, from Governments of both parties, than the reforms in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. Frankly, that is saying something. Grave doubts have been expressed about the finance for the proposals, after their factual basis was blown apart by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and by the treasurers, and about their effects on education, particularly following the devastating report from the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland. In those circumstances, should not we use parliamentary mechanisms to ensure that after the Bill's Second Reading its Standing Committee is at least able to call witnesses for four to six of its sittings? That would establish some kind of factual basis for the Bill. Between now and Monday, will the Leader of the House at least consider that and talk to the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Mr. Newton: It would be less than courteous of me simply to reject out of hand the hon. Gentleman's request, but I would not wish to raise his hopes that I or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would think it right to proceed down the path that he has suggested. I will, of course, bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to my hon. Friend's attention. Otherwise, may I say that the very process of the Second Reading will enable the hon. Gentleman to raise many of those points, should he catch your eye, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time that radio and television stopped using the voice of the actor as a substitute for the voice of the terrorist? If so, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a ministerial statement to be made as soon as possible on the measures that the Government intend to take to prevent the mechanical media from abusing the restrictions imposed upon them?

Mr. Newton: I will bring my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Given the crisis in the national health service, which was described so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), will the Leader of the House consider providing a day in Government time for a debate on it? That would enable every hon. Member to tell the right hon. Gentleman and his fellow Ministers exactly what is going on. Is he aware that the Government-appointed members of the trust in my district health authority are proposing to close two hospitals with the loss of 300 beds and goodness knows how many jobs? In fact, that decision will destroy the health service in Halifax. Is not it time that the Government offered the House a debate on the health service in their time because they have caused that crisis?

Mr. Newton: I do not regard the word "crisis" as a sensible description of the fact that the number of patients treated rose by more than 4 per cent. last year and is expected to rise by another 3 per cent. this year and the fact that, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in Prime Minister's Question Time, the number of people waiting more than a year for treatment has fallen from about 120,000 to 70,000 since the reforms were introduced.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the grave concern that has been expressed by the wool textile and clothing industries at the lack of a decision on tariffs when the GATT round was signed? In view of the importance of those tariff barriers to our industries, and therefore the people employed by them, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a discussion on them in the House as soon as possible?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that, in due course, there will be opportunities for further discussion on the generally very successful outcome of the GATT round. I know, however, that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will want to look with care at what my hon. Friend has said.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): Will the Leader of the House arrange time next week for an urgent debate on the British aerospace industry? Is he aware that, yesterday, during trade and industry questions, the Minister for Industry replied to a question on British Aerospace's venture, AVRO, at Woodford? He said:

[Ms Ann Coffey]

"the general fortunes of this business are improving."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 162.]

I have heard today, however, that massive redundancies at the Woodford plant will be announced tomorrow. Is not that evidence of the fact that the Minister is unaware of what is happening in the industry? In view of that and of the fact that the GATT negotiations did not resolve the problem relating to indirect and direct subsidy allowable to the British aerospace industry, which puts it at serious disadvantage, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an urgent debate before yet more of my constituents pay with their jobs because of Government inaction in relation to that crucial industry?

Mr. Newton: I am clearly not in a position now to comment on what, from the hon. Lady's initial remarks, I take to be speculation or prediction. However, I can make the point that, since 1979, the Government have provided more than £1·5 billion in support for major aerospace programmes and civil R and D. That is probably greater support than for almost any comparable industry in the country.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on the future of NATO, taking account of the meeting of the Prime Ministers of NATO countries this week, so that the position of Poland can be more fully debated than has been the case and so that we may take account of the feelings of expatriate Poles in this country, many of whom live in Ealing and fought in the Atlantic alliance against German tyranny in the war, and who fear for the future of Poland unless it is inside NATO as soon as possible?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's question underlines the request for a debate that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith). As I said earlier, I will of course bear that request in mind.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the Leader of the House find time to review the workings of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 in the light of the information that I have sent him about the case of a constituent of mine, Daniel Liddell, who was kicked unconscious and almost killed by thugs in Falkirk? Two of those thugs, Steven McDuff and James Easton, pleaded guilty and were released without being sentenced because the procurator-fiscal got the date wrong for calling them back for sentence. He blamed that on what he said were over-complicated regulations attached to the new Act. George Scott, the procurator-fiscal, said that the reason——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Connarty: I hope, Madam Speaker, that you will not mind me quoting.

Madam Speaker: Order. Yes, I do mind the hon. Gentleman quoting. These are business questions. The hon. Gentleman is going into too much detail about a particular case. What he should be seeking to do is ask the Leader of the House for a debate on an issue. If the hon. Gentleman would come to a conclusion, I should be grateful.

Mr. Connarty: The procurator-fiscal said that it was caused by stupidity in the drafting of the Act. Therefore, I ask that time is found to review that and find out whether that allegation is incorrect or in fact true.

Mr. Newton: What I think the hon. Gentleman has asked me to do is to find time to undertake a review of the matter. Although I cannot promise to do so personally, I will certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is aware of what the hon. Gentleman has said today.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Did my right hon. Friend find it rather curious that so many Opposition Members, who yesterday urged the Prime Minister to bomb the Serbs around Sarajevo, seem to have forgotten their history? May we have a debate on Bosnia so that the House may remind itself of the centuries-old ethnic and cultural links between Serbia and Russia? If Russians were treated to the sight of French, American and British planes bombing Serbia, it would feed the extremists in the Russian Parliament and make life very difficult for Boris Yeltsin. The debate could also provide an opportunity for those who urge the bombing to give an understanding that they will not be the first to condemn our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should British soldiers' wives be widowed as a result of the escalation.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has underlined what my right hon. Friends and, to be fair, numbers of hon. Members, although perhaps not all Opposition Members, have acknowledged throughout, which is the need to take into account a range of important factors, political and military, before jumping into decisions and actions.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Some 15 minutes ago, the Leader of the House announced the business for next week. Will he tell us what specific factor prevented him from announcing the business for two weeks ahead? That is not something for which he needs anyone's permission.

Mr. Newton: If I may say so, what happened yesterday constituted quite a good illustration of the need to retain flexibility at times.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Since later today a distinguished group of colleagues and myself hope to put down an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which will allow the courts to use corporal punishment in place of imprisonment for certain categories of young offenders, could my right hon. Friend be kind and courteous enough to undertake to allow us to debate the matter on the Floor of the House, with a free vote, as many of my, and perhaps his, constituents would feel that that would lie as well with the "back to basics" campaign as some of the other issues that have been treated accordingly?

Mr. Newton: I cannot quite give my hon. Friend that undertaking without giving some consideration to the matter.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Leader of the House recall the Government White Paper "Scotland in the Union—a partnership for good" released last year which said that there could be many more meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee so that more Scottish issues could be determined in Scotland? Given

that, would not it be a good idea to refer the Committee stage of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Grand Committee and allow Scottish Members of Parliament to determine that subject? If the union really is a partnership, why should the votes of English Tory Members of Parliament be required to gerrymander Scottish local government?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, as ever ingenious and tendentious, raises what he may regard as an interesting point, but one to which I propose to respond with caution. We are in a little difficulty in pursuing proposals, whether of his kind or of those that we might prefer, in the absence of what are known as the usual channels.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my right hon. Friend find time soon to debate the appalling management of council housing finance in—[HON. MEMBERS: "Westminster!"]—a number of Labour-controlled boroughs in London—in particular, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth, which have been singled out by the district auditor? Is he aware that, in 10 boroughs in London, more than 20 per cent. of the council housing rents remain uncollected, a matter of considerable concern to London and something of which Opposition Members should take notice?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about our attitude to such matters when allegations are shown to be founded, wherever they may occur.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Leader of the House aware of early-day motion 310 concerning the detention of Jamaican citizens at Gatwick?

[That this House deplores the decision of immigration officials at Gatwick Airport on 21st December to detain 190 out of the 326 passengers on charter flight YULE 966 from Kingston, Jamaica; notes that no justification has yet been made for why so many individuals should have been detained or why this particular flight should have been singled out for action on this scale; further notes the failure of immigration officials at Gatwick promptly to notify waiting relatives and friends as to the reason for the delay; condemns the decision to hold 57 passengers overnight, and in some cases for several days, at Campsfield detention centre in Oxfordshire; is concerned that some of the detainees claim to have been mistreated; notes that there is no evidence that any of the individuals detained were implicated in criminal or drug-related activities; notes that those removed and returned to Jamaica will encounter severe difficulties in ever returning as visitors to the United Kingdom; notes further that the abolition of appeal rights against visitors' refusals in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, leave those refused entry without any effective means of redress against an unfair decision; believes that this incident will severely damage the United Kingdom's reputation abroad as a country which welcomes visitors; believes further that this incident will damage race relations; notes that this incident is symptomatic of the discrimination and lack of accountability in the United Kingdom's immigration system; and urges the Home Secretary to institute a full public inquiry into this case.]

Is the Leader of the House aware that one of the passengers who arrived on the charter flight was a Jamaican woman who had been issued by the British authorities in Jamaica with a visa entitling her to settlement in the United Kingdom, which usually would have meant that she would have been admitted within minutes of arrival? Instead of that, she was kept waiting for 12 hours and, as she was four months pregnant, it is clear that that wait caused her considerable distress.

As the Government have refused even to name the passengers who were deported on Christmas day, or to give any reasons why they were refused entry, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to give an early statement so that he can be called to account for the exercise of brutal state power that took place on Christmas day when 27 Jamaicans were deported back to Jamaica?

Mr. Newton: I simply do not accept the hon. Gentleman's phrase "brutal state power". I think that he will be aware that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has written to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) about the matter generally and has placed a copy of his letter in the Library. It makes it clear that the immigration service had good reason to pay particular attention to that flight, although each individual passenger was considered individually on merit. There was a delay in completing all the necessary interviews, but an inquiry point for waiting friends and relatives was set up promptly and used by many people. However, I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will wish to look into the particular case to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Further to the reference by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) to the district auditor's report on Lambeth council issued in May 1993, will my right hon. Friend also consider the alleged goings on in Monklands district council and, taking that into account, seriously consider an early debate on the performance of these Labour councils?

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to what I said a few moments ago and to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said during Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Following the issue of two sets of district auditor reports in Clay Cross, which I represent, two groups of councillors were debarred from office and surcharged and some of them were made bankrupt. The second team of councillors were surcharged to the tune of £2,000, or a little more, to be paid jointly and severally.

May we have a debate on surcharging, debarring and bankruptcy, so that we may contrast Clay Cross, where people behaved honourably and decently, with Westminster, where £21 milion was at stake and where there was no honour or decency?

Mr. Newton: As my right hon. Friend said during Prime Minister's questions, allegations have been made and will now be examined by due process. Those against whom the allegations have been made have an opportunity to make their case and further consideration can take place in various ways. The sensible course is to allow that process to proceed—not the course that the hon. Gentleman invites me to take.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the activities of Tameside metropolitan borough council, following the

[Mr. Charles Hendry]

investigation on the Radio 4 programme "Face the Facts" this morning, which exposed a company set up to operate the council's nursing homes which has made multi-million pound losses and which is run by Labour councillors, members of their familes and Labour party lackeys?

Mr. Newton: I note that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning is in his place ready to make a statement shortly. I am sure that he will have heard and noted what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Given the rather idiosyncratic definition that the Leader of the House has given to the term "cancellation" of a debate, would he care to reflect on the impact of the delay in debating the national health service on the delegation that came here today from the Royal Orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham, which is threatened with closure as a result of the Government's health reforms? The delegation comes from a city that stands to lose more than a quarter of its acute beds as a result of the market mechanism.

What confidence can patients and health service staff in Birmingham have that the Government will not find an excuse again next week to duck their responsibility to debate the crisis that they have caused in our national health service?

Mr. Newton: I inadvertently suggested just now that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning was to make a statement shortly—in fact, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to make it.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that it depends on whether the Opposition choose to go on behaving as they did yesterday. We had no wish to cancel today's debate; in effect, the Opposition cancelled it by failing to behave reasonably.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): In view of the widespread public interest in the pressure that membership of this House imposes on married life, is not the time ripe for a debate on the hours that the House sits? Can my right hon. Friend confirm reports in the newspapers—or has he perhaps heard it from the Labour party—that the Opposition have welched on their intention to support the reform of our sitting hours and intend to keep us up all hours of the night for narrow party-political reasons?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I should direct that question at the serried ranks of former usual channels on the Opposition Front Bench who are looking at me now. I note with genuine regret a report in *The Independent* today, which states:

"Labour leaders last night confirmed talks between the two sides had collapsed over a recommendation"

about automatic timetabling. The report goes on to say that a senior member of the Labour party who was a member of the relevant Committee said that

"he saw 'no prospect' of the Jopling plan being enacted".

If that is so, I deeply regret it—but it should be made clear more formally by the Opposition if it is true.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): May I repeat the request for a debate on the divisive and destructive effects of the Child Support Act 1991? If it is not possible to arrange that as a matter of urgency, may we at least have a statement from the Minister responsible for such matters about the particular hardships caused by the disregarding of people with families, both abroad and in this country?

I ask the Leader of the House particularly to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the status of members of the armed forces with a second family based abroad is not recognised in the calculation of their disposable income. People who are putting themselves on the line to support their country find that they cannot afford to support their own children. May we have a statement to clarify the rule that the Child Support Act should encompass all the children of a person, not just a selected few?

Mr. Newton: I hope that none of those involved will regard it as a breach of confidence for me to say that I have already spoken to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, who takes a particular interest in such matters. I know that he is aware of the position to which the hon. Gentleman refers and has undertaken to ensure that it is looked into.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) asked about a review of the procedures of the House and the timetabling of all business. I have asked this question a number of times, but let me repeat it: is it not intolerable that the Opposition can effectively block reform simply by leaving an empty chair? Will my right hon. Friend present the Government's decisions on the matter at an early date, so that we can debate and pass the necessary legislation?

Mr. Newton: I do not wish to add to what I said in my earlier answer, but I hope that Opposition Members who are involved in these matters will note what my hon. Friend has said. His remarks reflect considerable frustration among hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The fundamental duty of the House is to scrutinise Government policy and executive action. Can the Leader of the House, with his special responsibilities, deal with a fundamental problem?

The Prime Minister has announced that the whole fabric of Government policy will be affected by his "back to basics" strategy and that it will permeate all Departments and policies; yet we have not debated it in the House. Given the number of Conservative Members who are confused about the policy, surely it is the responsibility of the Leader of the House to ensure that, as soon as possible, a full day is set aside for a debate on the "back to basics" policy, introduced by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Newton: The House has had substantial opportunities to discuss, for instance, educational matters and standards. Only the day before yesterday, it had the opportunity to discuss fully the Government's criminal justice proposals. Those are important elements in the programme and the hon. Gentleman has had plenty of opportunities to talk about them.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate next week on facilities in the House of Commons? I have looked very carefully, but as far as I can see there are no condom machines in the House. I realise that their installation would come rather too late for some Conservative Members, but it would probably be welcomed by the more circumspect among us.

Alternatively, perhaps we could seek some advice from Mrs. Lorena Bobbitt, who has a very direct way of dealing with members.

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether I can seek your guidance, Madam Speaker, on whether that is a matter for the Accommodation and Works Committee, the Catering Committee or the Administration Committee; but it is certainly not a matter for the Information Committee.

Madam Speaker: I should have thought that the comments of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) were in extremely bad taste, but I refer him to the appropriate Committee.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): It was announced during the recess that in future it may be possible to use the eggs from dead foetuses for in vitro fertilisation. Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on the subject so that hon. Members as well as the general public can discuss it during the consultation period allowed by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady, who is well informed about these matters, will be aware of the consideration being given to them and will know that recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will follow in due course. I shall, of course, bring her request to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Further to the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), if there is not to be an early debate on the Government's "back to basics" policy, will the Leader of the House at least arrange for a copy of this important policy to be deposited in the Library so that hon. Members can read it?

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether it is the usual practice to put into the Library a copy of the speech which, for example, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made at the party conference, but I shall certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman has a copy because it sets it out very clearly.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I suppose that it is inevitable that the House will, as usual, rubber-stamp the Scottish legislation to be debated on Monday, but, as the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill is deeply flawed and almost universally opposed by the people of Scotland, and in view of the fact that it will affect every locality in Scotland, may I suggest to the Leader of the House that it is important that as many parts of Scotland as possible are represented on the Standing Committee which will debate the Bill in due course? The Committee should consist of 25 members at the very least. Will he accept that point, regardless of the fact that there are only eight Government Back Benchers from Scotland?

Mr. Newton: The membership of Standing Committees is of course a matter for the Committee of Selection. I have no doubt that its Chairman will note the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Has the Leader of the House seen press reports suggesting that the 130 river clean-up schemes submitted by the National Rivers Authority and passed to the Secretary of State for the Environment have been reduced to 29?

Is he aware of the tremendous anxiety of my constituents who have been told by the NRA that without Government intervention the clean-up of Stock's beck, a river polluted by dyes and sewage effluent, will have to wait until well into the millennium, until 2005? Will the Leader of the House press his right hon. Friend, who is sitting alongside him, to make an urgent statement on his plans for river clean-ups?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend, who, with his usual diligence, is in his place, will consider that point.

Westminster City Council (Auditor's Report)

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement in response to the question raised during points of order yesterday—whether the Secretary of State has powers under the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to direct the auditor to publish the information that he has obtained in the course of his audit.

The issue arises out of the provisional findings of the district auditor in relation to allegations of misconduct at Westminster city council. Those findings were set out in a statement issued by him earlier today.

The district auditor is, by statute, independent. He is appointed by the Audit Commission to carry out an external audit of a local authority's accounts but, once appointed, he is not subject to direction by the Government or, except in certain limited circumstances, by the commission. He acts wholly independently. This is the most important democratic safeguard. His duties are laid down in statute and amplified in the code of audit practice which is approved from time to time by the House.

One of his duties is to consider objections made by electors against an authority's accounts. In the present case, he received objections in relation to decisions taken by Westminster city council during 1987 on its designated sales programme. It is alleged that decisions taken by the council and expenditure incurred in pursuing those decisions were unlawful. It is alleged in particular that the purpose of the council's policy was to retain political control of marginal wards.

Those are very grave allegations. It is right that they should be treated with the utmost seriousness, but the district auditor has made it clear that his view of the allegations is provisional, and that all the interested parties have an opportunity to challenge that view. If the allegations are proved, I shall have no hesitation in condemning the behaviour. In the meantime, the rights of those accused must be protected. I repeat, none the less, that, if the allegations of unlawful expenditure and wilful misconduct are ultimately upheld, I will condemn that behaviour in this case, as I would in any other, and the law will and should take its course.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) asked yesterday that I should direct the auditor to publish the information gathered in his inquiries. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning promised that he would take that request away and take legal advice. He has since written to the hon. Member explaining that I have no powers to direct the auditor to do so. A copy of my hon. Friend's letter is in the Library.

I am happy to assure the House that, when the case is complete, I shall consider again the issues that the hon. Gentleman has properly raised to see whether there are any changes that I would wish to recommend.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I thank the Secretary of State for coming to the House to make a statement in response to my point of order yesterday. Although we believe, as I think he does, that current law on the publication of the report is wholly unsatisfactory, we acknowledge that it exists, and we believe that it should be the subject of an urgent review.

The Secretary of State is already aware that I have made it clear outside the House that the respondents mentioned in the report are of course entitled to defend themselves under due process. He should also be aware, however, that the district auditor who carried out the report said today that

"this was the most wide ranging and comprehensive inquiry ever conducted by a local government auditor".

Since no one appears to dispute the auditor's description of the events, surely the Secretary of State should now be able to condemn the designated sales policies, lawful or otherwise, which led to hundreds on housing waiting lists and hundreds of homeless people in Westminster being denied houses and homes in Westminster, as Westminster city council mocked their need by boarding up decent homes and then trying to sell them on the open market.

Surely, given the Conservative party's attitude on law and order, it is possible to condemn a crime now without prejudging the issue of who was guilty of committing the crime. Why does not the Secretary of State practise what he and other Ministers preach on the issue of law and order?

Does not the Secretary of State accept that, if the findings are upheld, this will be a case of political corruption and gerrymandering on a scale unknown in modern Britain? [HON. MEMBERS: "Come off it."] There is no parallel—Conservative Members had better understand this—for corruption on this scale. If the findings are upheld, it will also show that the Conservative party in Westminster is rotten and amoral to the core, and has abandoned the most basic principles of public morality.

Does not the Secretary of State also accept that his party and Government should bear substantial responsibility for——

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Today, on the radio, there was an investigation into—[HON. MEMBERS: "This is not a point of order."] It is a legitimate point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members might let me do my job. If a point of order is raised, I have to listen to decide whether it is indeed a point of order—and let me tell the hon. Gentleman that I hope it is.

Mr. Duncan Smith: It is, Madam Speaker. Today there was an item on the radio about Tameside council, in which serious allegations were levelled against that council on the basis of the district auditor's account. Therefore, I would ask you, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I am coming to it. I ask you, Madam Speaker, to urge the Secretary of State to make a statement about the district auditor—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. That would have been a good business question to put to the Leader of the House a few minutes ago, but it is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Straw: The country will see the way in which Conservative Members are so windy about the disclosure of corruption and maladministration in Westminster on a

scale that has never occurred before in modern Britain that they try gratuitously to disrupt the proceedings of the House. *[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Shut up.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Straw: Does the Secretary of State accept that, because of the climate that his Government and the Conservative party have created, they must bear a substantial responsibility for what happened in Westminster? In 1990, the Conservative Government were gerrymandering grant to Westminster, just as the Conservative party in Westminster was seeking to gerrymander housing to gerrymander votes.

Surely the House and the country are owed an explanation—now—of the involvement of senior Conservative politicians and Conservative central office in the designated sales policies in Westminster.

Since the allegations were fully made public by the objectors as long ago as 1989, did Ministers really know nothing of them when, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition said at Prime Minister's Question Time, in 1990 the present Secretary of State for Employment referred to Westminster council as a "stunning success"? What are we to make of the statement that the Prime Minister made to the House on 21 February 1991, in which he said:

"We should be happy to have Dame Shirley's advice on"

the issue of the poll tax

"or on many other matters"?

He went on to say that Westminster council was

"certainly an example to other authorities and I hope that they will follow that example."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1991; Vol. 186, c. 432.]

Did the Prime Minister know what was going on in Westminster when he said that, and, in the light of today's alarming revelations, how many authorities have taken his advice and followed Westminster's example down the road of corruption and maladministration?

Does the Secretary of State believe—I have given him notice of this—that the Secretary of State for National Heritage needs publicly to offer his explanation about the meeting that "Panorama" claimed he attended in 1989, where the designated sales policy was fully discussed? What else did he know about that policy, and what steps did he take to prevent it from being followed?

Does the Secretary of State understand that, in the past 14 years, there has been a most serious decline of standards of probity and public morality, and that measures must now urgently be put in place to prevent such a systematic deception and fraud of the electorate and misuse of public funds from ever happening again?

Mr. Gummer: If we are to take seriously the allegations that have been made, we will do best to confine ourselves to those matters, rather than to use the opportunity for a general rant. I therefore say to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that I am taking the matter very seriously indeed.

The auditor's description of events is in front of us, and when those who have been criticised are given an opportunity to make their points, they will no doubt do so clearly, after which the auditor will make his decisions. Other legal remedies will then be available to them.

In the end, if any of the allegations are found to be true, I will, as I have said unreservedly and without distinction between political parties, condemn them, but there is no possible way in which I can comment on bits of the various statements, or indeed refer to references in other documents which I do not have, and which the auditor specifically has insisted that I should not have.

I believe that the House should uphold two specific and clear principles.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Law and order.

Mr. Gummer: The first is law and order.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—and the second is the right to put one's case and not be judged guilty before one has done so. That second principle is one that the House has always held especially dear.

I have two things to say to the hon. Member for Blackburn about his references to my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). First, my right hon. Friend is not mentioned in the document before us. Secondly, I take the same view of my right hon. Friend as I do of the hon. Member for Blackburn —I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is responsible for the policies of Blackburn council, but I would not find it surprising to hear that from time to time he has met members of that council. Unless it suddenly becomes impossible for either of those to be reasonable positions for Members of Parliament, I do not believe that my right hon. Friend has anything to reply to.

I must be careful about the length of my reply, but I must tell the hon. Member for Blackburn that he ought to think carefully about the whole history of local government all over the country before he starts believing that he can take a party political view of this.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): First, may I welcome very much indeed my right hon. Friend's robust defence both of due process and of the independence of the auditor? Since he is intent on looking at what lessons may be learnt and on reviewing the legislation governing district auditors, may I ask him to look particularly at the regulations governing the publication of reports, the length of time it takes to produce reports, and the length of time there is between the dates of the accounts to which objections are made and the final investigation by auditors?

May I also ask my right hon. Friend to look at the balance between two different types of accounting? Traditionally, of course, these matters were looked at in terms of financial accounting in order to try to detect, for example, embezzlement. We have moved from there to a position where accounting is very much value-for-money accounting, which of course brings into account much more political judgment and of course value judgments. Is it not therefore important to see that there are guidelines so that the proper process of democratic accountability is not undermined by the accounting process itself? Finally, may I totally dissociate myself from the comments of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)?

It seems to me grossly distasteful that someone who has a Front-Bench colleague who has been a disqualified councillor should speak in such a sanctimonious way.

Mr. Gummer: I shall seek to learn whatever lessons about the conduct of auditors need to be learnt as a result of the case, when such lessons can be learnt without interfering with the due process of auditing or of the law. I shall also take into account what my hon. Friend has said, but I do not expect to do so in such a way as to remove

[Mr. Gummer]

from the auditor his prized possession of independence, part of which depends on his ability to decide what reports he is to make, and where and when.

That is an area of great sensitivity, and I should be loth to make or to recommend any changes that would detract from the auditor's independence. The temptations to rush to judgment are great, but it would be better for all of us if no one were to do so.

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): At various times during his statement, the Secretary of State referred to "allegations" and their seriousness. Everybody in the House, and in the country, will accept that the matter is very serious and has been properly investigated. However, surely we have got beyond talking about allegations. We now have findings—admittedly provisional, but none the less findings—by the district auditor. It is much more serious now than it was when they were merely allegations that had not yet been investigated.

The case is especially strong because, as has already been mentioned, the auditor's investigation has been lengthy, detailed and expensive, and therefore gives extra strength to the provisional findings that have been announced. Does the Secretary of State feel that the time has come to make it clear that those are provisional findings and not merely allegations?

There are two sets of people whose rights have been damaged by the failure to publish the full report straight away. First, the people in Westminster, who are facing elections shortly——

Madam Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am seeking brisk questions and brisk answers. I have heard one question after a long statement from the hon. Gentleman. Will he now conclude with a question?

Mr. Rendel: Does the Secretary of State feel that immediate action is necessary to reform that part of the law which has prevented the district auditor from giving his full report in public now, and ensure that the rights of the people of Westminster and the Members of the House who are also clearly concerned in the matter are redressed?

Mr. Gummer: The reference to the report is based on the words of paragraph 36, which states:

"My Note of provisional findings . . . does not constitute any decision or finding adverse to any individual."

In other words, the auditor himself does not support what the hon. Gentleman says. I wish that he had read the report more carefully and had seen that my statement had been accurate in that respect.

It is not my decision that the auditor has decided not to print and publish his report. That is his decision, and any determination to force him to do so would seem to be unsuitable in the context of a single case. When the case is complete, it will be perfectly proper for the House to consider that matter on recommendations placed before it.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Bearing in mind the fact that Labour-controlled Hackney council's housing department is surrounded by allegations of corruption and incompetence, that Labour-controlled Monklands council stands accused of nepotism, incompetence and corruption, and that Lambeth council has £173 million outstanding in debt and arrears, is it not unsurprising that the Labour-supporting *Tribune* magazine has described Labour councils as lacklustre, incompetent, ineffectual and rotten?

Mr. Gummer: I do not believe that it is helpful in the House to rush to judge. Much as I am tempted by my hon. Friend's references, I shall try, if I may use a quote that you, Madam Speaker, know well, to "yield not to temptation". I hope that one or two other people will try to do so as well.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has not the Secretary of State got more than a little cheek to tell us not to rush to judgment on that case affecting a Tory council when, a few years ago, Minister after Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and attacked the Clay Cross councillors because they had the guts to fight the Tory Local Government and Housing Act 1989 long before it went to the High Court? The same was true of Lambeth and Liverpool, and all those who refused to pay the poll tax on principle.

The Secretary of State and this lousy rotten Government will not condemn Westminster council because it is Tory-controlled, and because, throughout those years, the Government were working in harness with it, giving it money—loads and loads of money—to win those safe areas and wards.

The Tory Government stand condemned just as much as Lady Porter and all her mob.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman shows his usual disregard of the facts and desire to make a party political point at all costs. I merely say to him that perhaps he would accord to others the freedoms which he would jealously demand for himself and his own side.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The Opposition parties seem to think that there are some moral issues at stake. Can my right hon. Friend say what sort of morality it is that allows such allegations and accusations to be made before the full report is known?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will agree with me that we should leave the judgments until we have some conclusion as to guilt or innocence. When we receive those judgments, we should condemn unreservedly what needs to be condemned. We should not act before we are so able to do, if we are so able.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I understand why the Secretary of State says that he wants to reserve judgment on the serious allegations made against named individuals in the auditor's report, but this matter also raises, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) pointed out, serious policy issues, the most important to which is the inability of Westminster city council to perform its proper functions as a housing authority and to deal with the scandalous problems of the homeless and those in need of urgent medical priority rehousing.

The Secretary of State must be aware that in London we have suffered for years now, in particular during the past seven or eight years, from the scandal and shame of cardboard city and homeless people lying in the doorways up and down the Strand, only a few hundred yards away. We have to suffer these outrages at a time when hundreds of dwellings that would otherwise have been available for homeless people and people in need of urgent medical

priority rehousing have been denied them because of the policies pursued by the council most particularly responsible—Westminister city council.

Incidentally, it is not only Westminster city council, but other councils, including the Stepney neighbourhood council and Tower Hamlets council, that insist on selling empty local authority properties, despite having huge requirements for dealing with homeless people and those in urgent need of medical priority rehousing.

Will the Secretary of State now issue new guidance to local authorities, telling them that, in areas where there are lots of homeless people and people in need of urgent medical rehousing, it is against national policy for them to sell off their homes simply to raise money and for private ownership purposes?

Mr. Gummer: First, the right hon. Gentleman has experience of these things, and he will remember that, when he was doing my job, he was unable to satisfy people on his own side with the housing programmes that he introduced because they were not as good as the ones that we are putting forward.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman will know that we have reduced to one third the number of people who are homeless at night on the streets in London; that every single one of them every night has a bed provided, because we have seen to that; that we are providing between £70 million and £80 million over the next three years to complete this programme's next stage; and that the voluntary bodies which are concerned in this are supportive of it.

My next point comes hard for me, because it may seem to be a remark favourable to the Liberal party, but it would be an odd argument for the right hon. Gentleman to suggest that the Government should extend their controls over local authority decisions and tell two neighbourhood councils that they do not know best how to solve the homelessness problems in their area.

I am rather on the side of those who believe that we should do our best to move further towards subsidiarity, rather than against it. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not push me down the road he suggests. I say that in circumstances in which I do not find the housing policy of Tower Hamlets right—I have a number of things that I would like to see Tower Hamlets do differently—but when the right hon. Gentleman uses this occasion to make a gratuitous parliamentary political comment about his local council, he lowers himself.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have appealed to all hon. Members to be brisk with their questions and answers. Many hon. Members are seeking to raise questions.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether it is against local government finance law to buy votes by refusing to collect rents and council taxes? Is it against local government finance law and other local government laws to buy support and votes by employing one's relatives if one is a councillor? Do we not have to stop Labour councillors from doing that sort of thing?

Mr. Gummer: If there is an activity which is against the law, that would be properly reported to the district auditor, who will take the proper action. I am sure that my hon. Friend is referring to a range of activities, to which many others might be added, which many people would want to think about. But I would not want them to think about those activities without taking due note of the seriousness of the issue that is in front of us.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): As a member of the Audit Commission at the time that Liverpool city council was investigated and surcharged, I know that the commission took two views which seemed to be relevant, and I wonder whether the Secretary of State would agree.

The first was that every member of the council was entitled to the fullest information about the investigations that were taking place. Indeed, it was the responsibility of the commission to see that all members of the authority in question had the fullest information. The second was that investigations carried out on behalf of the commission which revealed faults should be given the widest publicity so that everyone in local government was aware of what had gone wrong and could learn from those lessons.

In those circumstances, does the Secretary of State think that every member of the council is entitled to the 235-page report referred to in this report and to the fullest documentation? Does he agree that, clearly, the nature of the investigation and what it has revealed should be made public, so that everyone in local government and public office can learn from the events which have occurred? They will then know when someone steps over the line, if anyone does. Clearly, in this case the auditor provisionally thinks that the line has been broken.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman raises perfectly proper questions. First, I can assure him that all Westminster councillors have the full findings of the auditor. Secondly, the auditor has the right at any time to issue what he would call a public-interest report. If he decided that that was what he wanted to do before the end of any investigation, he would be able to do so. Of course, he could do it after the end of the investigation, and that might seem to be the best point at which to do it. It would be entirely up to him to make that judgment. I am sure that he will bear in mind precisely the sort of issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Sir Paul Beresford (Croydon, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in cases of gross incompetence or considerable incompetence by a local authority, in the armoury of the district auditor and the Audit Commission they can only place a report and a recommendation, and that many millions of pounds of council taxpayers' money is being wasted? If the auditor is undertaking a review, consideration should be given to firming up the powers of the Audit Commission for the sake of many residents in areas such as Lambeth, Southwark, Islington and many of the incompetent Labour authorities where he is powerless effectively to act.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend rightly points to the fact that there are many ways in which local residents and taxpayers may find themselves damaged financially, not just by the misuse of powers but by the less than competent use of powers. I would suggest to my hon. Friend that it would be better perhaps to consider the points which he has made after the completion of the proceedings. We may then examine them without prejudice to those concerned.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Has the Secretary of State troubled to request—not force—the district auditor to publish the report? Is the right hon. Gentleman worried

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

about libel proceedings? Is it not true that the auditor has qualified privilege by virtue of his office and that anybody seeking to take action for libel would have to prove malice against the auditor to justify such a course?

Is it not also true that the Government are determined not to have the report published, and that they are determined to do nothing that would give the House and the wider public information? Is that not because they want to try their best to cover up the whole shoddy affair, so we cannot be clear whether Dame Shirley Porter is the biggest crook of the decade or of the century?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, with his characteristic fairness, would accept that it would be better for a decision on that matter to be made by the man who has all the facts at his fingertips. He has gone through 100,000 pages of documentation, and he has produced a large report. It seems to me that it is up to him to make that judgment.

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman's question would have been that which he has just asked if I, as a Minister, had asked the auditor to change his mind. Would not the hon. Gentleman have asked why, when the auditor had decided to do one thing, I as a Minister had sought to get him to change his mind? I suspect that that would be precisely what the hon. Gentleman would have asked and, what is more, the hon. Gentleman knows that.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that two issues which are raised by a reading of the provisional report into Westminster are the reports of the Poulson affair and the extraordinary examination given by the BBC this morning of the nepotism, gross incompetence and corruption in Tameside? Is it not a fact that the distinguished presenter of "Today" reminded the nation of the way in which Labour councils grossly manipulated their housing policies when he was a local government reporter in the 1950s?

That raises the question whether it is inherently virtuous to establish more responsibility and more resources in the hands of local councillors. Are not more resources needed for an auditing process which is more speedy, regular and comprehensive across all councils, which the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) knows are currently primarily under his party's control?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will allow me to excuse myself from answering the first part of his question and come to the points about the changes which he might like. Those are precisely the issues which I would have thought proper to consider with great care when the due process is complete. It is obviously true that anybody looking at the matter would want to consider speed and the ability to audit effectively, and also the way in which such procedures could be made more relevant. Those are precisely the issues which I will examine at a point when those issues would not prejudice the present process.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State accept that the circumstances in Tameside council and the running of its homes are totally unsatisfactory? However, the trustees of the care trust—of which I am a member, as declared in the Register of Members' Interests—and the council asked for independent financial advice as soon as they were aware of any irregularities. When that independent financial advice did point to irregularities, they then asked the district auditor to carry out a full investigation. The district auditor carried out that investigation and his report was published.

Following the publication of that report, the council also published a report since additional information was needed. Therefore, it made every endeavour to get the whole issue into the public domain. Following that, steps were taken by the directors to take disciplinary action. While the whole situation is unsatisfactory, the attempts to clear it up were done with complete openness. I hope that there will be now the opportunity for those homes to be run efficiently.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to make those points. I am sure that he would expect that all those who are involved would have the opportunity to put their case, and to do so without prejudice. I believe that that ought to happen whenever such a situation occurs. That is why I make no comments in condemnation or otherwise about the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers, any more than I do about the case about which I made the statement.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he has adopted exactly the same approach to this matter as he has adopted towards the case of Hammersmith, and the financial scandals which happened there at a time when Hammersmith council was led by the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice)? Would not the logical conclusion from what we have heard from the Opposition today——

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman made reference to my time as leader of Hammersmith and Fulham council. There was an audit investigation which completely exonerated all elected——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. I will try to call the hon. Gentleman if he makes some movement during this cross-questioning.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it would be entirely wrong for the Labour party to condemn the hon. Member for Pendle before the final investigations are known, as what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander?

Mr. Gummer: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on a case which is currently before the courts, in precisely the same way as it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the details of a process which has not even reached the first of its public hearings.

Mr. Prentice: The Minister invited the House earlier not to rush to judgment. Is it not the case that, as far as Westminster council is concerned, the Conservatives never make any judgments at all? Was there not a deafening silence at the time of the 15p cemetery deal, and nothing was heard from the Government when Dame Shirley Porter was sacking senior officers right, left and centre?

What will people think of the nauseating double standards of this performance? Is it not the case that we are invited not to pass judgment where the Conservative flagship of Westminster is concerned, but that the Conservatives rush to judgment at the merest tittle-tattle about any Labour authority?

Mr. Gummer: Anybody hearing this exchange would notice that a single standard of judgment—saying that people are innocent until they are proved guilty—has been clearly used by the Government, and by most sensible people throughout the House.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one definition of nauseating double standards could be a person who has not yet read a report, but makes a judgment on it; who has not yet learned a final legal decision, yet comments on it; who has not yet heard the views of the person who has been criticised, but condemns them; and who has a Front-Bench spokesman who has been disqualified? Is that not a good definition of nauseating double standards?

Mr. Gummer: I would prefer to keep to the details of the report and to try to ensure that the due process is continued.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Does the Secretary of State recall that, eight years ago, 47 Liverpool councillors were at a similar stage in the process with the district auditor? Does the right hon. Gentleman also recall that the crime for which those 47 Liverpool councillors were surcharged and disqualified at that time was that they had failed to set a rate on the due date? It was a mistake, and that mistake cost the city council £106,000. Does the right hon. Gentleman also recall that nowhere in the report was there any suggestion of corruption, gerrymandering or of improper action, other than ineptitude in setting that rate?

Further to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), will the Secretary of State encourage his colleagues on the Government Front Bench to make the type of comments that were made all the way through the process during which those councillors fought the surcharge up to the House of Lords? Why are his colleagues so reticent about Westminster city council when, for almost two years, they damned Liverpool city councillors over that fundamental error?

Mr. Gummer: I should not like to comment on the nature of a mistake which means that one misses the date for fixing the rates. I have made a clear statement that, if the allegations were proved true, I would utterly condemn the actions, and I would expect the due process of law to continue to its proper end. I cannot think that any sensible person could say more in the light of what the district auditor says in the document which he has issued today. That is a position which the hon. Member would have expected in any circumstances. I hope that he will take the same position today.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Westminster council remains one of the best housing authorities in London compared with its neighbours, which have a sorry record in dealing with homelessness, dilapidation, arrears and empty properties? Will he confirm that it has never been the intention of Government legislatiion to make it a crime to increase home ownership and improve diversity of tenure in our council housing estates?

Mr. Gummer: I think that I ought to keep clearly to what I said and not make any specific comments about Westminster. I am proud that 1·8 million people now own their homes who would not have owned them if it had not been for the right to buy. The right to buy was fought tooth and nail by the Labour party until Labour Members found opposing it politically so disadvantageous that they had to agree with it. Except for those general comments, I ought to keep myself free of any comments on Westminster.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Regardless of the individual culpability of members of Westminster city council, and bearing in mind the district auditor's findings on the management, control and administration of the housing department of Westminster city council, will the Secretary of State instruct his officials to review the interpretation that the council has traditionally put on its obligations to house the homeless?

Will he bear in mind the attitude of that council over many years, including the period in question, which has been to offload its responsibilities towards the homeless on to neighbouring councils, including my own? Will he show the same regard for the rights of individuals who are homeless as he shows for the rights of Dame Shirley Porter and his Conservative colleagues?

Mr. Gummer: Of course there is a good deal of movement into Westminster from outside. I have already announced that, during this month, I shall publish a consultation document on homelessness. The fact that it is to be published has been welcomed by Shelter and other organisations. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will then be able to see the terms and conditions under which we shall be operating.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the same rules apply in Scotland? Does the Audit Commission have the power to investigate the nepotism, the jobs for the boys and the allocation of funds on the basis of religion, all of which are so rife in Monklands district council?

Mr. Gummer: I shall have to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to be in touch with my hon. Friend on that matter. I think that in general it is true that, if any local elector, ratepayer or council taxpayer feels that there has been some misuse of funds, he can ask the district auditor to investigate. That is the position, and that is what we in the Department of the Environment in England certainly recommend when there is such a complaint.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It would be bad enough if we were dealing only with matters of local government finance and homelessness—serious as those matters are—but we are dealing with matters of gerrymandering and electoral fiddles and fixes. They are not isolated. There are reports which show that 4 million or so people are missing from electoral registers in the United Kingdom. Most of them have disappeared from the register during the period of operation of the Government.

That position should be examined. The reason why we should have the report in front of us is that we as a House should have special responsibility for matters of electoral registration, electoral rights and equity between electoral areas. That is what the report has revealed is wrong, and what we should see the details of.

Mr. Gummer: I find it difficult to understand how the hon. Gentleman can suggest that a report which he cannot have read because he does not have a copy since the report

[Mr. Gummer]

went only to those whom the auditors suggested, reveals or proves anything. The auditor himself has said that this is a preliminary report.

We in the House have a particular responsibility to ensure equity. On the completion of these processes, no doubt the House will want to examine whatever the final reports say in great detail. One issue which will be of considerable importance is the one raised by the hon. Gentleman. I raised it and mentioned it specifically in my statement.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the director or possibly the deputy director of Westminster city council housing department attended and addressed a meeting at the end of last year of the all-party homelessness group, of which I and many Labour Members are members? He explained many of the difficulties of Westminster city council housing, particularly the influx of people from outside the capital and outside the country.

Madam Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Robathan: I am coming to the question, Madam Speaker.

We were impressed by the speech. I think that that goes for hon. Members from all parties. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the record of Westminster city council in housing homeless people is extremely good and bears comparison with that of any other council in the country?

Mr. Gummer: I have already taken the self-denying ordinance that I will not comment on the history of housing in Westminster.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): Is the Secretary of State aware that many people will be watching his response to questions on his statement? Is he further aware that his statement and comments and his closing around and cocooning the problems in Westminster—not allegations, but reported facts—will cause much distress to councillors of all political persuasions? There will be distress that he has not more roundly condemned the atrocious goings-on at Westminster city council. There is no doubt whatever that empty properties were boarded up and had steel doors put on them to prevent them being let to tenants. It is an absolute disgrace, and he should know it.

Mr. Gummer: I have said clearly that, if those allegations are true, they must be condemned in the roundest and fullest possible way. However, I do not believe that there is a councillor in the country who would want himself or herself to be condemned on the basis of a statement by a district auditor who has specifically said that it does not constitute the type of findings to which the hon. Gentleman refers. It is no good the hon. Gentleman making that point. He is here to defend the rights of individuals to be heard. They must first be heard; then justice may be done. He will join me in ensuring that justice is done.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that several Lambeth borough councillors have been surcharged and disqualified, including the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley)? Is he aware that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has appointed the hon. Lady to be the Opposition spokesman on transport and London? Does not that suggest a double standard on the part of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Gummer: At most I think that that is tangential to the issue under discussion.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Prime Minister was wrong when he said that we were dealing with "allegations" today? We are dealing with the provisional findings of the district auditor. Is the Secretary of State aware that not one person in this country will believe that he would have made such a softly, softly, approach if he were not dealing with a favoured Tory council at a time when it is led by one so close to the Tory party leadership?

Why does he not admit that, time and again, Labour Members gave warnings in the House about what was going on in Westminster—the sale of cemeteries for 15p and other malpractices—but the Tory Government, including the Secretary of State, were not interested? No doubt they were hoping that the council would be able to get away with it. Now that it has been found out, he has a chance to condemn those malpractices, which are some of the worst committed by a local authority.

Mr. Gummer: I am reminded of the comments of the former Member for Huyton about the hon. Gentleman's judgment. The district auditor himself says:

"My Note of provisional findings . . . does not constitute any decision or finding adverse to any individual."

I have to keep to what the auditor says if his independence is to be upheld by a House that insisted upon it in the first place. We have heard the hon. Gentleman's speech in various versions before, and it was as silly then as it is now.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Westminster city council has expressed extreme surprise at the provisional findings of the district auditor and has also regretted the non-publication of the report to the public and the media? Indeed, in a public statement, the council said:

"It would have preferred the subject to be dealt with in an open manner, consistent with the highest standard of probity."

Is my right hon. Friend also aware that, as recently as the beginning of this week, the council implored the district auditor to publish this report in full?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for those statements. I still believe that, in defending the independence of the auditor, it is right for the House and for me as the Minister responsible for local government to allow the auditor to use his powers as he thinks fit. When he has done so, and we have come to the conclusion of that process, it would be proper for the House to consider the circumstances and decide whether a better way could be found or whether we wish to confirm the present system.

It is perfectly reasonable for Westminster city council to comment, but the House should remember that the auditor operates under rules that have been confirmed by the House, and that it ought not to change them except at the end of a process rather than in the middle of it.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Why do Conservative Back Benchers insist that all councils are innocent until they are proved to be Labour councils? What will the Secretary of State do about the people who have been badly wronged—the homeless and the unhoused in Westminster? We have had a fortnight of allegations and

proof of the most dreadful misconduct by members of the Government. When will we hear a single syllable of remorse, humility or penitence from the Conservative side?

Mr. Gummer: There have been one or two cases of Labour councils not reaching the highest standards known to man. Indeed, there are cases in which they have been attacked not only by Conservative Members but by Opposition Members. The hon. Gentleman is therefore being a little naive in making that comment.

I maintain that, when the district auditor has specifically said that his findings do not constitute decisions or findings adverse to any person, it would be very odd if those of us who do not have access to the 100,000 pages of documentation to which he has had access should try to second-guess him. I have condemned any action which has been shown to be wrong, and have said that, if the allegations turn out to be supported and are proved, no one will be tougher than I in his opposition to them or his insistence that the law should take its full course.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Secretary of State agree that up to 9,000 dwellings were designated by the housing committee of Westminster city council and endorsed by it? Does that not suggest that up to 30,000 people who were not thereby housed could be homeless? Does he have the figure for the number of persons involved? If he has not got it, will he undertake to find out from the council the number of people rendered homeless in London or dumped on other boroughs as a result of the matters mentioned in the Magill report?

Mr. Gummer: I have been careful not to be led to discuss the nature of Westminster's housing policies by some Conservative Members, because I cannot see a way in which I could do so without detracting from the independent position that the district auditor has enjoined upon all. I shall therefore do the same in the hon. Gentleman's case as I have done with my hon. and right hon. Friends.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): As we understand it, the inquiry has taken four years, and some of the figures published today seem to intimate that £21 million might be involved. It is reasonable to suppose that, with further delays and as time goes on, considerable extra interest will accrue. It is quite possible that the surcharge could even be £25 million by this time next year. Would it not be in the interests of the people who are going to be surcharged to get the matter sorted out, rather than their having to face a bill for £25 million as against £21 million today?

Mr. Gummer: There is no doubt that the district auditor has calculated the interest, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that issue is likely to have been drawn to the attention of those concerned on both sides. I think that he will agree that, ultimately, it is up to the auditor and to those concerned to see that the due process of law is carried through, and also that they take such advice as is reasonable for anyone in such circumstances.

Madam Speaker: We now come to the allocation of time motion——

Mr. Straw: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, about the conduct of the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). Earlier this afternoon, during these questions, the hon. Gentleman made a very serious allegation in respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), without having given him any notice of his intention to do so.

First, will you confirm that, although it is not a rule of the House, it is an important convention that, when such allegations are going to be made by an hon. Member, notice is given? Secondly, since the allegation was wholly inaccurate, can the hon. Gentleman be given the opportunity to withdraw it?

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Madam Speaker: May I deal with the first question? Of course it is the custom in this House that, when another hon. Member has been named and is not actually in the Chamber, he or she should be given notice. It is not the case when the hon. Member is in the Chamber. In this case, I gave the hon. Member for Pendle an opportunity to answer immediately.

Mr. Nicholls: Further to that point of order and your ruling, Madam Speaker. The second point that I would have made was that in no sense did I make an allegation against the hon. Gentleman. I said that it would have been as wrong to condemn him on the basis of a preliminary report, as it would have been to condemn present council members—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I have dealt with that matter.

Points of Order

5.10 pm

Mr. Simon Huges (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You were good enough to grant me an Adjournment debate tomorrow on the future of Guy's hospital. In order to prepare for it, I have sought to obtain a document, allegedly a public one, that has been produced by the local hospital trust, and circulated, including to the Secretary of State for Health, called, "The Appraisal of Options for the Future of Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital."

Just as the district auditor and his document are accountable to the Secretary of State for the Environment, so the hospital trust is accountable to the Secretary of State for Health, and the right hon. Lady is accountable to us. There is no other way in which we can hold Ministers and their appointees to the health service to account.

That document will not be released by the trust, which says, "Refer to the Secretary of State." The Secretary of State's office will not release it and says, "Refer to the trust." All I want to know is whether you, Madam Speaker, have made it clear, as you have done in respect of other documents, that, if it is a document on which decisions are to be made by a public body accountable to the House, it should not be circulated partially without being put in the Library of the House or made available in the Vote Office. That would enable not just me but all hon. Members with an interest in this matter and similar ones to study it. I should be grateful for your help to obtain that document.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has not given me notice of that point of order, and I have no idea to which document he is referring. It is the responsibility of the Secretary of State. I note that the Leader of the House is on the Front Bench, and I am sure that he has taken note of that point of order. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can pursue that matter.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman gave my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health notice of his point of order, but I am sure that she will consider it. If I may venture a bit beyond my role, I understand that the rule on documents, if it can be called that, is that, once a document has been quoted from partially, the House has the right to see the whole of it. I would need further guidance on that.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Column 156 of the *Official Report* for 11 January contains a typographical error about the cost of building the new Abbey Wood Procurement Executive headquarters in Bristol. I raise this as a point of order because I have been in touch with the Editors of *Hansard*, who tell me that that mistake can be altered in the bound version.

That serious error means that the cost of those headquarters, at £345 million, is being quoted as £315 million, which in itself is £70 million more than that previously quoted. It is a matter of public interest, and anyone who referred to *Hansard* and did not wait to study the bound volume, which is produced many months later, would be misled. Surely the House should have a better way of flagging up typographical errors so that people who use reference material can obtain the right figures.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman seems to have achieved that effect by getting that point of order into *Hansard*.

Orders of the Day

Non-Domestic Rating Bill (Allocation of Time)

5.12 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Non-Domestic Rating Bill:—

Committee, Report and Third Reading

1.—(1) The proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

(2) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(3) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

(4) Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Conclusion of proceedings

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or the Speaker shall, subject to sub-paragraph (2), forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

(2) If, apart from this sub-paragraph, two or more Questions would fall to be put by the Chairman under sub-paragraph (1)(d) that successive clauses should stand part of the Bill, the Chairman shall instead put the single Question that each of those clauses shall so stand part.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) or (2) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) If at this day's sitting a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over to Seven o'clock, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Extra time

3. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on the Bill.

Dilatory Motions

4. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings at this day's sitting on the Bill shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Supplemental orders

5.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If at this day's sitting the House is adjourned, or if this day's sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

6. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order.

Recommittal

7.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

I see no need to detain the House with a speech of great length. In a sense, I need hardly say that I regret having to introduce the motion, since there is no doubt that had we been met with a sensible approach by the Opposition, the Bill could have been dealt with readily in a day, as we had hoped. Nevertheless, I make no apology for moving the motion, because yesterday's performance and, indeed, the Opposition's current stance on all Government business have made it quite clear that their intention is simply to bring about difficulty and delay.

Had we proceeded as we had originally hoped, we should simply have had a long and boring night of tedious and repetitious speeches in Committee to follow a long and boring day of tedious and repetitious speeches on Second Reading.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: I should like to make a certain amount of progress before I give way.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it true that the judgment on the conduct of the House is in the hands of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers? On no occasion yesterday was any hon. Member pulled up for tedious repetition. If the right hon. Gentleman is trying to suggest that the guidance in "Erskine May" was breached, he is reflecting on the conduct of the Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): There is a range of tediousness. The Chair only rules on that which is particularly tedious and repetitious.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for that clarification, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Comparisons with the two previous Non-Domestic Rating Bills, which are similar to the Bill before us, are instructive. The one that followed the March 1992 Budget took 98 minutes to complete its Second Reading and a further 98 minutes to complete its remaining stage—a total of just more than three hours. The second Bill, which followed the March 1993 Budget, took two and a half hours to complete its Second Reading and 20 minutes to complete its remaining stages—just under three hours.

So far, we have had five and a half hours' debate on the current Bill, and, given that we started today's debate at just after 5 o'clock, we have another five hours to debate its various stages. That means that the Bill will be subject to more than 10 hours of debate—three and a half times more than was required by either of the previous Bills. I do not believe that the charge of unreasonable behaviour against the Government can stand up.

[Mr. Newton]

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is not in his place at the moment, but the comparison that he drew yesterday with the previous Bills does not stand up. He suggested that, because those Bills, which had arisen from March Budgets, were not introduced until after the financial year had started, greater urgency was attached to them. We could have argued it in those terms, but we did not, because exactly the opposite is the case. Once the financial year has started, before it is conceivably possible to implement a proposal, rebilling will take place anyway. As a result of the autumn Budget this year, if we proceed rapidly, local authorities will be in a position to do all the work at once and send out the right bills before the financial year starts. It is entirely sensible, reasonable and desirable that that should be achieved.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) sought at the end of our exchanges last night to make a similar point to that raised by her hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn, but she obviously had not taken full account of the consequences of the change in Budget timing.

Against that background, I do not believe that it would have been reasonable to allow the Opposition to inflict unnecessary inconvenience on the House. Equally, I do not believe that it would have been reasonable to allow the consequences of the further delay, so clearly sought by the Opposition, to be inflicted on local authorities and the business community.

The motion provides for the remaining stages of the Bill to be completed by 10 o'clock tonight. The form of it means that the Opposition can readily give themselves more time for what they say they need to discuss. All they need to do is to guillotine their speeches on the motion and they will then have more time for discussion on the Bill.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Leader of the House recognise that he has a responsibility other than that of just being a Cabinet Minister? He is supposed to be the Leader of the House of Commons. Is he not aware of the general feeling that the House is being treated shamefully by the Government not simply on the Bill, but on other matters and that that has led to the present non-co-operation through the official channels?

Does the right hon. Gentleman not believe that he has a responsibility to try to mend fences? Given the shameful and contemptible way in which the Government have treated the House in the past few months, is it any wonder that delays such as that experienced last night take place?

Mr. Newton: I may touch on one aspect of the hon. Gentleman's question later. I do not believe, however, almost by definition, that the House is being treated in a shameful fashion. I do not believe that any Conservative Member believes that and, to be absolutely frank, there are an awful lot of Opposition Members who do not believe that either. They want a more sensible approach to be adopted to the management of business than the Opposition are allowing.

Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning set out the case for the Bill with admirable clarity on Second Reading. He dealt in detail with the scheme contained in it and described its benefit for many businesses. He also set out clearly the advantages of early enactment.

For my part, I emphasised to the House on 16 December, when I announced the business for yesterday, that the early passage of the Bill would be advantageous to local authorities and business rate payers both in giving good notice of the level of business rates for the next financial year and ensuring that authorities do not have to send out two sets of bills for the same year.

It is not a contentious measure, despite yesterday's attempt to pretend otherwise. It is not inherently complex, despite the extensive textual quotations that the hon. Member for Blackburn spun out in his speech yesterday. The House could have dealt with it in a day without difficulty, to the benefit of ratepayers and local authorities alike. It now needs to be carried through in an organised, orderly and sensible way. The motion allows exactly that to happen.

I now come back to the point that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) raised a few moments ago. I think that he used a phrase about mending fences. I acknowledge that it was perhaps significant that, in her remarks last night, the right hon. Lady the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) made no suggestion that there had been no attempt to come to an understanding about the Bill. It cannot be said that we got to this position in some dictatorial way without trying to reach an understanding.

I wrote to the right hon. Lady on 15 December, in a way that I took to be, and certainly intended to be, both reasonable and conciliatory. I set out the case for the Bill. I set out the reasons for wanting to pass it with reasonable speed. I said that it was hard to see why this Bill should require more time than previous similar Bills or why the Opposition should want to cause difficulties for local government and the business community by delayed enactment.

I made it clear that our judgment was that that could best be achieved by carrying through all the Commons proceedings yesterday so that the Lords could consider it and it could receive Royal Assent by February, in good time for the issue of rate bills in early March. I concluded by saying that I should be most grateful to know whether that would be acceptable to the right hon. Lady and, if so, whether we could be assured of her party's co-operation.

I make no complaint about the fact that I have not had a formal reply, because the right hon. Lady conveyed her response in another way. I can say only that that could best be described as a clear indication that there was no scope for any understanding of that—or any other—kind or for discussions on how to handle the Bill. So far as I am concerned, it is up to the Opposition to decide whether they want to deal with business in the House in that way. We, as the Government, have to get on with the business. On that I rest my case and commend the motion to the House.

5.22 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The overriding purpose of Parliament is to hold the Government to account; to make the Government justify and explain their actions and intentions, not for the convenience or interest of Members of Parliament, but on behalf of the people by whom we are elected and for whom we are sent here to exercise our responsibilities. That is why we are here.

Today, not for the first time in recent weeks, the Lord President referred to debates that have taken place in the House as "yesterday's performance". Let me remind the

House what yesterday's performance was. It was Members of Parliament making perfectly reasonable legitimate speeches on an item of Government legislation.

The Government are fast reaching the stage where they do not think that anybody should scrutinise any legislation that they introduce, and that we should all simply touch our forelocks and say, "Yes, guv" and let it go through on the nod. That is not why we are here, and any Member who thinks that is reaching the stage of being unfit to hold office and be a Member of the House.

I sometimes think that it is difficult during these debates, because the superlatives have so often been used before. I shall say to the Lord President in all honesty that, looking at today's proceedings, I believe that it is possibly the most dangerous guillotine that we have had before the House, certainly in years here, for one simple reason: it is the most pointless. There is no need for it. The Lord President knows that. The Government are playing games, and in so doing they are setting a dangerous precedent.

The Opposition may be dissatisfied when a Government, of whatever political shade, introduce a guillotine, but hon. Members can normally see why it has been introduced. Usually—indeed, I cannot recall a previous precedent—that reason has been self-evidently connected in one way or another with the legislation under discussion.

That connection, the purpose of the guillotine, might be thought by the Opposition to be deplorable, but it has always—to my recollection—been serious. I can discern no purpose in this guillotine whatever. I remind the House that the Government chose to curtail the debate at 10 o'clock last night. They did not choose to continue with it, as they easily could have done, just as they chose to rise early for the Christmas recess and come back slightly later than has often been the norm.

The only conceivable, even political, purpose that I can discern is that the Government might have desired to avoid the debate on the NHS, originally scheduled for today, because they have been avoiding any debate on that issue for a year. The only debates that we have had in the past three years, since 1991, have been held—as was the one a year ago—in Opposition time. It is plain that the Government are anxious to avoid scrutiny of their health policy. If that is their purpose, at least it is one which is unusual in having no connection whatever with the Bill that the Government are choosing to guillotine.

Before Christmas, the Government guillotined two Bills, each to one day's debate. In each case, the costs involved in that proposed legislation were literally hundreds of millions of pounds. One affected every British employee; the other every British business. It was the Government's action in that respect, as the Lord President and the House well know, which quite rightly led the Opposition to withdraw co-operation from the Government.

But at least we knew why those Bills were guillotined to a day's debate: they were contentious; they were embarrassing; and, however low and unworthy the purpose, there was at least the purpose that it was convenient for the Government to avoid debate on the Bills.

Today's guillotine is on a measure that again affects every British business. It deals with one of the most unpopular measures that the Government have introduced during their lifetime. In most cases, the non-domestic rate is unpopular with business, as was the poll tax with the public as a whole. The financial implications of each year's non-domestic rating settlement are very important for business, especially for small business.

The Lord President sought to play down the significance of the Bill. He sought to imply that it was a simple matter which needed no great time spent on it. The Library has pointed out that, inevitably by its nature, the Bill is technical. In particular, the finance for the transitional arrangements, which is enshrined in the Bill, is of great importance to business, particularly small business.

Already in yesterday's debate, to which the Lord President referred so contemptuously, concern has been highlighted about how a shortfall in the rating pool might in future be dealt with. It is in present-day legislation. The Government are reluctant to write such provisions into the Bill and, instead, are calling on those scrutinising it to place their trust in the Government to act as we would hope and wish. That is not something that many of us are inclined to do these days.

It is exactly the kind of issue that is normally explored in depth in Committee. It is not only explored, but the answers to that exploration are reassessed over a period. If the assurances given by the Minister during yesterday's debate are unsound, the domestic council tax payer could be hit, or council services could be affected. That matter is of considerable importance now and in the future.

The Lord President spoke briefly last night and today about the hours of debate that such measures had previously attracted, as though that was all that mattered. What is almost more important than the specific time spent in debate, whether on Second Reading or in Committee, and what the Government are not just ignoring but sweeping aside in the debate, in a most dangerous way, as they did before Christmas, is the correlation between the period during which legislation is in the public domain and still under scrutiny and the hours of debate required.

Every hon. Member knows what happens in the ordinary process of legislative scrutiny and Committee debate. Ministers are asked questions. They are pressed to give assurances. Sometimes those assurances are thought on the spot to be unsuitable or unsound. But hon. Members take the record of those debates, the meat of those assurances and the answers to those questions back to those outside this place. They have the time to do that and those outside this place have the time and opportunty to give their scrutiny to see whether we are justified in leaving those assurances to stand.

That is perhaps the most vital part of legislative scrutiny in the House and that is precisely what is being lost when the Government try, as they are doing, to confine all the debates on the measure into one parliamentary day.

I would not myself have raised the matter, but the Lord President referred to the letter that he wrote to me before Christmas about this measure. He did not, I think I am right in saying, remind the House that the letter was received in the week after the guillotining of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill and the Social Security (Contribution) Bill, not perhaps the most fruitful time to seek agreement from the Opposition to curtailing yet a further measure to a single day's debate.

I have no quarrel with the Lord President's description of the terminology of the letter. It was in a reasonable and conciliatory tone. He accepted that he called for curtailing of debate into one day, which is not usual, particularly at the start of a Session, with all of that Session before us in which to debate. He did so in a week in which debate had

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

already been curtailed to one day on two previous pieces of legislation and he was asking us to agree to the same procedure in the first week back after the recess.

Nor, I think I am correct in saying, did the Lord President say, when I received his letter saying that this was a non-contentious measure, that we had not seen the Bill. It was only just before the Bill was published, but it had not been published. Therefore, we were being asked to agree to a procedure which depended on our taking the Government's word that the matter was non-contentious without being able to look at any of the print, never mind the small print. But, more important, we were being asked to give such agreement when there had been no opportunity, and there was unlikely to be opportunity, particularly given the impending Christmas recess, to consult outside this place.

Hon. Members, from all parties know that it is not enough for any Member, however expert, to rely on his or her judgment about the technical detail of Bills such as this. It is an essential part of proceedings in this place that we are given time to consult outside and that those outside this place are allowed to exercise their right to make their point of view known on matters of this kind which raise technical details.

I say to the Lord President with some regret that it is strongly my view that he had no right to seek the assurances that he sought from me, any more than he had any need to do so. I should have been failing in my duty to the House if I had given those assurances.

Mr. Winnick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to some extent at least, the fact that there has not previously been such a breakdown between the official channels is due to the fact that previous Leaders of the House were obviously devoted to the Government, but they played fair with the House? In particular, I have in mind the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and, long before that, the then right hon. Member for Chelmsford, now Lord St. John of Fawsley.

Everyone knows that the Leader of the House must be a member of the Cabinet, devoted to Government business. But the Leader of the House has some responsibility, which he does not seem to carry out, to ensure that the Oppositon have a feeling, however controversial a measure may be, that enough time is being given in the Chamber and in Committee fully to examine what is being put forward by the Government. That is not being done at the moment.

Mrs. Beckett: I accept my hon. Friend's contention —it is what makes the role of the Leader of the House particularly difficult, as many hon. Members recognise— that, historically, the role of Leader of the House has been to exercise his responsibility as a member of the Government but also to exercise his responsibility to the House. It is also the case that those who have built up the greatest respect as Leader of the House on both sides of the House have been those who have visibly demonstrated their concern for the House as well as their understandable responsibilities to their party.

Mr. Newton: In view of what has been said in the past few minutes and what was said earlier about mending fences, I should make it clear that I thought and intended that the tone of my letter—it did refer to the breakdown of the usual channels at the beginning and that is why it was written—made it clear that I was seeking to bring about a situation in which we could do reasonable dealing with the Opposition on uncontentious legislation despite the difficulties that had arisen. That is not only consistent with, but properly consistent with, the role of Leader of the House.

Mrs. Beckett: I accept the Lord President's word on that matter, but I simply say that, irrespective of the matter of the Bill, if he really thinks that it is not raising difficulties and is likely to ease the return to smoother procedures in the usual channels to ask the Opposition to curtail debate on any measure to a day when there seems to us to be no necessity for that curtailing, the Government are losing touch with what Members expect of reasonable and proper procedures of debate in the House.

The Lord President referred in his speech today, as he has done previously, to the few hours that the measure has taken in the past. That is one of the points that he made in his letter. However, he did not point out that those few hours were, as I have observed, spread over a few weeks.

Last year, the parallel piece of legislation was before the House for six weeks and then before the other place for two weeks, even though it was not published until April. Even in 1992, when the general election obviously disrupted the timetable to some extent, the legislation was before the House for four weeks and did not become law until June.

Yesterday, the Lord President said, and he referred to it in his speech today, that we should have understood that the fact that the Budget was earlier and the legislation was published before the start of the financial year, rather than after, meant that the pressures on its debate were heavier rather than lighter than in previous years. I have seldom heard such a lot of old rubbish.

Local authorities have told us in terms that they do not need to know that the legislation is on the stocks until, at the earliest, the end of February. It is turning logic on its head to say that there is less urgency about a matter that is published after the start of the financial year than about a matter that is published before the start of the financial year.

I remind the Lord President that, as my hon. Friend the deputy Chief Whip observed from a sedentary position, in the past these measures have passed through the House by agreement, but they were in the public domain and open to people to scrutinise and check for four weeks in the election year and for six weeks last year. There is plenty of time for that sort of period to elapse before local authorities or businesses need the legislation. I am sorry to have to say that the Lord President's case simply does not stand up.

We are at the start of a parliamentary Session which started late and we finished early for the Christmas recess. The Government did not even try to go on with the debate yesterday evening when they could have done so after 10 o'clock. They tell us that it was only their consideration for others, for business and local authorities that led them to press this step on us.

Businesses are none too happy with the curtailing of the timetable for this debate, any more than they were with the curtailing of the timetable for the debates before Christmas, which was also said to be in their interests. As for the notion that the Government care tuppence about the concerns and worries of local government, I imagine that they can barely keep their faces straight at the thought.

The Lord President will remember that he and I were in opposite positions when the Government introduced massive changes in housing benefit legislation with no concern whatever for the timetable of local government or for its difficulties in implementing enormously complex legislation which deprived many people, including pensioners, cumulatively of hundreds of millions of pounds. The poll tax was introduced practically over the dead body of local government and so was the non-domestic rate to which this legislation refers. We can therefore dismiss with contumely the notion that it was worrying about local government that led Ministers to propose this step.

I shall draw my remarks to a close because, like the Lord President, I do not want to detain the House. I end by returning to the point that I made at the outset: this is possibly the most dangerous precedent that the Government have yet set in a string of mishandlings of the House. The purpose of this guillotine is entrely frivolous. There is no justification or need for it. No Government have ever shown such disregard for the parliamentary safeguards that have grown up, for good cause, over the years.

I remind the Lord President—I mentioned this in our debate in the last week before the Christmas recess—that it is only three or four weeks since he and I spoke at a meeting jointly organised by "The House Magazine" and the Hansard Society, where representatives of one of the most important and financially crucial British businesses pressed him to give assurances that the House would conduct its business so that legislation could be properly scrutinised in order that we might avoid legislative error and give people time to take full account of the implications of all legislation.

The Lord President gave the assurance—since when three Bills have been taken through all their stages in the House, in effect, in three days. This is a pathetic measure, introduced by a pathetic Government.

5.40 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Like the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), I do not want to detain the House. Although one must be thankful for small mercies, we must also take account of what the Lord President said. He said that if we take up time discussing the timetable motion we will deprive the House of the opportunity to look at the amendments.

I am a bystander in the war of attrition that is going on above my head. I repeat an offer that I have made before: I will happily run between the Front Benches and use my best endeavours to get the usual channels opened up again as soon as possible. It is of course easy for me to sound pious, but I am worried that the House may bring itself into disrepute if the problem goes on too long.

I can perfectly well understand the frustration expressed by the Leader of the Opposition, if press reports are to be believed, when he decided to implement this period of non-co-operation. I must, however, counsel the official Opposition to be cautious. It is easy to start disruption, but not so easy to stop it. It is not clear to me what the Opposition seek to achieve. If they are trying to give the Government a hard time, I will sign up for that—but I am not prepared to sign up if we go so far as to prejudice the sensible scrutiny of legislation. I fear that that may be happening already.

There must be a temptation for the Government to retaliate vindictively. They must resist that temptation. In the short term, they must take this on the chin and try as hard as they can to get on with business without being vindictive. I must add that the action that the Government took overnight comes very close to vindictiveness.

It is not in the long-term interests of the House to suffer indefinite disruption, nor is it in the long-term interests of the legislation that we consider or of the public. I believe I am right in saying that every Bill that this House has sent to the Lords this Session has been guillotined. Is that a record of which the Lord President is proud? He may claim that it is nothing to do with him—that it is all someone else's fault—but the situation is serious.

The House must recognise that if we get into this position early in the new year we will have to think seriously about the new conjunction of the Queen's Speech and the Budget at the back end of the old year. If we do not learn the lessons of this year, there will be more trouble in future years. If the disruption continues, I foresee chaos after Easter, when major Bills come out of Committee and back here for Report and Third Reading. The Government will be forced to impose draconian guillotines on those Bills, and the House will become impossible to manage. Again, I counsel caution.

Regardless of who is to blame, I cannot contemplate with equanimity measures such as the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill or the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill—important Bills affecting thousands of people—being the subject of guillotines. Once this is all done and dusted we will have to step back and better consider how we conduct business in this House. I find it sad that the Jopling proposals appear to have been lost——

Mr. Cryer: Hear, hear.

Mr. Kirkwood: People may have differing views about that. I hold no brief for the Jopling proposals as such, but I am willing to talk about any way of improving our procedures. The Jopling opportunity appears to have been lost, however, and that is sad.

If guillotines are to continue to be as customary as they seem to have become, we shall have to consider seriously the possibility of devolving whole areas of legislation——

Mrs. Beckett: I do not want to upset my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but I have noticed this increasingly common suggestion that the Jopling proposals are dead and that there is no point in further discussing them. That is true only if it is what the Government are determined to achieve. I am growing increasingly suspicious that that is the end to which the Government's tactics are directed.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is good news. Both sides are now claiming that it is only the other side that is preventing progress. I must confess that I had given up hope, but I am glad to hear that the right hon. Lady has kept the door open. Our party is certainly willing to continue to try to find common ground——

Mr. Newton: I ought to make it quite clear that I do not accept the hon. Lady's accusation, and I would be most grateful if the hon. Gentleman found an opportunity to provoke her to make a further intervention in which she

[Mr. Newton]

confirmed that she is willing to engage in further constructive discussion, with a view to implementation of the Jopling report.

Mr. Kirkwood: I find myself the only channel left open—people are channelling their remarks through me at this point. I shall continue to provide the service at no cost to Government or Opposition. I hope that after the dust settles we will return to the issue and manage some progress.

I was a little disappointed by the lack of attention that the Leader of the House paid to the guillotine motion itself. I know that it is customary nowadays to use such motions as an excuse for more political debate about the contents of Bills. I for one intend to pay more attention to the terms of the guillotine motions in these debates. I am concerned about some of the new developments incorporated in them. I know that the Lord President spent the hours between midnight and 3 am with his inky pen going through the motion bit by bit, so it was difficult for him to get it right in so short a time. That is precisely why he should not be operating in this way. Nevertheless, paragraph 1(1) takes some justification.

The right hon. Gentleman said in a casual aside—it happens to be true—that we have until 10 o'clock, so if we stop discussing the guillotine now we will have more time to discuss the contents of the Bill. By tradition, however, guillotine motions have not imposed strict timetables on the discussion of Bills such as this one, because that would prevent hon. Members from voting within the allotted period. The time for the votes is taken out of the time allowed for discussion. I consider that tactic an abuse, but the Government have begun to resort to it with increasing regularity.

The House should not allow such behaviour to pass without comment. If we are to have timetable motions, the Government must recognise the need to allow the House to express its opinion within the allotted time in a way that does not prejudice further discussion. I consider paragraph 1(1) of the motion objectionable for that reason.

Paragraph 2(2) is also extremely worrying. The Leader of the House may contradict me if I am wrong, but, as I read it, it means that several clauses can be lumped together for a single vote. The right hon. Gentleman may say that, given that the Bill is relatively small, there is no cause for concern; but the application of paragraph 2(2), willy-nilly, to a 100-clause Bill would mean one vote to dispose of all those clauses at a stroke. I understand the purpose of timetable motions to be to enable the Government to limit the time available for discusion of the various stages of legislation, but paragraph 2(2) prevents clause-by-clause consideration.

As I have said, this is a small Bill, and in this instance paragraph 2(2) may be of no moment. Nevertheless, I consider that it sets an objectionable precedent. It is new to me, but I have been looking after this side of the business for only a short time: the Leader of the House may say that it was introduced recently. I find it worrying, however, and I believe that, if the Procedure Committee considered it objectively, the Chairman would also be extremely concerned. It has been introduced overnight, without discussion, and the procedures of the House have effectively been changed: we can no longer consider clauses seriatim.

I have other worries. The Leader of the House should not allow the parliamentary draftsmen to stick in otiose bits of garbage that are of no consequence. When, for example, was the last occasion on which we required the provisions of paragraph 5(1)? When was the last occasion on which a Bill was recommitted? Not within living memory, I bet. It does the House no service to produce such unnecessary and irrelevant verbiage.

I fear that, if the difficulties between the two main parties continue, more and more Bills will be guillotined. I think that the Procedure Committee should consider a Standing Order setting out the parameters within which Governments can introduce timetable motions, and that we should engage in a full and lengthy debate on what Governments can and cannot do. This motion provides evidence that Governments are incrementally removing powers from the House by imposing timetable motions in a draconian, unnecessary and unjustifiable manner. The House should vote the motion down.

5.53 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I am not one of the hon. Members who bored the Lord President of the Council so much yesterday—not because my speech coruscated and was laced with wit, but because so many hon. Members wanted to speak and there was so much to discuss that I could not get in.

Only Opposition Members were speaking yesterday, but these are very serious issues. What worries me is the arrogance of power, which we saw earlier—[HON. MEMBERS: "The Leader of the House is leaving; he has had enough."] Hang on. What worries me is the arrogance of power that allows Governments—or councils, as in the case of Westminster—to think, regardless of the individuals involved, that they can do anything that they want. The Bill involves a fundamental philosophy which must be discussed: the philosophy of democracy.

In his "Politics", Aristotle said—this is a rough translation—that those parties were best to which everyone brought the booze. Similarly, those Governments are best to which everyone contributes ideas; yet the way in which this tax is organised means the increasing separation of local businesses from their councils. They are no longer a fundamental part of what is happening, and some of us consider that very serious.

Labour Members engaged in an excellent debate at their party conference. It is a shame that the Lord President was not there: he would have been excited by the speeches about regional government. We strongly believe in devolution and regional government, and we think it deplorable that, since 1979, the Conservative Government have taken more and more power to the centre. They have increasingly decided that Whitehall and Westminster should govern the people—in my case, the people of Yorkshire.

That is clearly nonsensical. When the people of Whitehall and Westminster—whose experience relates to London—see problems and what they consider to be solutions in London, they send those solutions flying out to the regions, where they are totally inappropriate. We have seen that happen in education: if the Secretary of State has his way, all schools will be accountable to a central body provided and staffed by Whitehall, and appointed by the Minister. We have seen it happen in hospitals, too: increasingly, the Secretary of State has made appointments

for political reasons. I can think of no other reason to justify the creation of trusts such as those in our area, which contain not a single Labour sympathiser, although the vote is 80 per cent. Labour. It is an odd situation; it may have come about by chance, but it may have been created deliberately.

Now there is to be yet another centralisation. The Home Secretary has traditionally governed arguably the worst police force in the country: the Metropolitan police do not compare with the South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire police——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am finding it increasingly difficult to know how what he is saying relates to the guillotine motion.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): My hon. Friend has vast experience of local government, having served as chair of the Yorkshire planning committee for four years. Having sat through yesterday's debate, does he agree that it is astonishing that the Minister of State has been unable to explain properly to the House the reason for the fundamental policy shift on the proposed legislation for this year—as opposed to the provisions piloted through the House last year by his predecessor, now Secretary of State for Wales? We are still waiting for an explanation. We oppose the guillotine motion because we need time to listen to the Government's views, so that we can then go out and consult local authorities and local businesses about the proposals.

Mr. Enright: I, too, find that astonishing.

Let me explain what I mean about centralisation and devolution. This is yet another example of the way in which taxes have been centralised: centralised business taxation is now taken for granted. That is quite wrong. On the continent, exactly the opposite has been happening. For example, in the mid-1970s, France was more centralised than any other country—schools there all taught geography at the same time and everyone knew exactly what was happening in the schools at any given time. However, with regard to taxes and policies, France has increasingly devolved power whereas here the Government have gathered it all unto themselves.

Our argument is that the nature of the business tax is fatally flawed. The way in which it is collected and imposed has nothing to do with the services that it is supposed to render. It seems that business taxes should once again be devolved to local councils. One can think of many spheres in which local businesses would be delighted to have it so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said that I was chair of planning in West Yorkshire. I recall explaining to representatives of local businesses that we could carry out certain schemes such as pedestrianisation and the building of bypasses on which industry was extremely keen but we made it clear that business would have to pay. It led to constructive dialogue. We did not always agree but at least we kept talking and, by doing so, we knew why the taxes were being raised and what could be done with them. That is no longer the case because now the Government, or nanny in the form of the Minister for Local Government and Planning, knows best.

Mr. Vaz: Nan.

Mr. Enright: Nan knows best, indeed. That is not clearly desirable because it is not democratic.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again but he is discussing the substance of the Bill, for or against. We are considering only the timetable motion.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall certainly not intrude on the time allotted to discussing the Bill. I shall deliberately absent myself because I shall have made some of my substantive points.

It was important that we should have discussed such issues in Committee last night because they are crucial. By guillotining the Bill——

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The points that my hon. Friend is making are relevant not only to his but to all our constituents and they are very important and numerous, as he has amply outlined. So many issues are potentially affected by the legislation that a timetable motion that constrains debate carries the risk of our not being able to discuss thoroughly all the issues that could affect the interests of all our constituents.

Mr. Enright: As always, my hon. Friend is absolutely correct.

One important aspect which we were not able to discuss and which is a further argument against the guillotining of the Bill is the collection of the business tax. We need time to probe the Government's intentions in that respect. At the moment they have helpful district and county councils to collect it for them or, to put it another way, to do their dirty work for them. They do so at a reasonable cost but we hear a whisper—one that we should have wished to probe if there had been no guillotine—that collection is to be privatised. That is a dangerous and threatening situation——

Mr. Betts: Group 4, will lose a bit more.

Mr. Enright: Not only Group 4, although we know that it is somewhat spendthrift and difficult to employ. I shall make no more of that because you would quite rightly stop me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Gladstone set up a magnificent civil service to stop corruption. Since that time, the probity and honesty of our civil service has been the equal of any other. It is perhaps worth going through a list of United Nations Governments and asking which of them are corrupt.

Mr. Vaz: Does my hon. Friend share my concern that yesterday not a single Conservative Member found time to come to the Chamber to debate this important subject although it is Conservative Members who claim to speak for British business? Many Labour Members were prepared to speak on behalf of British business. It is extremely important that we have enough time to discuss the Bill.

Mr. Enright: I was especially disappointed yesterday that the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick)—I mention him precisely because he is not here—was not in his place because he is always talking about his diligence in voting and how awful local government is. He is absent I know not where, but I should be grateful if the Government Whips could get him here so that he could be taught about democracy.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): Could I appeal to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) not to intervene on his hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) at the very moment he is beginning to be interesting? I thought that the hon. Member for Hemsworth was about to embark on a tour of the world beginning with Guinea-Bissau. I should not wish to deny him the opportunity of giving us a perspective on local government there from his experience. Perhaps the hon. Member for Leicester, East could refrain from intervening when his hon. Friend is halfway there.

Mr. Enright: I shall first give the Minister a lesson in pronunciation. Guinea-Bissau is pronounced "Guinea-Biss-ow"—that is how it is pronounced not only by the locals but by good British chaps and chapesses. The Minister is correct—in Guinea-Bissau the people have the advantage that collection is carried out at the base and everyone has a say in what happens at small meetings in the villages. It is against such a system that the Government are fighting. It is an absolute disgrace that in this century a guillotine is proposed by uninterested people, which cuts to the heart of democracy. I hope that the guillotine motion will be defeated as it deserves to be.

6.7 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): The Liberal Democrat party spokesman confused me. I do not know where he has been, but I can tell him that the issue began with the Budget and the curtailment of the time allocated to debate it. If he will listen, I shall go further.

There has clearly been concern about the allocation of time for parliamentary business and scrutiny. A story currently doing the rounds is that the controversial Child Support Agency, for example, will be debated for an hour and a half. I do not know whether Government Back Benchers are happy about that, but I hope that the Lord President will accept it when I say that we do not regard it as satisfactory when a controversial issue is to be debated for only one and a half hours. I am sure that many hon. Members will wish to participate. It is merely another subject on which debate is being curtailed. *[Interruption.]* Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) to speak through you if he wishes to do so, but to stop heckling me?

Mr. Kirkwood: If the hon. Gentleman is talking about the statutory instrument that is required to introduce the changes announced on 22 December, he should know that if the statutory instrument is introduced under the affirmative order procedure, the time limit is one and a half hours. That has always been the case. There is no time limit on statutory instruments.

Mr. Cunningham: If that is the case, I suggest that the Minister prepares another Bill and that we hold another debate on the Child Support Agency.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that the concern was about the Local Government Finance Bill, not another Bill or an order.

Mr. Cunningham: I accept what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I was trying to prove that there is insufficient parliamentary time to debate some important issues.

Mr. Vaz: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is one of the most distinguished former council members to serve in the Chamber. He was a Coventry councillor for almost 20 years and was the leader of that council for four years. Does he agree that it would have been sensible for the Government to have arranged a proper and appropriate Committee stage—say, in a fortnight's time—which would have given people such as my hon. Friend the opportunity to go back and discuss with local business people, with the local chamber of commerce and with the local authority the enormous and fundamental changes proposed in the Bill? Would my hon. Friend have liked that opportunity to continue the discussions that he has had over the past 20 years in local government in Coventry?

Mr. Cunningham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that observation.

Mr. Curry: I am sure that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) would wish to inform the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) that he accompanied a delegation from Coventry to talk to me about standard spending assessments earlier this week. The delegation was extremely well informed and we had a constructive meeting. However, the delegation said nothing about the Bill. Its members all knew that if they wished to raise such issues they were free to do so.

Mr. Cunningham: We were perfectly clear at that stage what we wanted to talk to the Minister about and, as I said to him at the time, we were treated most reasonably. However, being a fairly shrewd character, I added that we must wait and see what emerged from our discussions. That is the point and that leads me back to what my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said and to my reasons for opposing the guillotine. I must tell the Minister that before Coventry city council reached that stage the onus was on it to conduct widespread consultation with, for example, business rate payers. The Minister's own rules and regulations require us, as a council, to carry out those consultations. That is why I am so concerned about the guillotine. There are many issues that affect the business community in Coventry and extensive consultation is required. As the House knows, many small business people are struggling to keep their businesses afloat and if some of those people go under jobs will be affected.

It is vital that the Bill be given enough time for adequate debate so that we can scrutinise it properly. Legislation has been rushed through the Chamber in the past and discussion has been curtailed. There has often not been adequate consultation or scrutiny of the effects of Bills on public services and on the public in general. People with small businesses in my constituency often come to me because they have difficulty paying their business rates. Clearly those people would expect me to vote against the guillotine, so that their concerns and the issues important to them can be raised in the House—I hope that the Minister will take note of that.

Another reason for voting against the guillotine is the longer-term effect on local authorities' ability to charge adequate rates and to raise budgets. The Government pass legislation, but they do not give adequate resources to implement it. The Minister says that he may compensate, but he does not say that he will compensate fully. That issue arose last night and it needs further scrutiny. It is

important to many people, not only to the small business men who pay the business rates but to many local authorities. I hope that the Minister will take note of that.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): The Minister has tried to suggest that because the Coventry delegation managed to arrange a meeting with him on our SSA, yet did not raise the issue of the national non-domestic rate, there is no such issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) was here last night when we heard the Minister reading out comments about the dissatisfaction of the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce with the level of business rates some years ago, when those rates were set locally. But, when challenged, the Minister did not know whether the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce was dissatisfied with this year's business rate levels. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is proof that adequate consultation has not taken place? It is not surprising that we do not yet know the opinion of Coventry chamber of commerce on the national business rate, because the Minister did not know whether there was any problem with the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce.

Mr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend has touched on the nub of the problem. He will know that the Government were trying to curtail the debate last night and that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who wound up the debate, refused to give way to any of the Members who were seriously concerned, except my hon. Friend himself.

While we are on the subject of consultation, I ask the Minister when he last consulted the people in local chambers of commerce who represent the small business community—I am not talking about the CBI—and what their views were. That question was not answered last night. That is probably why the Under-Secretary of State would not give way to Opposition Members who wanted to ask questions.

I am worried about the timetable under which we shall be allowed to debate the Bill. I am concerned for the small business community, because there has been a lack of consultation. We have been given no answers about who was consulted about the business rate and who was not. I am worried, too, about the Bill's other possible effects. The Minister has conceded that he has not yet worked out a formula or procedure for compensating business ratepayers. That was why he rejected an Opposition suggestion about using "may", as opposed to "shall", in the Bill.

There is extreme concern about the Bill and about the effects of the unified Budget. For the reasons that I have already explained, I shall join my hon. Friends in opposing the guillotine.

6.17 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on his speech and my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) on his wide-ranging contribution to the debate. I assure him that the Leader of the House did not leave the Chamber because he found my hon. Friend's speech boring. Indeed, he left at such an early stage of that speech that he could not have had time to find it boring. Only those of us who stayed and listened to the full speech were in a position to make such judgments.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): One reason why I am here is that I was told that this was a wonderful debate and that Labour Members' contributions were excellent and well worth hearing. I am surprised that the Leader of the House is not here to listen to the Opposition's eloquent arguments. The Prime Minister tells us that we must go "back to basics", and I wonder why we do not do that. Why did the Government increase VAT to 17·5 per cent., with 2·5 per cent. going to local government? That 2·5 per cent. should now be taken off and then we might get more common sense out of the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. "Back to basics" could also be interpreted as meaning, "relevant to the subject under discussion".

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for that remark, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the subject under discussion is the Opposition's efforts to persuade the Government to listen a little more to what we say about necessary changes to their proposals. I am sorry that the Leader of the House has been forced to leave the Chamber, because I want to comment on some of the things that he said when he opened the debate. The Leader of the House has returned —he has clearly anticipated dangers!

Every hon. Member knows that the fundamental constitutional role of the Opposition is to oppose. Constitutional law books suggest not that the Opposition might or should oppose the Government but that they have a duty to do so. If I understood the opening remarks of the Leader of the Opposition correctly, he agreed with that proposition. It is therefore difficult for Labour Members to understand his argument that there is a means by which the Opposition should carry out their constitutional duty.

Mr. Vaz: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Opposition have a duty not only to oppose but to do so constructively? Labour wished to propose constructive amendments, such as those that appear on the amendment paper, which would strengthen the Bill and make it more acceptable to the business community. The Government have decided not to allow us to help them with the problems that clearly exist in the Bill, which we would have addressed if our amendments had been properly debated.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for that intervention. My hon. Friend developed an argument that I hoped to develop. Notwithstanding his intervention, I shall still try to do so.

I am glad that the Leader of the House has returned to his place because I wish to invite him to consider some of the comments that he made in opening the debate. The Opposition must decide how to oppose any measure. It is not for a Minister to say what tactics the Opposition should use.

The Leader of the House laid great store on the fact that previously similar legislation went through in a matter of three hours on one occasion and rather less on another. He should know from his experience that what happened last year or the year before is irrelevant. If a similar measure had been proposed last week, it would not have mattered how long it had taken to dispose of it because Opposition Members are now considering how best to exercise our constructive role in opposing Government measures. That is simply what we are seeking to do.

I invite the Leader of the House, who is a fair-minded man, to read his speech carefully—not necessarily in a darkened room because I should like him to read what he

[Mr. Hoon]

had to say and think about it—away from the excitement of the debate and from the need for the Government to pass the Bill. He said not only that the Government should determine how they manage their business but that Ministers should comment on how the Opposition go about their role of constructively opposing Government measures. If I understood him correctly—I shall give way if he wants to correct me—he was saying that the Leader of the House knows best. I know that he would not advocate a one-party state, but he is suggesting that we might move to that model of so-called democracy whereby the Government can push through measures with a rubber-stamp Opposition whom the Government know will accept what the Government want. We have a vigorous constitution and a vigorous Opposition and it is for the Opposition to decide how much time we allocate to opposing Government measures.

The motion is the Government's frustrated response to the fact that we have a different opinion about how we should oppose measures from the Government. That is how it should be; we should have a different role from the one that the Government allot to us. I hope that the Leader of the House will reconsider his approach to the motion because he does not know what is best for the Opposition. It is a dangerous and slippery slope when a Leader of the House introduces such motions and tells the Opposition that the Government know how we should be opposing Government proposals. It is for the Opposition, and for them alone, to decide that.

6.25 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Unfortunately, I did not hear the Leader of the House's opening speech because I was busy in a Committee, but I heard his comments last night. He could not have been here for most of yesterday's debate for him to have made the comments that he did, implying that Members were wasting time and not addressing real issues.

I was concerned about the comments that the Minister made in winding up the debate last night. I read *Hansard* today to confirm that he said that Opposition Members' concerns were synthetic—or at least that is what his Auntie Flora in Aberdeen would think. I do not have an Auntie Flora to get advice from.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I know that my hon. Friend does not have an Aunt Flora in Aberdeen, but he has an Auntie Aggie in Sheffield, who has asked me to pass him her best wishes for a very happy birthday today. She is delighted that he is making a speech on his birthday, working on behalf of his constituents.

Mr. Betts: I thank my hon. Friend and note that he has not led his usual rendering of "Happy Birthday" in the Chamber.

The Minister said yesterday that the debate had been spurious, which was an ill-chosen forms of words to have used and which he might like to reconsider.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) made an interesting point last night when he asked why, if the Government had not been concerned that the issues would not need lengthy debate, they had tabled the 10 o'clock business motion, which they chose not to move.

I noted that between 5.30 pm and 9.50 pm yesterday no Member chose to speak from the Government Benches. That is their choice. They did not regard the issues as important, but we did.

Mr. Vaz: I wish my hon. Friend a happy birthday. Does it surprise him to learn that while Labour Members were toiling on the Bill, in the absence of Conservative Members, the Secretary of State was dining in the Churchill Room on lamb cutlets?

Mr. Betts: I was not aware of that, but I am disappointed that the issue is of so little importance to the Minister that he preferred lamb cutlets to the debate.

The issue could still be resolved if Ministers would address the points that we have raised continually. Yesterday, the Minister gave assurances that appear in *Hansard* and in winding up he made a clear comment. He said that any shortfall will be made up. If that is Government policy, we merely want that policy put into the Bill. If that were done, there would be no need for additional scrutiny and debate on many aspects of the Bill. While that commitment from the Government is not forthcoming by way of a change to the Bill, we will argue strongly that we cannot be certain that in one, two or three years' time the shortfall will be made up. Of course, we may have a different Government in three or four years. While the Government remain in power, we cannot be certain that, unless that provision is included and the Bill is amended, any shortfall that occurs as a result of the transitional arrangements will be made up by the Government and not by local authorities through increased council tax or by a reduction in local authority services. If we cannot be assured of that, we want additional time for debate and we do not accept the guillotine.

6.30 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): For the past two days of parliamentary business—the past three days, if one considers the time devoted to the money resolution on Tuesday—the House has seen the Government show a callous disregard for our democratic procedures and a callous presumption of the intentions of the House by discussing the money resolution on Tuesday before the substance of the Bill was debated.

The way in which the Government have tried to force through the business is a contempt of the House. They have forced the business through without giving organisations around the country an opportunity to comment on the Bill, having heard the arguments on Second Reading, which would have enabled representations to be made to the Government and to the Opposition, and, perhaps, would also have given organisations the opportunity to suggest amendments.

The procedure that we are now discussing is completely unnecessary. We are using time to discuss the guillotine motion that we could have used to discuss aspects of the Bill which are important to hon. Members. We are doing that because the Government cannot even carry the support of their own Back Benchers.

Last night, during five hours of debate, there was only one intervention from one Back-Bench Conservative Member. In past years, all of us have had to listen to Conservative Members endlessly attacking local government and endlessly exaggerating the burdens on rates, yet last night we did not hear a whimper. That indicates either

that Conservative Members have recognised the folly of their arguments or that they have so little confidence in those on their Front Bench that they are embarrassed to come along and present those same arguments.

The Government did not have the confidence to continue the debate after 10 o'clock last night, just when I thought that we had reached the point of having disposed of some of the general principles involved in the Bill, and had the opportunity to move on to some of the detail in Committee. I did not like that procedure. The way in which it prevented organisations and Members of the House from making representations during that gap between Second Reading and Committee—either on the Floor of the House or upstairs—was an affront to democracy. Even though it was the Government's procedure, they did not have the confidence to take the argument beyond 10 o'clock.

That is one reason for such an unnecessary motion this evening. The other reason is one that was advanced by the shadow Leader of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). She made it clear that the sinister reason for the guillotine motion is to kill a possible argument on the national health service. The Government are afraid to come to the House and argue about such an important service.

On Second Reading, the Government claimed that it was necessary to have the Second Reading in January to meet local authority Treasury billing needs. I accept that, because of a November Budget, it is more sensible to begin dealing with the business rate in January, because it avoids the situation of the past two years, in which retrospective additional costs have been incurred and businesses have become unstable because they have been unable to predict the level of commitment that they would have to make to business rates.

However, the Opposition's argument is not to do with the calendar timetable. It would have been possible to publish the Bill at the same time and to have the Second Reading yesterday, with a money resolution following it.

The timetable before the House is unacceptable, because it is undemocratic and unnecessary. It is undemocratic because the money resolution was tabled on Tuesday night, before the issues of principle were discussed on Second Reading. It was presumptuous of the Government to adopt that procedure. As was pointed out yesterday, apart from the poll tax debate in 1991, this is the only time that this Government have had the effrontery to table the money resolution before Second Reading.

In administrative terms, the timetable is unnecessary to meet the needs of the local authorities. If one communicates with local authority treasurers, it becomes clear that the bills for business rates are not normally sent out until February. I received a document from Birmingham city council, the largest metropolitan council in the country, which showed that it does not send out the bills for business rates until mid-February. Therefore, a timetable that would have taken business beyond the end of January would have been able to meet the needs of a typical council such as Birmingham.

We do not even need to hear evidence from Birmingham city council, because the document produced by the Department of the Environment and sent to chief executives of local authorities on 30 November, which I cited last night, made it clear that provisional calculations would be made in January. Nevertheless, the Department of the Environment expects authorities to recalculate the amount that they will receive in contributions from the business rate between January and March. Even the Department of the Environment has acknowledged that the Bill could have lasted beyond January and still have met the assumption on which it based its regulations.

We could have adopted a procedure that involved a Second Reading yesterday, a money resolution following it, Committee either on the Floor of the House in 10 days or in two weeks' time, or Committee upstairs. That would have allowed time for Royal Assent to be given—to a Bill which might have been modified in the light of representations and discussion in Committee—in February, and which not only would have met the needs of councils such as Birmingham, but would have met the administrative arrangements that the Department of the Environment anticipated would apply. That would have been a sensible procedure, which would have been acceptable to the Opposition and acceptable to the House.

Of course, the Bill is not as straightforward as it was in the past year. Government Members who argued that it is essentially the same Bill are quite wrong. Although I was sufficiently courteous to allow the Minister to intervene in my speech last night, the Under-Secretary of State, while drawing a comparison between the Bills of the past year and this year, was not sufficiently courteous allow me to intervene in his speech to correct his misapprehension. He will not be surprised that I shall now take the opportunity to correct that misapprehension.

Last year's Bill dealt essentially with one issue, which was that business rates should be frozen at the level of the rate of inflation. The arguments were about whether it was appropriate to limit the increases to the rate of inflation. That was discussed on Second Reading, and during the 10-day period between Second Reading and remaining stages, which were taken on the Floor of the House, several different organisations made representations to me.

This year's Bill is much more complicated. It involves a discussion of the future structure. It raises the question whether there will be further transitional relief in 1995, which is the year after the next revaluation of business rates. It raises the question of what will happen if there is transitional relief. Under the current arrangements, if businesses are given transitional relief, the aggregate sum given in relief is made up by the Government before the rating pool is distributed to local authorities. Therefore, all other things being equal, local authorities themselves neither win nor lose under the current procedure.

Because of some clauses in this Bill, there is no guarantee that that will happen in future. There is no guarantee that transitional relief will be granted in the first place. If it is granted, there is no guarantee that the sums needed to make up the rating pool will be contributed by the Department.

Moreover, there is no guarantee that, even if both happen, the Government will take that into account in calculating the external financing limit for local government, which governs the sum given to local government from outside sources. These are important issues that affect the ability of every council to make decisions on their chosen level of provision and to meet that level of provision.

A further important issue that emerged in representations made to me last year and in preliminary representations by some organisations to me this year is the whole question of who should determine business rates. It seems that, increasingly, organisations over a wide spectrum, from chambers of commerce to the Institute of

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

Directors, to councils throughout the country, to many businesses, believe that it is far better that business rates are determined locally than centrally, for all the reasons discussed in yesterday's Second Reading debate. That issue is central to what happens to business rates and the rating pool. Many organisations would have wanted to make repreentations on that, had that been possible.

I do not want to prolong the debate on this motion for longer than necessary, because we wish to discuss many other important items this evening. The timing of the legislation and the Government's introduction of it without proper consultations through the usual channels are unacceptable to hon. Members, and an abuse of our democracy in this House. They have deviated from previous procedures that hon. Members accepted as reasonably satisfactory.

This establishes a dangerous pattern of contempt for those workable and tried and tested procedures. The rush with which we have had to deal with the legislation is unnecessary. We could have dealt with it in a satisfactory way, which would have allowed proper representation and discussion, as well as the completion of the Bill in sufficient time for local authorities to make the necessary arrangements.

Those are only some of the points that my hon. Friends have raised in their speeches this evening. The Government's conduct has been wholly reprehensible and unacceptable, so we shall oppose the guillotine motion tonight.

6.43 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): Today we have had a continuation of the cabaret which marked yesterday's debate. We have had what I can describe only as the performance of the Tea Room trotters. They are the hon. Members who are called out of the Tea Room to keep the debate going and then dispatched back, no doubt like the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), to eat his bacon sandwich.

In they come, back they go. They try to make their speeches, and whenever they look as though they are faltering, which is fairly frequently, up pops the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) to prompt them and bring them back on track. Indeed, I am surprised that he did not have some visual aids with him to help them. Perhaps he might have had a score card for technical expertise, which I fear would have been fairly low in most cases. Certainly they would have scored higher on artistic impression.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Get on with it.

Mr. Curry: That is typical of the hon. Gentleman. He has spent a day and a half not getting on with it, yet he sits there and urges us to get on with it. The Opposition have waffled, wasted time, digressed and completed a little global tour, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who is not even concerned about the Bill. That indicates his dedication to duty.

Then we had the sentimental interlude when it was discovered that it was the birthday of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts). We are all glad, and wish him a happy birthday, but if this measure were so important, so crucial and so absolutely essential to business, it is a little curious to intervene in the middle of the debate to wish him a happy birthday. But if that is how the Opposition wish to use their time, I am delighted.

The digression continued when the hon. Member for Leicester, East wished to inform the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had been observed eating lamb cutlets.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I will give way in a little while.

I was not clear whether the sin was to be eating, whether it was to be eating lamb cutlets or whether there was some implication about the origin of the lamb cutlets. Knowing my right hon. Friend's past, I would be deeply surprised if the cutlets were not English. They may even have been Suffolk lamb cutlets, and no doubt I could have provided him with Yorkshire lamb cutlets. The fact that he was eating lamb cutlets was apparently a material reason for intervening in the debate. I fail to understand quite why.

Mr. Vaz: I do not understand why the Minister has decided to trivialise this important matter. The point that was being made was that no Conservative Member could be found yesterday to partake in this debate and speak on behalf of British business. Yet the Secretary of State for the Environment, unlike the shadow Secretary of State who opened the debate for the Opposition, instead of coming to the House to listen, spent his time eating downstairs in the Churchill Room. Is that acceptable behaviour when such an important measure as this is being debated?

Mr. Curry: I am delighted that my right hon. Friend takes such a sensible precaution to ensure that he can effectively discharge his responsibilities in this House, as he has done so admirably this afternoon. Whether or not he has mint on his lamb cutlets seems marginal as far as the debate is concerned.

Yesterday, too, we had a cabaret. We heard the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stephenson) talking about his chip shops. I shall be delighted to accept his invitation to visit one if he can stick to his guarantee. At one moment, the debate was so gripping that the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) felt the need to resort to his worry beads or prayer beads, no doubt praying that Opposition speeches would come rapidly to an end.

Mr. Kirkwood: Why did the Government feel the need to include paragraph 2(2) in the guillotine motion?

Mr. Curry: I will ensure that my good colleague has an extremely sound answer to that question.

There was a sense of deep outrage in the House. The Opposition said that this was an abuse, and that the Government were arrogant. The Opposition were so indignant that, on a measure which was announced before the Christmas recess, they imposed a one-line Whip. That was on the money resolution. The outrage was enough to impose a one-line Whip.

That one-line Whip also covered the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, to which you will not wish me to refer, Madam Deputy Speaker. That Bill, too, was sufficiently important to merit a one-line Whip. At the end of the day, 59 Members summoned up the outrage to vote against the money resolution.

Then the Opposition banged on about consultation. Where are these frustrated petitioners? Where is the

Institute of Directors, which appears to loom so large and so suddenly in the perspective of the Opposition parties? The Confederation of British Industry and the Association of Chambers of Commerce demanded access. Undoubtedly, even the Archbishop of Canterbury, with his rather agreeable mixed hereditament across the river, was pressing to make representations.

There was not a squeak, not a whimper, not a hint or a sound in terms of representations. *[Interruption.]* I have checked with my Department. How many representations did we get? We got no representations from local authority associations, the Associations of Chambers of Commerce or the CBI during the consultation period, because they were content with the *measure*.

Over the past few weeks, my hon. Friend and I consulted 62 councils on the rate support settlement. All those councils know that we had a wide-ranging discussion. Indeed, some have raised matters that go beyond the SSAs. Not one council wished to raise the subject of the business rate. That is the great crisis of confidence, and it is the great problem which all councils face. It is all fiction from start to finish.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister misses the point completely. The reason why he has not heard a squeak, as he puts it, from the Institute of Directors, the CBI, the Association of Chambers of Commerce and local authorities is that he has not given the House sufficient time to scrutinise the legislation. He knows that there is a fundamental change in this year's proposals. They are quite different from what was foreshadowed last year. He admitted that when he said that there was a change. The House should have the opportunity to scrutinise the legislation, and local authorities, the chambers of commerce, and even the Archbishop of Canterbury, should have the opportunity to comment on it.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman will not accept that the essentials of the proposals were published in the Budget on 30 November, the Bill was published on 16 December and the business of the House was announced before the Christmas recess. Labour Members may not have wished to work or do their homework over Christmas. However, others were able to do so, and were satisfied with the proposals.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: The Minister is making great play of the fact that he has received representations from local authorities and not one of them said anything about the proposals. The proposals relate to the national non-domestic rate. All that local authorities do is collect that rate on behalf of the Government. Why on earth would the Minister expect local authorities to make representations?

Mr. Curry: I would expect local authorities to make representations, because Labour Members told me that they were burning to make representations. Who is right? The hon. Gentleman says that they do not want to make representations; the hon. Member for Leicester, East says that they want to make representations. The hon. Member should co-ordinate his time with his colleagues. He should not accuse me of wasting time. Labour Members wasted a day and a half, and they do not appear to like it. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that seated interventions from the Labour Front Bench are helpful to the debate.

Mr. Curry: Let us look at the needs of local authorities and billing. There are three essential points that I wish to cover: first, the needs of local authorities in terms of the timetable; secondly, the unpredictability of the old business rating system and the arguments for moving to the new system; thirdly, the nature of the Bill and the understandings which I have given the House about what we will do post-1995. I have said it once, and I will say it again shortly.

A sensible local authority will want to get its first instalments payable at the beginning of April. It must leave its bills to lie for 14 days once it has served them on the businesses which must pay them. The bills, therefore, should go out certainly no later than 10 March. There is printing to be done. Of course, some of that is highly automated. Printing will have to start on 6 or 7 March.

Local authorities must be sure that they know the scheme which will operate. That means that they need certainty by the third week in February. We have already received telephone calls from councils asking whether they have that certainty: "Because of the actions of Labour Members, can we count on this measure coming through in time for us to prepare our bills?"

This year, we have the opportunity to get the bills out not merely in proper time but a little early. That is of great help to local authorities and businesses. Let us be clear on this: if we fail to do that, one of two things will happen. First, the bills will go out unamended. That will mean that they have to be rebilled. If the bills go out and have to be changed, there is a complete rebilling run. That means that businesses will be struck with uncertainty again. Secondly, local authorities will decide that they will not send out the bills and will simply wait. That means that there will be an enormous cash flow problem for local authorities. Business rates bring in £1 billion a month.

The whole history of tax changes in business is local authorities banging on our door complaining about our being late. We now have the opportunity to be early, and Labour Members wish to deny us——

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Curry: No. I have given way a great many times already.

Labour Members wish to deny local authorities the certainty of having the system well in advance and saving money, and they wish to deny business the time to pay.

The old system was wildly unpredictable, and there were enormous variations. I have some of the figures for the variations in poundage for 1989-90. The lowest poundage was in Chelsea and Kensington, with 122·2p. The average in England was 258·3p. The highest was in Sheffield, which went over 400p in the pound at the time that the hon. Member for Attercliffe was associated with that council.

Mr. Betts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Curry: I shall give way at the end of this section. Undoubtedly, the hon. Gentleman will elaborate on his methods of creative accountancy and off-budget financing which were practised at the time.

We saw the following variations and year-on-year increases. In Ealing, the rate for businesses was 57 per

[Mr. Curry]

cent. That went down by 21 per cent. after capping, and it then went up by 28 per cent. in the following year. In Calderdale, the figures were 37 per cent., 2·8 per cent. and 13·9 per cent.; Haringey, 56 per cent. in a year; Hammersmith and Fulham, 44 per cent. in a year; Birmingham, 32 per cent. in a year; and Brent, 30 per cent. in a year. I could continue with the list.

If the old system was so remarkable——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that the Minister wants to refer to those matters, but I need to be persuaded that they are directly relevant to the motion before the House at present.

Mr. Curry: Labour Members said repeatedly that the old system was excellent and that everyone wished to go back to it. I am merely saying that at the time there was a large number of complaints because of the sheer unpredictability of that system.

Mr. Betts: Does the Minister accept that the league table to which he referred was one of rate poundage, not a rate product collected per hereditament? Although Sheffield was high on the rate poundage league table, it had very low rateable values. It is the two figures combined which had an impact on business. The Minister did not draw a fair comparison.

Mr. Curry: I made it clear that I was talking about rate poundage. I spelled out exactly what I was talking about. If the hon. Gentleman wants a debate about financing in Sheffield, I am willing to provide an occasion when we can debate those matters.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair does not want such a debate.

Mr. Curry: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am disappointed but I bow to your preference.

The Bill does two things. It is not fundamentally different from the one introduced last year. It is a different Bill, but the idea that it is some radically different Bill is simply not true.

First, the Bill continues for the financial year which is almost on us the mechanism for compensation which we had in the past. The figures are different, but the mechanism is the same. For future years, if we decide that there must be a means of mitigating increases following the 1995 revaluation, it gives us the means to invite the House to approve such a means of mitigation without primary legislation every year but with an affirmative resolution in both Houses, with adequate time for debate.

I have been asked constantly about compensation. I have said it before, and I will say it again: I have given a clear commitment that any shortfall which results from new concessions will be made up by the Exchequer in full from national resources.

The Opposition have made a charade of the Bill and a cabaret of the debate, and it is about time that we got on to the substance. The Opposition do not want to do that, because they know full well that this is a popular Bill which will help business. It is a Bill which local authorities welcome and which is in time, efficient and effective, and I commend it to the House. It is about time that the Opposition got on with the real business, and I would ask the House to accept the guillotine motion which is before it tonight.

Question put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 302, Noes 231.

Division No. 65] **[7 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*

Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*

Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Non-Domestic Rating Bill:—

Committee, Report and Third Reading

1.—(1) The proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

(2) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(3) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

(4) Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Conclusion of proceedings

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or the Speaker shall, subject to sub-paragraph (2), forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

(2) If, apart from this sub-paragraph, two or more Questions would fall to be put by the Chairman under sub-paragraph (1)(d) that successive clauses should stand part of the Bill, the Chairman shall instead put the single Question that each of those clauses shall so stand part.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) or (2) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) If at this day's sitting a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over to Seven o'clock, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Extra time

3. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on the Bill.

Dilatory Motions

4. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings at this day's sitting on the Bill shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Supplemental orders

5.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If at this day's sitting the House is adjourned, or if this day's sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

6. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order.

Recommittal

7.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Non-Domestic Rating Bill

Considered in Committee.

Clause 1

LIMIT ON INCREASE IN NON-DOMESTIC RATES FOR 1994 FINANCIAL YEAR

7.15 pm

Mr. Vaz: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, leave out line 27.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 2, in page 1, leave out lines 28 and 29.

No. 3, in page 2, leave out lines 1 and 2.

Mr. Vaz: May I say how pleased I am to see the Under-Secretary of State, who has returned to the debate following an absence. One of the interesting aspects of the debate on the Bill has been the lack of interest of the Secretary of State in the proceedings. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who was present yesterday and is present today, the Secretary of State has not made a single appearance during the various stages of the Bill and has had to rely on the Under-Secretary of State and the Minister of State to put the arguments.

One of the reasons why the Opposition opposed the allocation of time motion on which the House has just divided was that we wished to give the House the opportunity to scrutinise the Bill. One of the most worrying aspects of the Bill is the group of clauses that will continue to give special treatment to privatised utility companies —gas, electricity and water. That continues the orders that were made in the Non-Domestic Rating Acts of 1993 and 1992. In particular, it continues the special treatment conferred by article 9 of the British Gas plc (Rateable Values) Order 1989, article 9(3) of the Electricity Supply Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1989 and article 9(3) of the Water Undertakers (Rateable Values) Order 1989.

We have tabled the amendments to seek to remove the special treatment that has been given to the utilities, which have done extremely well as a result of the Government's privatisation policy. That policy has resulted in their being able to achieve huge profits and, as I shall show shortly, to remunerate their chairmen and chief officers with huge salaries. That has been a matter of comment not only outside the House but in the House by hon. Members of all parties. Therefore, it is extremely important to examine the proposals and seek ways in which we can ensure that the overall pool of money that will be made available for distribution to local authorities is as large as possible.

Conferring special treatment on those privatised utilities will mean, in the long run, that they will not contribute to ensuring that the pool is topped up in a way that Opposition Members and many people and organisations outside the House believe would be fair.

May I also make it clear, as it has been a matter of comment during previous stages of the Bill, that the Opposition are wholly in favour of the subsidies being given to businesses in Britain. We therefore support the principles of the Bill, in so far as they repeat the principles enunciated during the passage of the 1992 and 1993 Acts. Businesses have suffered greatly due to the difficulties caused by the recession, which is shown quite clearly by the fact that the number of businesses approaching local authorities to obtain support through section 49 of the 1989 Act has increased dramatically. The last figures that we have for hardship cases show that, under section 49 of that Act, local authorities paid more than £1 million to support businesses.

The amendments would ensure that the amount of money that will go into the pool will increase, thereby enabling businesses to ensure that they are able to cope with the very serious recession that has affected the country during the past few years. Because of that recession the previous Minister of State—the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who is now the Secretary of State for Wales—came before the House a year ago to ensure that the arrangements continued. That is why the Government are returning for the fifth time in four years to ensure that the amount of subsidy available to local businesses is kept at an acceptable level.

If the amendments are accepted, the privatised utilities —gas, electricity and water—will be able to contribute a much greater amount to the pool, which will diminish the amount of money that the Secretary of State will have to put in. That would mean an overall increase in the amount distributed to local authorities and would, therefore, assist local councils.

I hope that the amendments will be accepted. If the Minister needs any enticing, I merely point out that the privatised utilities have done extremely well during the past few years. There can be no better source of information or statistics that hon. Members on both sides of the House can accept than the Library, which has produced for me a note setting out the pre-tax profits of some of the companies to which the Government wish to give special treatment.

British Gas made a pre-tax profit for the year 1992-93 of £1,054 million and its chairman, Mr. Evans, received £379,000 in remuneration for that financial year. Why on earth should the pool be diminished to give special treatment to British Gas, under orders passed in 1989, when it has made more than £1 billion in profits and its chairman is receiving such a large remuneration? It is certainly a great deal more than that received by Ministers of the Crown or even the Prime Minister.

Special arrangements are to be provided for the water industry under article 9(3) of the Water Undertakers (Rateable Values) Order 1989. How much profit have the water companies made? Last year North West Water made a profit of £247 million; it pays its chairman £238,000 a year. Northumbrian Water made £69 million in pre-tax profits last year and pays its chairman £91,000. Severn Trent Water—the water authority which covers my constituency—made a pre-tax profit of £270 million and the remuneration of its chairman was £179,000. Southern Water made a profit of £119 million and its chairman receives £170,000. South West Water made £93 million and its chairman receives £112,000. Thames Water made £251 million, Welsh Water made £156 million, Wessex Water made £86 million and Yorkshire Water made £139 million. They paid their chairmen £155,000, £156,000, £164,000 and £156,000 respectively.

Will the Minister explain why special treatment is to be given to the water authorities when their profits are so vast

[Mr. Vaz]

and when the amount of money that they made available in remuneration for their chairmen was high last year and I am sure will again be high this year?

Article 9(3) of the Electricity Supply Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which I re-read this morning—I am sure that the Minister has also re-read it—shows that special treatment will again be given to the electricity undertakings, which made almost as much pre-tax profit as the water companies.

East Midlands Electricity made £155 million and pays its chairman £226,000. Eastern Electricity made £183 million and pays its chairman £238,000. London Electricity made £146 million; Manweb, £111 million; Midlands Electricity, £167 million; Northern Electric, £111 million; Norweb, £157 million; Seeboard, £113 million; South Wales Electricity, £87 million; South Western Electricity, £111 million; Southern Electric, £187 million; and Yorkshire Electricity, £156 million. The salaries of their chairmen vary from £226,000 a year to £167,000.

The Government have given no explanation of why it is necessary to continue this year an order made in 1989. All it will mean is that companies that have done extremely well during the past few years will be indirectly rewarded by the Government. If we set aside the sweeteners and the other support given to those industries when they were privatised and merely look at the support offered because of that special treatment, we see that the amount of money available to the pool will be diminished. Why is it important? It is for the very reason put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn on Second Reading. Not one Conservative Member came to the Chamber and spoke in support of Government policy.

We are so concerned about the effects of the Bill because of the fundamental change that has been made since the passage of the 1993 Act. The clauses making that change take away the duty of the Secretary of State to make good the shortfall and replace it with a power. From the comments of the Minister for Local Government and Planning during the debates on the money resolution and on Second Reading, we know that he is not concerned about the fact that he has not even devised the scheme that will be in place after 1995. He made that absolutely clear. He did not know what the scheme would do, yet he expects the Committee to approve a clause that will give special treatment to companies that have made billions of pounds in the past few years. That is unacceptable.

No argument in favour of that special treatment was made on Second Reading, and the Minister did not refer to it tonight, although he had the opportunity to do so. All that we have been offered by the hon. Gentleman is the stock phrase used by other ministerial colleagues. He has pushed the official Government line that the Bill must be passed as quickly as possible to ensure that the billing arrangements are established so that local authorities do not suffer.

7.30 pm

We witnessed an extraordinary performance earlier, when the Minister failed to allow proper scrutiny of the issue and cast aside our objections. He knows that it is essential that we ensure that local government gets as many resources as possible. The amendment will ensure that they receive more resources, certainly more than they did last year in terms of their take from the non-domestic rating pool.

The Minister should study the number of bankruptcies and business failures that have occurred in the past few years. For the years 1990 to 1993, the number of business failures was 28,935, 47,777, 62,767 and 55,673 respectively. The level of the business rate contributed to the enormous costs facing local businesses. British Gas, the water companies, East Midlands Electricity and Northern Electric, however, have done extremely well, even during the recession—some would say because of the recession. Why should businesses in my constituency and those of other right hon. and hon. Members not benefit from the money made available from the rates pool?

I hope that the Minister will accept that the amendments are modest. They have been tabled as a means of helping the Minister and the Government through a difficult economic time. They will result in more money being available for the pool.

The Minister may reply by suggesting that the commitment to the utilities was made in 1989 by one of his predecessors or the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when those utilities were sold off. He may argue that the House must be bound by that commitment. The situation has changed, however, because we have had a recession, which has caused 55,000 businesses to go bust. Those utilities, however, have done extremely well.

Now is the opportunity to replace the current system with a reasonable course of action to ensure that those who make more are able to pay more. The enterprises that have got away with special treatment should, quite properly, be made accountable for the money that they have made.

Mr. Betts: I strongly support what my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has said about the intention behind the amendment.

I understand that the transitional arrangements in the Bill will ensure that those businesses that are subject to a large increase in their business rate as a result of a revaluation will be offered some assistance to offset the financial impact of it. The Opposition have made it clear that they have no objection to the revaluation exercise or to the implementation of transitional arrangements that protect businesses that would otherwise suffer a marked increase in their business rate. It must be accepted, however, that a revaluation reflects certain changes that have occurred in the standing of a business vis-a-vis other businesses since the previous valuation. Those revaluations reflect current conditions. The transitional arrangements should act as a cushion against the impact of different valuations on certain businesses, out there in the real world.

No one has sought to argue that small companies should not be cushioned from the effects of an increase in their valuations. That is right and proper, because many do not have large financial reserves. Many others have suffered tremendously in the past three years of the recession. They should be protected from any sudden increase in their rateable valuation and the new rates should be phased in.

There is some question about whether larger businesses should be protected, although I accept that, in the past three years, larger businesses in the manufacturing sector have not made profits. Many have simply marked time, while

others have made losses. It is reasonable that some protection should be offered to them, particularly in the current economic climate.

The amendment concerns those companies that have done extremely well, even in the recession. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East read out the profits that have been made by the privatised utilities and none of them is in any financial danger because of lower profits. None of them is making a loss.

When my hon. Friend read out the list of those privatised utilities and the profits that they have made, I thought in particular of those that serve my constituency, Yorkshire Water, Severn Trent Water, East Midlands Electricity and Yorkshire Electricity. The combined profits of those four companies come to £700 million, which is substantially more than the £90 million shortfall that the Government have catered for in the Bill. That profit represents an awful lot of money. Those companies are hardly on the brink of disaster. They are unlikely to be rocked by the effects of a revaluation, however large the rate increase might be. Why then do the Government want to offer transitional arrangements for those utilities? What is the justification for that?

The Government claim that they have budgetary problems of their own and we know that local authorities face similar problems, so why have the Government chosen to spend money on the utilities, which make excessive profits? Why have they been allowed to get away without paying a proper rateable value according to latest revaluations?

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend served for 16 years as a Sheffield city councillor and for five years as leader of that great city. Does he agree that it will be extremely difficult to explain to Sheffield city council and other local authorities that the amount of money available to them has been reduced because the Government are showing favour to their friends in big business by allowing them special treatment?

Mr. Betts: My hon. Friend puts the argument succinctly. I do not know how I would begin to explain to my local authority in Sheffield and my constituents why they should face reductions in their services, worth between £30 million and £40 million in the next financial year, while the Government attempt to give what can only be described as a subsidy and a hand-out to utilities that already make excessive profits. Perhaps the Minister could help me. It is an obscene waste of public money to introduce legislation that allows those utilities to pay lower rates than the revaluations have deemed that they should pay.

That is what transitional arrangements do. They do not say that the rateable values are wrong, but simply that business should be cushioned from the immediate impact of what it is deemed proper that they should pay for a period.

There is no problem with small businesses or the manufacturing industry. I want the Minister to say clearly what would happen to those utilities if the transitional relief was not available to them. Can he name one consequence that would have any impact on those businesses, on the people whom they employ and on the services that they provide to people throughout the country, from not allowing it? I do not believe that he can, but he may find many other things that he could do, if the money were available to the Treasury, to help local government deliver better services throughout the country.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): It might be helpful if I put the amendment, which is in quite a narrow context, into some perspective. Underneath the inescapable complexities of the drafting, the principle of the relief scheme is simple. Without it, some 360,000 non-domestic properties still in so-called upward transition would be subject to real-terms rate increases next year of up to 20 per cent. for larger properties. For a number of sectors posing unusually difficult valuation problems, principally former public utilities, rateable values are made by the Secretary of State rather than arrived at through conventional valuation. That is the reason why they are in that category. It is not because they happen to be former utilities, but because they present difficult valuation properties.

For properties of those categories still in upward transition there would have been real rate increases of up to 20 per cent. next year. Clause 1(4) substitutes a limit of 10 per cent. That would ensure that, for the purposes of the scheme, such properties are treated on all fours with other large hereditaments. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said that they were being given special treatment. That is not the case. They are being treated in exactly the same way as every other conventionally rated property.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister accepts delegations from local authorities all over the country. He was visited recently by a delegation from Leicester, which made a strong case for additional Government funding and resources to make up for the cuts in Government expenditure for Leicester. He knows all of that, and the context in which local government operates at the moment.

Therefore, how can he justify giving special treatment —that is what it amounts to—through a subsidy to British Gas, which made profits of £1,054 million last year, and to the water companies, which, between them, made £1,615 million last year, and to the electricity companies when, as he knows, ordinary local businesses have suffered because of the recession? The Opposition do not oppose his proposals to give a subsidy to business. We believe that it is important at a time of recession and that is why we did not vote against the Second Reading.

In the amendment, we are putting forward a proper reflection of what happened in the economy over the past few years. We want the Government to accept, in what is a modest amendment, that those who have done well should not be subsidised, but should be taxed at a proper and appropriate level; a level that they can manage to deal with quite effectively.

The Chairman: Order. That was a long intervention.

Mr. Vaz: I thought that we were in Committee.

The Chairman: We may be in Committee, and an hon. Member may contribute many times. Interventions, by convention, are short and succinct, to put the Minister on the spot, or to ask a question.

Mr. Vaz: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Of course I will accept your guidance. I shall take that as a nod that I should interrupt the Minister several times before he finishes.

7.45 pm

Mr. Baldry: The amendment is in a narrow compass. Essentially, what the hon. Gentleman wants, as he has made clear, is that utilities should be treated differently from other business. We see no merit in setting higher limits on transitional rate bill increases for utilities than for other industrial rate payers. The laws of natural equity expect that every business be treated the same. The extra burden on their customers could be significant in some cases. I shall use as an example the rates bill that the National Grid Company would pay in Wales next year, because businesses within that category are not all privatised businesses as the hon. Gentleman sought to suggest. They include nationalised industries such as British Waterways and organisations such as National Grid.

Mr. Vaz: It is a narrow point, and that is why we have been careful in the way in which we have tabled our amendments. We have not included the railways rateable values order, because of the difficulties that that organisation faces. We have been specific in selecting in this amendment those utilities that we believe can bear the full rateable value.

I refer the Minister to the speech by his predecessor at column 855 of *Hansard* of 27 April when it was accepted that it was the recession that had meant that a new proposal had to be brought forward.

Mr. Baldry: I am aware that the Opposition have not included the railways. If the hon. Gentleman had been listening to what I was saying, he would know that neither the National Grid nor British Waterways is a railway. But they would come within the context of the amendment. The rates bill that the National Grid Company would pay in Wales next year would be nearly £1·75 million higher if the amendments were accepted.

It is a narrow point and the Government believe that in equity everyone should be treated in the same way. On those grounds, the Government urge the Committee to reject the amendments.

Mr. Vaz: It is a sad state of affairs that a Minister of the Crown can argue that British Gas, the water authorities and electricity companies should be treated in exactly the same way as local businesses. As I said at the start of the debate, the Opposition do not oppose the subsidy that is being given. Indeed, we support the additional help for businesses. That is why on the previous occasion when the matter came before the House we supported the principle of additional help to local businesses, as put forward in the Non-Domestic Rating Bill of 1992-93.

We object to the unfairness that the Government wish to proceed with; an unfairness that was properly outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts). My hon. Friend speaks with vast experience of the difficulties that local businesses face. As someone who led a local authority, he knows very well the problems that local businesses have, and their difficulties in paying their taxes and, as then, their rates. I am sure that, in the conversations that my hon. Friend had with local businesses as leader of Sheffield city council, they expressed to him their concerns about the level of rates and then the level of uniform business rates that they had to pay. The amendment is narrow. It deals with those particular industries. It sets out clearly the fact that we should not give them special treatment.

Of course, they will be given special treatment, because the whole purpose of the Bill is to give support to those businesses that are in difficulty because of the recession. I refer the Minister to the comments made by his then hon. Friend, now his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. He said:

> "Bearing in mind the effects of the recession, the Government decided last year not to add to the burden on businesses."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. 853.]

There would be no burden on businesses if British Gas, with profits of more than £1 billion, the water companies and the electricity companies, were to pay their fair share of rates; nor would the Government be in any way criticised for making those privatised utilities pay what they should pay. Rather, the public would applaud their decision to make them do so because it would directly benefit the small businesses that have suffered from the recession.

I hope that the Minister will be prepared to accept the amendments. I am not convinced by anything that he has said. Ministers in Committee and on Second Reading have come to the Dispatch Box and read out a few lines prepared for them on the basis of what happened last year. They assume that everything is the same. However, everything is not the same, and everything should not be the same.

The privatised utilities that have done well should pay more or what is fair because that will benefit the pool. It will mean that the Secretary of State will have to put less into the pool by way of compensating for the shortfall, a promise that he made verbally but has not put in the Bill. That will mean that the pressure on the Government to provide assistance in other areas of policy will be reduced.

The amendments will help, not hinder the Government. They will paint the Minister and his colleagues as reasonable and fair people who are prepared to allow those who make more to pay more.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

AMENDMENTS OF POWER TO MAKE SPECIAL PROVISION FOR 1995 ONWARDS

Mr. Henderson: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 19, at end insert—

> '(2) Before making any regulations under section 58 of the 1988 Act in relation to the financial year beginning in 1995 and to subsequent financial years, the Secretary of State shall consult persons or bodies appearing to him to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates about the effects of the compilation of new local non-domestic rating lists on hereditaments in each of the following categories—
>
> (a) factories;
> (b) offices;
> (c) shops;
> (d) warehouses; and
> (e) other hereditaments.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 19, at end insert—

> '(3) Before making any regulations under section 58 of the 1988 Act in relation to the financial year beginning in 1995 and subsequent financial years, the Secretary of State shall consult persons or bodies appearing to him to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates and those local authorities as appear

to him to be concerned about the effects of the compilation of a new local non-domestic rating list on the local economy in each of the regions of England set out below and in Wales.

For the purposes of this section the regions of England are the standard economic planning regions, namely

(a) the Northern region;
(b) the North West region;
(c) the Yorkshire and Humberside region;
(d) the West Midlands region;
(e) the East Midlands region;
(f) East Anglia;
(g) London;
(h) the South East region, excluding London; and
(i) the South West region.'.

Mr. Henderson: I am always pleased, Mr. Morris, to serve under your chairmanship. You were the Chairman of the first Committee on which I served. The Bill that we were considering had seven or eight clauses. We managed to make progress, but it took us between 30 and 35 sittings.

Some hon. Members may erroneously have had the impression last night that some hon. Members were elongating their contributions. However, I can assure you, Mr. Morris, and the Committee, that that was not the Opposition's intention. We were making very real points in relation to procedure and the Bill. I hope to continue in the same spirit in Committee and to deal as expeditiously as possible with the amendments that have been selected.

Amendment No. 4 says that, before regulations are made under section 58, the guts of the 1988 Act, the Secretary of State should, with regard to the Bill's impact on different types of premises, consult bodies which appear to him to be representative of persons who may be subject to non-domestic rates.

Amendment No. 5 says:

"the Secretary of State shall consult persons or bodies appearing to him to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates"

and local authorities in different parts of the country.

The changing pattern of business rates clearly has many different impacts. There is the impact of revaluation which takes place every five years and the impact of the way in which any increases are subject to relief which the Government may or may not give to businesses. The impact differs according to the type of business and the region.

It is important that the Government should consult widely before decisions are made. The starting point differs in different parts of the country and the economic circumstances of businesses vary greatly.

Most hon. Members will agree that Dun and Bradstreet is a good source of information on the state of the economy in different parts of the country. In other circumstances, there may have been a temptation to have given the House more information from that organisation, but I shall simply say that it has recorded that the number of business failures in 1993 was nearly double those in 1990. However, the impact was different in different parts of the country. Dun and Bradstreet's most recent publication shows that London had more than 9,000 business failures last year, the south-east 13,000, the eastern region 2,000, the south-west 7,000, and so on. One can see the pattern. It is clear that there is a variation in the impact of the recession and in the circumstances in which different businesses find themselves. Those businesses would want to make representations to the Secretary of State regarding their circumstances before the Secretary of State sets limits on the general movement in the level of business rates or decides on the case for or against any transitional provision.

Opposition Members have complained about the procedure adopted in relation to the Bill and the inability of organisations to make their views known, but after I tentatively prepared some amendments which raised a number of issues that concern people, several organisations wrote to me setting out their views on the regional impact of business rates. Those views differ around the country.

Barnsley chamber of commerce, to which I referred earlier, believes that people in the south have received all the benefit of the Secretary of State's provisions in past years because they have had the largest part of the transitional arrangements. Some of its views have been echoed by, for example, the east midlands chambers of commerce and industry.

It is surprising that the Government had to admit earlier this evening that they have not received representations. I would not say that my desk has been flooded with representations, but I have had a reasonable spread from around the country.

The east midlands chambers of commerce say that they do not believe that the north and the midlands have benefited from the Secretary of State's provision in the past. They, too, believe that the south has done better.

On a previous occasion I mentioned the contribution that I received from Southampton chamber of commerce. It believes that the southern part of the country experienced the worst impact of the 1990 revaluation and that, although some transitional relief was made available, it did not compensate for the increases that businesses have had to face in that part of our nation. Therefore, it believes that the north has done best from the changes that have taken place since 1990.

My purpose in giving only a flavour of some of the evidence that I have on this matter is to show that different parts of the country have different perceptions of how they have been affected. The Secretary of State would be wise in future, if this legislation receives the approval of the House, before a decision is made on the question of relief, to consult widely regional organisations of one form or another, whether they are based on industrial and commercial associations or whether they are individual organisations. The representatives of these bodies should be consulted to give the Secretary of State a flavour of how businesses are performing and of what the impact of rates increases will be—and hence an assessment of the need for transitional relief. It would be both democratic and wise if the Secretary of State set off in that direction.

A whole spread of views has been put to me about amendment No. 5. Those views relate to the impact of the changes and to what sort of policies organisations want. They have mentioned, for instance, that they would prefer their local authorities, not the Secretary of State, to make decisions on these matters. They feel that local authorities would be more sensitive to the needs of local industry. They also believe that businesses would be more able to influence the decisions of local authorities and they feel remote from the Secretary of State and unable to have any great impact on his decisions. The onus is now on the Secretary of State to dispel those worries and to show himself open-minded when he takes his decisions.

8 pm

Most organisations identify industrial, commercial and retail premises and they often take a regional view of the possible impact on different types of premises. The Government should be aware of the strong feelings that prevail before they take decisions on these important matters. That is why amendment No. 4 was drafted. Many of these organisations may have wanted to make more concrete representations but they have been unable to do so because of the way in which the Bill has been rushed in, but the Association of Metropolitan Authorities tells me that it is aware of the views of various bodies representing sections of industry. If this debate were longer, I would be able to read out much more evidence in support of amendment No. 4.

I have had some interesting correspondence about the 1995 revaluation from an organisation known as Gerald Eve Research Forecasts, a company that acts as consultant to many local authority associations and major business organisations. In a word, it has many important clients and it has drawn together a number of different views on the projected impact of the 1995 revaluation. The AMA has been given an interesting paper on the subject by Robin Goodchild, who says that the rating changes will have different impacts in different parts of the country. He forecasts a reduction in the burden of rates on central London retailers of the order of 15 per cent., but an increase of about 20 per cent. in the east midlands, and of between 15 and 50 per cent. in the north-west and the north. He predicts that office developments in the east midlands will face a 50 per cent. increase in the burden of rates, while in the north-west and the north the increase will vary between 15 and 30 per cent. He also forecasts a reduction in the burden of rates for some southern parts.

The consultant predicts increases for all industrial premises following the revaluation, but smaller increases of between 5 and 10 per cent. in London and the south-east, and increases ranging up to 30 per cent. in the east midlands, the north and the north-west. I would expect the Secretary of State, when considering the transitional relief arrangements to apply from 1995, to want to be aware of these views of various consultants and I expect that the local authority associations may want to make their views known to him by way of representation.

My group of speculative papers written by Gerald Eve includes a number of other views, too. The office of Stephen Tutcher FRICS predicts that the burden of rates will not increase as much for offices in the southern part of the country after 1995, but that there will be an additional burden for offices in the north—a factor which I am sure the Secretary of State will take into account when deciding on transitional relief. I should add that the assessments of the impact of the revaluation vary among the consultants who have assisted local authority organisations.

My folder contains the views of other consultants on this issue, but I hope that I have established the general point, although if Conservative Members doubt what I say I am quite prepared to enlighten them further with more evidence. I hope, however, that they have taken the point already.

It is widely recognised that the state of the economy differs in various parts of the country. Likewise, the impact of rates on businesses differs. It is clear that the various consultants who have applied their minds to the detail believe that there will certainly be changes in the regional impact of the rates following the 1995 revaluation. For our part, we believe that the Secretary of State would be wise to undertake formal consultation with representative organisations before reaching decisions that will have a long-standing impact on the business community and, in turn, on the economy.

I look forward to hearing what my colleagues and the Minister have to say on this subject.

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): A fairly small and select class of right hon. and hon. Members who were here for the Second Reading debate are here again tonight. Those in that class will remember that yesterday I opposed an amendment moved on Second Reading by the Labour party. On this occasion, I want to show the even-handed way in which Liberal Democrats act in the House by supporting an amendment moved by the Labour party.

The fairness of my efforts will become even more apparent when I mention that my support is given in an attempt to persuade the Government that it is in their best interests that the amendment be agreed to. The Conservatives have often claimed to be a party which favours consultation with all sorts of people. Unfortunately, they do not often act in accordance with their words. The result has often been that legislation has been passed which has later had to be reversed—one has only to think of the poll tax legislation, and there are other examples.

I cannot help feeling that had the Government consulted properly on those occasions, the legislation that they later had to reverse would never have been introduced in the first place. That would have been much to their benefit, not least because of the waste of parliamentary time and of taxpayers' money caused by legislation that should never have been introduced.

I support the principle of consultation in general, and, in this instance, I think that the Government would be wise not only to consult but to listen to the results of their consultation. They could argue that there is no point in consulting, because—as everyone knows—even when they do consult they never pay any attention to what is said by the consultees; rather than being as cynical as they might be tempted to be, however, I suggest that they consult widely and take note of the responses. I think that they have been granted an opportunity that they should grasp with both hands.

Mr. Baldry: The amendment would simply oblige the Secretary of State to consult on a statutory basis. I consider it unnecessary. We fully recognise that consultation on matters relating to local government is extremely desirable, and we always engage in such consultation.

Mr. Vaz: I am astonished to hear what the Minister is saying. He was in the Chamber when the Minister of State replied to the debate on the allocation of time; he must have heard the Minister of State mock the Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry and local authorities. He also mocked the Archbishop of Canterbury —although you were not in the Chair at the time, Mr. Morris. He said that he had had no representations from them. The Minister says that the Government wish to consult. To what extent did they consult before introducing the Bill?

Mr. Baldry: Any reasonable person who reads *Hansard* tomorrow will see that what the hon. Gentleman has said does not accord with the facts. We have just

completed the most comprehensive review ever of the methodology for allocating grant to local authorities, which has involved Ministers and officials in numerous meetings with local authority representatives and organisations. Of course, we are always interested in the views of such bodies as the CBI, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and the Institute of Directors.

We fully understand the need to consult widely on any proposals for the introduction of transitional arrangements following the 1995 revaluation, and subsequent revaluations. I therefore see no need to make the Bill longer by making that a formal duty. Yesterday, we made clear our intention to consult businesses on the effects of the 1995 revaluation by early summer. We also recognise that local authorities will need warning of our proposals, and we will certainly take their views into account.

. I consider our record on consultation on business rates exemplary—as, indeed, is our record on consultation on all matters relating to local government finance. We consulted widely on our proposals for the current transitional arrangements before introducing them in 1990, and we have continued to listen carefuly to the views of individual businesses and their representatives ever since. My officials have regular discussions with members of the valuation profession about the effects of revaluations and the detailed operation of the non-domestic rating system; we also have regular meetings with local authority associations.

Mr. Rendel: Does the Minister consider it "exemplary" to consult people and then ignore the result of their consultations? That is what happened in the case of the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Baldry: Whenever Ministers consult widely on matters of public policy, they must ultimately make value judgments; that is their duty. I could consult every shire county in the country about the methodology involved in local government finance, but I could not possibly secure the agreement of all those counties on the relative weighting of the area cost adjustment. All the authorities that benefit from the adjustment want to keep it; those that do not will not want it to continue.

Consultation does not mean having to accept all that every organisation says: it means listening intelligently, being prepared to consider and being prepared, intelligently, to take on board the suggestions that are made. I believe that this Bill, like previous Bills, is a good example of the Government's willingness to respond to the views of businesses and other consultees about the operation of the business rate system.

8.15 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Has the Minister consulted businesses on a regional basis? One of the advantages of the old system was the fact that such consultations took place at local level. If we accept that the Department's consultations with business cannot take place at local level, surely the Minister accepts that there will be great regional variations in the effect of the measures. Has he consulted the regional organisations of either the CBI or the chambers of commerce? He might receive different messages from different regions, and he might be able to take those differences into account.

Mr. Baldry: Of course. I am more than willing to take into account representations that might be made to us by the CBI at regional level—or, indeed, by local government at regional level. We are intent on ensuring that we secure the best possible system. I do not believe that any useful purpose would be served by the imposition of a statutory duty on the Government, given that our actions make it clear that we are more than willing to consult widely. I urge the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister tells us to judge the Government by their actions. I am glad that the Minister of State has returned to the Chamber, because I intend to refer to comments that he made during the debate on the allocation of time motion. He made mocking remarks: I use the word "mocking" advisedly, because I was astonished at his demeanour when he challenged the Opposition on whether people were pressing at our doors and writing letters to make their views known on this important subject.

The Minister mocked the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the chambers of commerce and local authorities, and threw in an aside about the Archbishop of Canterbury; he said that he did not know whether the archbishop had decided to write a letter about the matter. The fact is that not even the Archbishop of Canterbury has had enough time to consider the Government's proposals. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) tabled the amendments. They would place a duty on the Government to consult a number of organisations and examine the various regions to observe the effects of their rating policy on local businesses.

The Under-Secretary says that this Government listen intelligently, and are intelligently prepared to take on board representations made by various organisations. When I challenged him about the number of organisations that the Government had consulted, however, he was unable to give me a single example. All that the Leader of the House and the Minister of State have told the House is that the Bill was published on 16 December.

The Minister implied that, if we had been diligent, we would have spent the Chirstmas period writing to organisations and asking for their comments. That is exactly what we have done. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North read out a number of comments made by chambers of commerce, selecting letters from Barnsley and Southampton from the pile that he had received; but I have not even had the chance to consult those organisations.

It is important that the Government accept the amendments. We feel strongly about them because the best way to proceed is to ensure full consultation not only with local authorities but with the regional branches of organisations such as the Institute of Directors and the CBI.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), who is a former leader of Leeds city council, has vast experience in this sphere. From his membership of that fine council he knows about the level of consultation required by councils on various aspects of policy. We often hear Ministers from the Department of the Environment lecturing councils about the need to enter partnership agreements with local businesses. All urban regeneration policy is now based on the concept of a partnership between local authorities and the private sector, a partnership which has been spearheaded in places such as Leeds and Sheffield. The amendments have the same aim. They would ensure that the words used by the

[Mr. Vaz]

Government for a number of years were put into effect and that there was an attempt to rebuild the relationship between the local private sector, the local authority and the Government. We want to create a climate that will enable local businesses to form an equal partnership with local authorities.

I recently visited Luton to see the regeneration work being carried out by Luton borough council. Local councillors told me of their initiatives with the private sector. Every few months, members of Luton borough council hold meetings—they call them business breakfasts—with the business community and ensure that they are kept fully in touch with the needs of local business. That is precisely what we are asking the Government to do. We want to ensure that the people most affected by the Government's proposals are properly consulted.

The Under-Secretary says that it is not necessary to include every duty in the Bill. He says that he is a reasonable chap, is prepared to talk to anyone and attend meetings with anyone as long as he hears various points of view that can help to formulate policy. He mentioned the Government's review of local government finance, but we know where that led—it led to enormous cuts in resources for the rate support grant. The House will look forward to discussing that in the near future.

The Under-Secretary also said that we did not need to add more clauses to the Bill. The Bill has only four clauses and we are proposing small amendments. There is no reason why the Government cannot accept an amendment to a four-clause Bill, which would mean that the Government would formally consult a number of organisations which could assist them in the discharge of their duties.

I hope very much that, even at this late stage, the Minister will accept the amendments, as he has not really spoken against them. He accepts the principle behind them, but says that what the amendments suggest will be carried out in any event. It is not possible to predict who will be in the Department in a year's time, or even next week. For example, the then Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, who introduced the Bill last year, gave some commitments, but things have changed. We would, therefore, much prefer to have commitments included in the Bill so that it is clear to local authorities and businesses what they need to do to bring their views to the Government's attention.

I hope that the Minister will accept the amendments and ensure that we make rapid progress.

Mr. Gunnell: I should like to correct my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) so that I do not offend another hon. Member. My hon. Friend did me the singular honour of describing me as a former leader of Leeds city council, but that was in fact my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie). I am a former member of West Yorkshire metropolitan county council and was its leader until it was abolished by the Conservatives. Usually, when an authority is abolished, something similar is substituted for it. West Yorkshire county council consulted thoroughly with the local chamber of commerce and the regional branch of the CBI, but that consultation has not been replaced. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to change that tonight.

Mr. Henderson: I hoped that the Minister might respond to some of the additional points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), but it seems that he is intent on maintaining his sedentary position.

I have many times in Committee discussed amendments that have called on the Government, one way or another, to give a legislative commitment to consult various bodies. Many times I have heard Ministers say that they have a great deal of sympathy with the points being made and that they consult in any case, but that they are not prepared to include such a commitment in legislation. It is not good enough for the Government to adopt that attitude on a matter such as this.

It is important that formal consultation is carried out through the official channels representing interested bodies. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that he has a wink and a nod and various chats with friends around the country and that that gives him a clear impression of what is happening in industry and of the views of the industrial, retail and commercial sectors.

The amendments are necessary because of the, perhaps wrong, perception that people in the business community have about the impact of rates. The Government should try to meet any difficulties and set up a formal consultation process so that no one is in any doubt about the information according to which decisions are reached. However, as the Government are being so obstinate, I feel bound to press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee proceeded to a Division—

The Chairman: Serjeant, will you investigate the delay in the Aye Lobby and report back, please?

The Committee having divided: Ayes 94, Noes 295.

Division No. 65] **[8.27 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dewar, Donald
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Khabra, Piara S.
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Pickthall, Colin

Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John

Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Henderson: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 2, leave out lines 23 and 24.

Perhaps it is fortuitous that this issue is being discussed in a Committee of the whole House. It is encouraging to see that Conservative Members have begun to take an interest in proceedings on the Bill. Those of them who had other things to do yesterday evening would have been welcome to join us then and to make their views known on the important issues that affect businesses in their constituencies. Their decision to join us today, and at least to listen to the debate—perhaps even to participate in it—is welcome. Some of the things that I shall say may encourage them to join in the debate. I see a smile on the face of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), who is always keen to take part—indeed, he was the only Conservative Member who took part in the debate yesterday.

This is a key amendment. There is considerable regret among Opposition Members that the Bill is not being debated in a way that would allow representations to be made by interested parties. The clause, and our amendment to it, represent the nub of the Bill. The clause allows the Secretary of State to make a judgment on how the level of transitional relief should relate to the rating pool and to decide whether any funding from central Government should be paid into that pool to compensate for any gaps caused by the relief that businesses may have been given.

8.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and the Minister of State have both claimed that if the Government introduce transitional relief they intend to top up the pool and to make good any losses arising. I am not one who necessarily distrusts commitments given by the aforesaid Ministers, but, as has already been pointed out, we can never be sure that they will still be in post by the time the Bill takes effect. Indeed, the Bill will have a long-term effect on business rates way beyond 1995. It is not good enough practice for Ministers simply to give commitments—although I am sure that those commitments will go some way towards warming the hearts of the businesses affected. Parliament is supposed to legislate and if the Minister believes that there is a case for topping up the rating pool, he, on behalf of the Government, should be prepared to say that in the event of transitional relief being granted the Government will top up the pool and add to the amount of public money available for local authorities to meet important needs all over the country.

If we believe that there should be legislative backing to the Government's intention, it is important to press the amendment so that the commitment will be given and businesses around the country will be assured that the Government do not necessarily intend to reduce the funding available to meet the important needs of the community. If that is really the Government's position, there is a strong case for their accepting the amendment.

Mr. Baldry: We may have a rather frustrating debate because the amendment does not do what the hon. Member thinks that it should do or that he wants it to do.

Mr. Vaz: Why?

Mr. Baldry: Because the hon. Gentleman has sought to explain in his speech what he had hoped that the amendment would do. Anybody who reads *Hansard* tomorrow will see that that was what he had hoped that it would do.

The effect of the amendment would be to deny the Government the power to make transitional arrangements after 1995 which included a measure of Exchequer support for businesses facing rate increases as a result of the revaluation. Any arrangement would therefore have to be self-financing, with the cost of any protection for losers having to be borne by the gainers.

The Committee does not need to be reminded that the 1990 transitional arrangements were originally self-financing. Ratepayers who were potential beneficiaries of the 1990 revaluation had their rate reductions limited to meet the cost of cushioning the effects of increases. Not surprisingly, that was unpopular with businesses and added considerably to the administrative complexity of the arrangements. We listened to the concerns of businesses and that was why we introduced the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992 to provide £1·25 billion of Government support for the arrangements. The Act froze rate increases beyond the rate of inflation for 1992-93, while allowing greater reductions for businesses whose bills were being phased downwards.

Mr. Vaz: Why will not the Minister accept that there is a fundamental difference between what was proposed in 1992 and what is being proposed in this Bill?

Mr. Baldry: I am concerned about what is proposed in the amendment.

Further relief worth £550 million was provided by the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1993 and, as we have made clear, this Bill provides further assistance. The Bill is entirely consistent with what we have sought to do in the past couple of years in providing support for the business community. The amendment would deny the Government the chance to make regulations giving further relief to businesses in 1995-96 and beyond should that appear to us to be necessary.

Mr. Vaz: I refer the Under-Secretary to what his hon. Friend said yesterday. I realise that he was not in the House, but at column 197 of *Hansard*, the Minister makes it quite clear that the scheme to be used has not yet been devised. Therefore, the amendment moved so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) does not mitigate against the scheme because the scheme itself has not been designed.

Mr. Baldry: That is why I began my comments on the amendment by saying that I thought that we were going to have a somewhat frustrating debate. The amendment does not propose anything that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North suggests, because it would remove the provision which would allow the Government to make the transitional arrangements that are not self-financing. I am sure that businesses would be interested to know if the Opposition were seeking to prevent us entirely from helping businesses with their rates by that means.

We can always come back to Parliament with further Bills such as this Bill each year, but if the aim of the amendment is to ensure that decisions on any such funding are given parliamentary scrutiny, I can assure hon. Members that any transitional arrangements that we make after 1995 are already required by the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to be approved by both Houses of Parliament. There would be a full opportunity for hon. Members to consider any proposals carefully and there is no question that the arrangements could be used to increase the burden of rates on businesses, so we would not expect the regulations to prove contentious.

Mr. Vaz: How can the Minister expect Labour Members to accept any of his assurances when we bear in mind the fact that the Bill is being rushed through the House at record speed? How can we accept assurances that we will have the opportunity to scrutinise the complex regulations in the future when he has treated the House with such contempt over the past two days?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman cannot quite keep a straight face when asking that question. As I have just explained, the statutory provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 oblige us to bring the measures before the House. That is a much more practicable way in which to deal with the matters than the administrative complexity and timetabling problems with further full-blown Bills.

I remind hon. Members that businesses and local authorities will be looking for clear and early notice of any decisions that could affect rates bills. The simpler and faster the procedure, the more easily it is likely to be achieved. Flexibility is therefore essential. An amendment which would remove the provision that allows the Government to make transitional arrangements which are not self-financing would reassure businesses.

Mr. Betts: The Minister referred to the frustrating nature of the debate. Is not the greatest frustration that he keeps saying that there will be no occasion on which the shortfall in the business rate pool will not be made up by Government? If that is the case, why does not he cut across the Bill and give a commitment to legislate to that effect? What is the problem? There has never been any explanation of why the Bill cannot be drafted to achieve that. Why, if the Under-Secretary does not believe that our amendment achieves that commitment, does not he propose another amendment instead?

Mr. Baldry: To use a rather legalistic phrase, we have given those undertakings during the debate on occasions too numerous to particularise. My hon. Friend the Minister and I have sought to explain that it would not benefit the business community to seek to proscribe the scheme that we may introduce after 1995 until we have consulted. We have made it perfectly clear time after time that we would not expect council tax payers to bear the cost if the pool had to be topped up. Little short of putting it in bright lights, I am not sure what more we can do. Nor, with respect, do I think that the more times that we say it the more it will impact on hon. Members. It is clear that the whole debate about powers and duties was a spurious debate in an attempt to keep business going yesterday. There is no validity in it and the amendment does not seek to address that point.

I hope that the Committee recognises that the amendment does not do what it is even intended to do. It would remove the provisions which would allow the Government to make transitional arrangements that are not self-financing and would not be to the advantage of the business community.

Mr. Henderson: I had some doubts about whether we should proceed with the two final amendments because they deal with matters of fairly general concern which could have been covered partially on Second Reading with the remaining points being taken up on Third Reading. I am glad that I proceeded with amendment No. 6 because we have scratched a surface and exposed a flaw in the Bill.

If I understand the Minister correctly, he does not accept the sentiment of my argument in support of the amendment. He does not accept that there should be a provision which requires the Government to top up the rating pool in the event of transitional relief being given to certain businesses. He gave a commitment that he would do so next year, but he made it clear that he does not feel required to make such a provision.

9 pm

Mr. Baldry: As I said, this is going to be a frustrating debate. The amendment goes nowhere near achieving the hon. Gentleman's intentions. If he is asking me to undertake that if in future there is a need to top up the scheme the Government will do so, if that were the means we used, we have already given that undertaking. My hon. Friend the Minister and I made that clear and anyone who reads yesterday's *Hansard* will see that undertaking being given on a number of occasions. The amendment has nothing to do with that. As drafted, it simply removes the Government's ability to do exactly that. Indeed, it makes the task that the hon. Gentleman wants us to perform much more difficult. The amendment would oblige the gainers to pay for the losers. That is not a sensible way to proceed.

Mr. Henderson: I am pleased that the Minister intervened in my speech because he now appears to be clarifying his earlier remarks.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. On a matter which the Labour party has claimed to be so important, I find it outrageous that only one Labour Member is on the Back Benches.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman is reasonably new to the House, but he has been here long enough to know that that is not a point of order for the Chair. [HON. MEMBERS: "But what he said is true."] Order. It is not a point of order for the Chair, whether or not it is true.

Mr. Henderson: I have always found contributions from Tory Members more helpful before they have their dinner than after it. That has been confirmed again this evening.

If I understand the Minister correctly, he is saying that in any future year when transitional relief is given to businesses, any moneys that are lost to the rating pool because of that transitional relief will be made good by central Government finance and that will be in addition to the aggregate external financing limit. I am assuming that I have been given that commitment by the Minister unless

[Mr. Henderson]

he again intervenes to correct any misunderstanding. I should be happy to give way to him if he believes that I have misunderstood his position.

Mr. Baldry: I am not sure how often it will be necessary for us to put this on the record. I had hoped that if we had a sensible debate yesterday it could be accepted first time round. As we did not have a sensible debate and this was the only point that the hon. Gentleman could run yesterday, he is obviously having to make something of it again today.

Let me make the point again. Let us suppose that in due course we design, as we may well do, a scheme for some future year which is not fully self-financing. The hon. Gentleman should bear it in mind that the amendment would make that more difficult, but let us leave that to one side. Clearly, this would leave a shortfall in local authority revenue, which would need to be made up in one way or another. Clearly, it would be inappropriate for the council tax payer to bear that shortfall. In those circumstances, the Government would anticipate making up that sum. That is what we have said time and time again.

Of course, the most obvious way would indeed be to top up the rating pool by a compensating amount. That is what we have done for the past two years and what we propose to do for 1994-95, but it is not the only conceivable option. For example, we could decide instead to give local government as a whole a larger amount of revenue support grant than it would otherwise receive. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Of course, that would compensate local government by another route, but it would not fall to the cost of either the council tax payer or local government. I am not sure how many more times it will be necessary to make that clear before Labour Members understand the point. I do not think that I can put it more clearly than that. I am sure that any reasonable person who reads *Hansard* from yesterday and today will see how clearly we have made the point. If the hon. Gentleman takes the matter further, it will demonstrate that this is not a serious debate but merely an attempt to take a bad point further, as was done yesterday.

Mr. Henderson: I assure the House that this is not an attempt to prolong the debate. Indeed, the debate is guillotined—there is no way that we can prolong it beyond 10 o'clock. The only reason why I am sticking to this point is that I want it to be absolutely clear. Yesterday, there was some confusion about the Government's intention. Even a Tory Back Bencher who came in to listen to a small part of the debate was confused.

If the Government are so firm in their response—I welcome their response, which has clarified their position—it would be better if they wrote that into the Bill. I assure the Minister that I will be watching to see what happens next year if transitional relief is granted. In subsequent years, if I am in the same post, I will be watching from this Front Bench. If I am on the Back Benches, I will still be watching.

Councils around the country will be watching to see that there is no camouflage by the Government in an attempt to reduce the amount of the revenue support grant before the announcement on transitional relief is made, only to restore it to what councils would have had to compensate for the relief given to the rating pool. If transitional relief is granted, I hope that the pool will be topped up by a genuine increase in resources which will be made available to councils by the Exchequer through the Department of the Environment.

My exchange with the Minister demonstrates the importance of having a gap between the Second Reading and the Committee stage so that there is more time for representative organisations to lobby Members of the House and for hon. Members to examine perhaps in more detail the implications of the wording of any amendments that they table. That demonstrates the point made by Labour Members in this debate. Based on the commitment given by the Minister, and based on some of the doubt about the wording of the amendment, I beg to ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Order for Third Reading read.—

[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified]

9.8 pm

Mr. Curry: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I was taken aback because I knew that Labour Members were anxious to give the Bill a profound scrutiny and I had not expected such rapid progress. Undoubtedly, debate on the technical clauses is proceeding apace on the trains heading out of London tonight.

This is an excellent Bill, which is in time. [HON. MEMBERS: "He has forgotten his notes."] I can manage without notes, thank you very much.

The Bill will enable local authorities to get bills out on time, which has not happened for various reasons in previous years. It is to the benefit of business, particularly small business, and it helps those in areas which are worst affected. The Bill continues the Government's pledge to moderate what was a difficult transition following the re-rating in 1990.

The Bill also looks to the future, and we know that there will be a new rating in 1995. That will be based upon facts which are being collected at the moment, and if that creates turbulence, clearly we will have to tackle it. The Bill gives us the means to do so. When we do that, we will put before the House the measures which we will take. Any shortfall in the financial pool will be made up from public funds. The Government have made that clear, and I have made that clear before.

In the past, the Opposition have been happy to welcome and support the Bill and, in practice, they do not have it in their heart today to oppose it. I think that Opposition Members know that it is right and necessary to create help for small business. It is important that the parties should be seen to be united on the matter, which is of great importance. The measure is opportune and the help is necessary. The small businesses which we are talking about in the centres of towns—particularly in London and the south east, which are the areas worst affected—will welcome the measure. Local authorities will welcome it, as will the business community and its representatives. It is important that the measure be right and in time. We have ensured this and I commend the measure to the House.

9.12 pm

Mr. Henderson: Proceedings have moved with such alacrity that hon. Members can forget where they are on the detail of the Bill.

The Opposition are concerned about the way in which the Bill has been dealt with in the House. We are happy that the question of business rates has been dealt with earlier in the parliamentary cycle and we are happy that Second Reading took place in January. We are not happy, and we are extremely worried, that the Government forced through the measure without due concern for the representations which might have been made by concerned parties on the impact of the Bill. All along, the Opposition have been intent on making sure that the democratic processes take place in the House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Vaz: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) has been in the House for two days on the Bill. He is trying to make his Third Reading speech, and there is a lot of frivolity on the Government Front Bench. Perhaps they would like to listen to what my hon. Friend is saying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I have noticed the frivolity. If that is the case, I am sure that the Minister will listen to what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Curry: It is very rare that we derive frivolity from the hon. Gentleman. On the few occasions we do, we are most grateful for it.

Mr. Henderson: It is so pleasing to see Government Members with smiling faces for a change. When I see frivolity among Ministers, I begin to wonder who it is that they are talking about who raises laughter and humour among them. It is pleasing to see that there is still lightness among Government Members.

We said yesterday on Second Reading that we wanted to conduct real arguments about the Bill, and that is what we did. It was not the wish of the Opposition that a guillotine motion be moved. The 10 o'clock motion was not moved last night because the Government neither had the confidence of its Back Benchers to proceed with the Bill, nor sufficient confidence in themselves to face the arguments in a session which may have lasted for a few hours.

The way in which the Bill has been dealt with in Committee demonstrates that the Opposition made the arguments expeditiously and moved through the Bill expressing our opposition. We have done so in a way with which the procedures of the House have coped easily. It has taken no more than about two hours to deal with the Committee stage and Third Reading since discussion of the guillotine motion finished.

The matter could have been dealt with yesterday if the Government were intent on dealing with all stages of the Bill in one day. Our position is that it negates many of the democratic processes in the House and in the country to deal with the Bill in one day. But if the Government wanted to deal with the Bill in one day, it would have been possible for that to happen. The reason why it did not happen was the Government's lack of confidence and because they wanted to scupper some of the debate that might have taken place today on the national health service. They were frightened to come to the House to deal with that matter.

I know that you will want me to dwell on the Bill rather than the Government's fear of the House of Commons, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Opposition support the purpose of the Bill. We recognise that transitional relief needs to be granted to businesses because of the way in which the current structure of business rates has been introduced and the way in which transitional relief has been granted.

Business will judge whether the size of the relief is appropriate in the circumstances this year. Business will be extremely disappointed that it has not had full consultation with the Government on the economic circumstances that it faces and on what relief might have been helpful.

Many of us are suspicious of clause 3 of the Bill. Although the Government confirmed in Committee earlier this evening that if transitional relief were given, the rating pool would be topped up in a real sense, they are still opposed to putting that commitment in the Bill. That demonstrates to the House that the Government will not necessarily increase the aggregate external financial limit to take into account any need to top it up because relief has been given.

The Opposition will not oppose the Third Reading of the Bill because we want to see business in Britain receive the relief which it believes at least partly helps it in the present difficult economic circumstances. However, democracy in the country and in the House would have been better protected if, through the usual channels, the Government had dealt with the Bill in a sensible, workmanlike way—the way in which the matter has been dealt with in past years.

The Bill is much more complicated than the legislation of the past two years. It deals with structural, not merely financial, issues. That is why the matter needs much wider debate than in past years. It would have been better if the Government had been able to take account of representations that might have been made by organisations throughout the country and by Members of Parliament.

9.23 pm

Mr. Betts: The debate has been important because it has allowed us to raise in the House the real fears about the finance of local government and the part that the business rate plays within that. It has allowed hon. Members to draw attention to the fact that, because the business rate has been centralised and because central Government have taken over raising that rate and fixing the poundage, the amount of local finance that is directly under the control of local authorities has been substantially reduced. That has led to the problem of gearing.

The impact on the council tax of any increase in expenditure that a local authority wants to undertake, within the cap limits that the Government lay down, is multiplied several times because the council tax, which is the only part of their revenue in which local authorities have flexibility, is only a small part of the revenue available to local authorities. If the business rate were transferred to local authorities, that situation would be substantially amended and that would be to the benefit of the local authorities, democracy and accountability.

During the debate, we have been able to explore the reasons for the Government's decision to take over control

[Mr. Betts]

of the business rate as part of their general approach—taking powers from local authorities and restricting their freedom of operation, including the freedom to provide local services that their communities vote for and want to be provided.

We have had a substantial discussion of the Government's intentions and of whether we can believe and trust ministerial assurances given now that if there are shortfalls in the pool of business rate money, because of transitional arrangements introduced by the Government, they will automatically compensate local authorities for that shortfall and will ensure that council tax payers and the recipients of local services will not be in any way disadvantaged because of the effects of those arrangements.

Throughout the debate, Opposition Members have tried to persuade Ministers to realise that an assurance given now may not be worth anything in two years' time if circumstances or Ministers change. We simply cannot take on trust that that assurance will always be honoured. We have, therefore, invited Ministers to change the legislation to include the word "shall" instead of "may". That seems a very small change.

If Ministers keep telling us that they have no intention other than to compensate local authorities for any loss in the pool because of transitional arrangements, why do they not write that into the legislation? That question has been asked many times, but I have not heard a clear and simple answer. Only a few moments ago, the Under-Secretary of State sought to explain that, as the transitional arrangements were not fixed and could vary from year to year, the legislation could not include a commitment to compensate in a particular way for any losses because of those arrangements. I simply do not accept that and he did not explain why it was the case—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, he did."] No, it was a non sequitur. A Bill could prescribe compensation for local authorities and contain a commitment to compensate while not prescribing the form of transitional arrangements. The two are not linked.

The Under-Secretary did not explain why the fact that the transitional arrangements were not prescribed in the legislation meant that no commitment to compensate could be written into it. However, he also let the cat out of the bag. Throughout the debate, Ministers have implied that compensation will be provided by the Government topping up the pool, as they intend to do in 1994-95 when £90 million will be paid in directly. The Government have given the impression that future compensation will always be provided in that way.

However, the Under-Secretary of State said something else. He said that compensation, to make up any loss in the business rate, might be given by increasing the revenue support grant to local authorities and that that would have no impact on council tax payers or the recipients of council services. He is absolutely wrong, because revenue support grant is paid out under a different system and by different allocations from those of the business rate. The latter is paid on a per capita basis, while the revenue support grant is paid out according to the standard spending assessment system; the two are not the same. If there were another £90 million shortfall in the pool and the Government made it up by compensating local authorities through a £90 million increase in revenue support grant rather than compensating the pool directly, the total impact on local government would be the same, but the impact on each authority would be different. That means of compensation would, therefore, have a consequence, which is what we have been arguing throughout. We want an assurance that that will not happen to be written into the legislation.

Furthermore, when the Government tell us that there is a £90 million shortfall in the pool because of their transitional arrangements but they will not top it up because they have already given that sum of money in the revenue support grant announced in the autumn, how do we know that that is the case? The Government could come along at any time and say that they do not need to top up the pool because they have already included £90 million, or whatever the sum is for that year, in the previously announced revenue support grant.

Frankly, that is not transparent. The Government will be able to claim that they have carried out their commitments as promised, but will merely be pretending that the compensation has been paid. It is difficult to accept ministerial assurances tonight when we know that they could devise a future system that made it unclear whether those assurances had been met.

It would have been much simpler if the Government had accepted, right at the start, the need to include in the Bill a promise always to compensate for any shortfall by topping up the pool. If that had happened, the debate could have been concluded many hours ago. The Government could have got their way, but, equally, local authorities and the recipients of their services could have been assured that future transitional arrangements would not adversely affect their council tax or the services that local people receive.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link (Compensation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

9.25 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): This is the fifth occasion on which I have detained the House on the question of entitlements to compensation under the Land Compensation Act 1973 for those with properties alongside the existing designated railway routes to the channel tunnel. I hope that this will be the fifth and last occasion on which I shall do so, which I am sure will be a relief to the House and will be a not inconsiderable relief to myself.

The designated rail routes are for passengers and freight through Kent on the Maidstone East line and the Tonbridge line running up to Waterloo, where the new international terminal has been constructed. In addition, there is a designated freight route going from Tonbridge through Surrey to Redhill and round the south and west of London.

I am raising this issue again tonight for two reasons. First, because it has a real immediacy. We are now some four months away from the opening of the channel tunnel. There is no doubt that when it is opened in May, those with homes alongside the designated freight and passenger routes will suffer considerable deterioration in their living and, in particular, their sleeping environment. Many of those lines are lightly used during the night, if at all. With the gradual build up of channel tunnel traffic, particularly freight traffic during the night, it is possible that individuals will find the channel tunnel international freight trains going past their bedroom windows approximately once every 15 minutes during the night hours. Therefore, we are talking about the real prospect of a considerable deterioration in those people's environments.

The position that they face is unhappily one that will continue for the foreseeable future, because the new high speed line is still years away from construction. Even after that, in accordance with Government plans and statements, the overwhelming proportion of freight will continue to travel on the existing designated channel tunnel rail route to which I have referred. It would be very surprising therefore if there was not some impact on the property values of those homes alongside those designated routes, which is why compensation is now a matter of such immediacy.

I raise this issue for a second and even more crucial reason, because having examined most closely the legal background, I am in no doubt that the legal basis on which Ministers previously made statements about the application of the Land Compensation Act to this issue was incorrect. My first reference point for that opinion is the previous full debate that we had on this matter on 19 June 1991, when I moved what was new clause 16 to the Planning Compensation *[Lords]* Bill. I endeavoured, along with some of my hon. Friends, and I am glad to say with the support of those on the Opposition Front Bench and members of the Liberal party, to secure new powers to enable compensation to be paid in the circumstances I have outlined.

My right hon. Friend, in responding to that debate, said:

"Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973, which deals with compensation for depreciation in value due to various physical factors, quite expressly excludes, in section 9(7) situations in which there is an intensification of an existing use. Therefore, it cannot apply if the amount of traffic on a road or a railway line increases.

As hon. Members will know, it has been a long-standing policy of successive Governments to make a clear distinction in this respect between the construction or alteration of public works and the intensification of use of existing works. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling made the fair point that the substantial and increased use of the existing railway line constitutes a new service and that that, combined with the work on the channel tunnel, constitutes a qualification under existing legislation. I understand the argument, which was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst on behalf of his local borough. However, that is not the legal advice given to the Department of Transport."—[*Official Report,* 19 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 345-6.]

My right hon. Friend left the House with a clear view that the Department's legal advice was that there could be no application of injurious affection compensation under the Land Compensation Act to the properties alongside the designated routes to the channel tunnel.

I have harboured some considerable doubts about the validity of that interpretation, and in recent months the local authorities concerned, at my instigation, have sought counsel's opinion on that issue. Counsel has been instructed, and a leading planning and compensation barrister, Mr. Gregory Stone, at Gray's Inn, has furnished an opinion on that point, which I have with me this evening, and from which he has given me his permission to quote.

Mr. Stone is in no doubt that it is going to be possible to claim injurious affection compensation under the Land Compensation Act 1973 in the context of the substantial reconstruction and alteration of the existing designated rail routes to the channel tunnel. I shall first put the basis of his legal argument in my own words—no doubt somewhat inadequately—but will then give the House the benefit of the exact quotation from his opinion.

The statement of my right hon. Friend in the debate in June 1991 was in relation to section 9(7) of the Act, which reads as follows:

"For the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared that references in this section to a change of use do not include references to the intensification of an existing use."

That reference must be seen against the three heads of claim under which injurious affection can be claimed, which are detailed in section 9(1). Those heads of claim are listed in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c). We can leave aside paragraph (a), because that relates to claims in relation to highways, about which we are not concerned here. Claims under paragraphs (b) and (c) can both apply to railways.

Head of claim (c) reads:

"there has been a change of use in respect of any public works other than a highway or aerodrome."

The House will appreciate that the use of the phrase "a change of use" in head of claim (c) effectively makes it impossible, because of the qualification in section 9(7), to make a claim under that head.

However, the critical point is the wording of head of claim (b), which reads:

"any public works other than a highway have been reconstructed, extended or otherwise altered after they have been first used".

The critical point is that the phrase "a change of use" does not appear in head of claim (b) and therefore claims under (b) are not qualified by subsection (7) to which the Minister referred in his June 1991 speech.

Now I shall give the House the benefit of Mr. Gregory Stone's opinion on the crucial point. He summarises succinctly and in proper legal form what I have just said in two key paragraphs of his opinion. He says:

[Sir John Stanley]

"Section 9(7) of the 1973 Act has led to the mistaken view that the intensification of use of existing lines preclude claims for compensation being made. That construction of the law has been stated in debates in Parliament.

However, Section 9(7) of the 1973 Act states only that references in the Section to a change of use are not constituted by intensification of an existing use. That leaves open claims being made under Section 9(1)(b) namely that 'Public works other than a highway have been reconstructed, extended or otherwise altered after they have been first used.' That head of claim has nothing to do with changes of use."

On the basis of that opinion, it would appear to be clear that, under head of claim (b), it would be possible to make claims for injurious affection compensation in relation to the depreciation of property caused by the public works in connection with the designated rail routes to the channel tunnel.

It will not be difficult, in court if necessary, in test cases if necessary, to demonstrate that the types of public works that have been carried out on the designated routes fall firmly within the terms of head of claim (b)—in other words, reconstruction, extension or otherwise altered.

Those of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who know in detail what has gone on on the designated routes—the electrification, the alteration of the track, the removal of sharp gradient bends, the resignalling, the altering of bridges, the construction of loop lines—the alterations that have gone on the length and breadth of the track, quite apart from the construction of a new international terminal at Waterloo and the extension of the line at Cheriton under the channel on to the continental railway system, will know that any barrister will have the utmost ease in demonstrating that the scale of the works that have been carried out is fully within the ambit of head of claim (b).

Sir Keith Speed (Ashford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the difficult travelling conditions that our constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) have experienced during the past two years on the Kent coast lines, which have led to extreme unreliability, have been part and parcel of the massive reconstruction of points, upgrading of traffic and all the rest? The level of performance that has been achieved on the Kent coast lines is proof that an essentially brand new line has been built.

Sir John Stanley: My hon. Friend's point is entirely correct. The huge dislocation from which our constituents have suffered, including being bussed between stations, reflects the magnitude of the reconstruction and alteration work on the designated routes.

A very different legal construction has quite properly been put on the key question of the application of the Land Compensation Act to those who have the misfortune to live alongside the designated routes. I am glad to say that British Rail now seems to have conceded in principle that compensation may be payable. Having given every impression, rather like the Department of Transport until quite recently, that no compensation would be payable, BR now appears to have taken fresh legal advice and to be back-tracking on the issue.

I have been in correspondence with the chairman of British Rail, urging him to advise members of the public on their legal rights—rights given to them by this House. Just before Christmas, I received from Sir Bob Reid a copy of a new leaflet that BR has produced in which it endeavours to set out its response to the issue of compensation for those alongside the existing routes.

Sir Bob was kind enough to write to me and thank me for suggesting that BR produce such a leaflet. When I read the leaflet, however, I was not the least bit enthusiastic about its contents. It appears to me that BR does not start from the standpoint of advising people on their legal rights; it seems much more concerned with dissuading them from seeking compensation and with throwing a wet blanket over everyone who might be considering seeking compensation from British Rail.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that, on behalf of my constituents and many other people in Kent, I entirely agree with all his points? His argument takes us forward considerably, and I am especially glad to hear him focus on this unsatisfactory leaflet from British Rail.

Sir John Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; I should like to develop the point a little more, to show just how unsatisfactory the leaflet is.

British Rail highlights only the negatives. For example, in paragraph 5 BR says, in respect of what might constitute a basis for compensation:

"Parliament has not defined what constitutes an altered development in the case of a railway, but in British Rail's view such works as the relaying of track would not be a new or altered development leading to a successful claim for compensation, just as resurfacing a road does not qualify."

The House might reasonably expect that, having stated what, in its view, does not qualify for compensation, BR might then go on to say what would qualify. On that point the leaflet is wholly silent—there is no reference to the hundreds of millions of pounds of expenditure on reconstructing the line and on upgrading it to make it suitable for channel tunnel trains. There is not a mention of all the alteration, reconstruction and extension that provide the basis for the head of compensation.

In paragraph 6 of the leaflet, BR refers to the need for the householder to demonstrate that his house has been affected by the physical effects of the new public works in a way that depreciates the value of the property. One might have expected British Rail to try to help householders by setting out the physical effects that Parliament had in mind when using that expression. Not a bit of it. The BR leaflet is wholly silent on the point, even though, in the Land Compensation Act, the physical factors are set out well in section 1(2): noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, artificial lighting—they are all there in the legislation. Again, the leaflet remains silent. Perhaps the fact that we received a leaflet at all constitutes a success, but it is a very unsatisfactory leaflet, designed to put people off and give them the least possible encouragement to take advantage of their legal rights.

I urge my right hon. Friend to do two things. First, I know that he is the last person who would want a statement about the legal position, which, in my view, is unsustainable to remain on the record. I hope that, when he has had time to reflect on what I have said, to read *Hansard* and to consult his legal advisers, he will return to the House and make a clear statement about the legal position relating to properties along the designated routes, against the background of the Land Compensation Act. I am sure that

he will want to do that, rather than allowing what he said on 19 June 1991 to stand as the Government's sole observation on the legal aspects of the matter.

Secondly, I ask my right hon. Friend to instruct British Rail to return its first cockshy at a leaflet to the drawing board, and to produce a document that sets out compensation rights fairly and properly. The current leaflet is a pitiful piece of paper. We are talking about the legal rights provided by existing legislation passed by Parliament; it is incumbent on what is still a nationalised industry, answerable to a Government Department, to advise people fully and frankly about their rights. I urge my right hon. Friend to speak firmly to British Rail, and make it issue proper advice.

If those two things are done, we will have gone a long way towards providing an equitable base on which to deal with this important issue, which directly affects a number of properties. Those properties will certainly be affected seriously once the channel tunnel trains start to run. If we take such action, we shall have properly discharged our responsibilities to our constituents.

9.49 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman) *rose——*

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I understand that the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) has given the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) permission to speak.

Mr. Mackinlay: I asked the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for permission to speak, having been given an unexpected opportunity to raise the similar anxieties of my constituents about the blight that the proposed route will cause, and the need for compensation. I agree with everything that he has said: he clearly speaks for all hon. Members whose constituents live on the route. I am grateful to him for relaying to us the detailed opinion given to him by Mr. Gregory Stone, which we shall all want to study thoroughly.

I shall not delay the House too long, because I spoke about the matter in an Adjournment debate on 2 April 1993. However, I hope that the Minister will clarify a couple of points relating to compensation, and to the procedure whereby the House of Commons will give its mandate for the route. The procedure raises the issue of delay, which of course has an effect on blight, which in turn affects compensation.

When I raised the issue in the House on 2 April 1993, the Minister for Transport in London clearly said that the issue would be dealt with as a hybrid Bill. There seems to be some confusion about that, so I should be grateful if the Minister for Public Transport would confirm that it will indeed be dealt with in a hybrid Bill.

If that is so, is it not a fact that the House will not be able to give the Bill a Second Reading until 1995? That is my understanding, as the Wharncliffe rules would apparently apply. By the time we had gone through all the preliminary procedures, the House would not be able to deal with the issue until then, which would compound the blight and anxiety of those who live along the line of route. We need to be told exactly what the ground rules and the procedure will be.

In preparation for my comments this evening, I referred to the Adjournment debate secured on 29 October by the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold). On that occasion, the Minister for Public Transport said:

> "On the question of surface sections of the route, property seriously affected during construction and operation of the rail link, not just that actually required permanently or temporarily, may also be included within the zone safeguarded once the final route has been announced."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 1160.]

In a few weeks, or perhaps days, the Minister will announce the line of route. If it is to be safeguarded, he must say whether constituents who live near it will be able to receive some form of immediate compensation. I believe that blight already exists, but once the route is announced it will certainly increase immediately and become fixed. It would be grossly unfair to wait until Second Reading or Royal Assent to make compensation available.

One other issue needs clarification. In *The Daily Telegraph* of 4 January, I noticed a surprising but nevertheless comprehensive report on a proposal by Central Railways to produce an alternative link route from the midlands, skirting the west of London, passing through central London and leading to the channel tunnel, via, I believe, Croydon, using track parallel to existing routes and tracks ripped up as a result of the Beeching cuts. The report seemed to say that the idea was being given credence by the Department of Transport. I have no objection to that, but one must ask, where is it going to end?

The report suggested that there was private funding, which might mean that compensation would be available sooner to anyone affected by this line of route and that the alternative route might have less impact in terms of property blight. I am surprised that there has been no further utterance from the Department of Transport about that report, and I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to rectify that.

I must acknowledge that the Minister of State has kindly agreed to meet me, representatives of my local authority and the residents involved next week. I therefore do not want to go over old or bitter ground now, because that would not be fair to the House or to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling, who has given us the opportunity to debate this issue tonight. Can we be told, however, whether there will be a hybrid Bill? Is it the case that the House will not be able to begin to deal with this issue until 1995? If that is so, Royal Assent could clearly be as far away as 1997 or 1998.

Once the Minister has announced the protected line of route, will compensation be immediately available to people whose property falls within it? Is Central Railways' proposal under serious consideration, and if so, how shall we decide between these two routes, bearing in mind the procedures for dealing with the matter in the House?

9.54 pm

Sir Keith Speed (Ashford): I shall be brief.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on initiating the debate. He has done a great service to people in Kent, Essex and London who will be affected by the route.

My right hon. Friend the Minister knows more about this matter than probably any Member apart from those with constituency interests. I pay tribute to him for his courtesy, patience and detailed knowledge in acquainting himself with the facts. He has been sympathetic to our representations.

[Sir Keith Speed]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling was right about British Rail's leaflet. We live in the age of the citizens charter, which has been one of the Government's better initiatives in recent months. Under the passengers charter, we are now aware of the reliability and punctuality of services and the fact that, if they fall below a certain level, compensation is payable as of right.

What is missing is a charter for those who are affected by the proposed channel tunnel developments. That lacuna must be filled quickly. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling said, a proper and detailed pamphlet should be made available to those who will be affected for the next 10 years along existing lines, with trains going via Maidstone or Tonbridge from the channel tunnel into Waterloo, and after that by the construction of the new high-speed rail link.

British Rail and the Government could be much more positive. British Rail and, as privatisation proceeds, Railtrack should make positive proposals to ensure that account is taken of the interests of people who are not legally qualified and who are not chartered surveyors, but who know that it is difficult to sell their homes and that they will suffer from the increase in noise on the new railway.

What has happened on lines from London down to Folkestone via Maidstone and Tonbridge is rather like what happens when a trunk road is upgraded to a motorway. In that light, I hope that the Minister will be positive and will ask the British Railways Board, while we still have one, to be as positive as the excellent citizens charter.

9.57 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): May I add my congratulations to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed) to our right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on his positive approach? As I said in an intervention, his specific focus on the legal aspect of the matter has taken us a long way forward. We look for action from British Rail and from my right hon. Friend the Minister on the issue.

Three rail lines run through my constituency that are directly affected by these changes. A number of my constituents are extremely worried because they are unable to sell their homes. The problem will continue over the next few years and, once the lines are used more intensively, long into the future for those who wish to move because of retirement or a change of job.

We all appreciate the frightening situation, and the sleepless nights that people suffer, when their major asset is damaged as deeply as those properties are. It seems to me that, in all equity, quite apart from the compelling legal arguments, it is essential that the House, and the Government that I support, should appreciate the problem, alleviate the difficulties for the individual families affected, and give them the option of finding a way through.

The intensification of use will be of benefit to the whole country, enabling us to be properly linked with the European Community. That is a benefit for Britain, but the result of it is a major disbenefit——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Mr. Wolfson: The individuals concerned suffer a major disbenefit affecting the personal capital asset of their home as a result of a benefit that will accrue to the whole country. It is surely not unreasonable that compensation should be available to those individuals.

I am afraid that the record of compensation in Britain for people whose property has been compulsorily purchased or adversely affected by development is not good. We are mean in providing money for people. That has been true for many years; I have raised the issue many times in the House, and did so in Committee when we were airing the issues on the original channel tunnel legislation. All the evidence suggests that, if we were more generous, public works would be finished faster, and less delay would be caused by objections.

In individual instances, people ask for reasonable protection against the adverse effects of increased use of the lines, such as noise and vibration. Where such protection cannot do the job and the house remains blighted, with its capital value heavily damaged so that it cannot be sold, or can be sold only at a knockdown price, I should feel a great deal more comfortable if people could claim compensation, and British Rail gave them the necessary information to do so. More importantly, the people affected would feel more comfortable, too. Although we return to this issue often, and make such slow progress in resolving it, I hope that tonight we shall see a real move forward.

I emphasise again why we are so concerned and why there is a particular problem with the Kent lines. At least two of the lines in my constituency now have very little traffic, and until recently have had minimal traffic at night, whereas the freight trains will be heavy and noisy, and will roll at night.

That situation is exactly comparable to the problems that people who live near airports suffer—and we have introduced strict controls on night flying. The noise of a railway line is similar to that experienced as an aeroplane takes off or lands, with quiet periods in between. That is more disturbing than the continuous rumble of motorway traffic, yet we are doing nothing for people who face that problem. I have been into people's homes, and they have explained the situation. They do not make that up; it is real, and it is our duty to do something about it.

10.3 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for introducing this subject yet again. He has done a service in allowing us to focus our minds again on the important issue before us, and some progress has been made.

I have no problem at all in accepting the requests that my right hon. Friend has made of the Government: to consider carefully the legal advice which he has received, commissioned by the local authorities, for the Government to reflect with their own legal advisers and, in consultation with British Rail, accepting what my right hon. Friend has laid before the House. That will be done: it will be done promptly and thoroughly.

I also accept the second part of the request, that I should return to the House as promptly as possible with a clarification of the issues. I have absolutely no hesitation

whatever in accepting what my right hon. Friend has said. If he studies the record, my right hon. Friend will be aware that, where there is clear and powerful argument—for example, about the channel tunnel route and the control of fares in the privatised railway, a debate in which my right hon. Friend participated—he will accept that the Government are not unresponsive. Where clear arguments are marshalled and where there is a case to be answered, the Government are not reticent in answering properly and fairly.

Before dealing with the substance of the debate, I shall respond to the points raised by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed), and then deal specifically with the Land Compensation Act 1973.

We shall shortly be making an announcement about the channel tunnel rail link route that it is proposed to safeguard. Of course, that will be only the route chosen for the preparation of the Bill and the seeking of planning permission. That announcement will come at the end of a long, thorough period of consultation—unprecedented for the construction of a new railway line, and, dare I say it, for a new road.

I can confirm that, once the route is safeguarded—the act of safeguarding will follow shortly after the announcement of the route, as there are some legal steps to be taken to safeguard it—a purchase scheme will apply to those houses that will be directly affected by the route. That scheme will affect those houses which will have to be acquired—if not compulsorily, then purchased voluntarily—and those houses which will be substantially affected by construction. There will be a scheme, and Union Railways is funding it so that it is commenced promptly. That is only equitable and fair.

The hon. Member for Thurrock asked me whether it will be a hybrid Bill. It will be. Once an announcement is made of the route, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will ensure that preparations begin promptly to prepare the Bill. We have said that we hope that the Bill will be ready at the commencement of the next Session. However, the timing of its introduction depends not on myself or the Secretary of State for Transport, but on collective consideration by the Government. We have always said that we want the private sector to comment on the Bill. We have made it plain that that does not entail reopening a safeguarded route.

With regard to the Central Railways group, the newspaper to which the hon. Member for Thurrock referred quoted me incorrectly. The Department of Transport does not endorse or promote or support any individual proposition. If the hon. Gentleman has the chance to read the information document which is being circulated in the City to raise money by that group, he will realise that we have issued an even-handed comment on the proposal and indicated the procedures that it must go through before construction can start.

The points raised about the channel tunnel rail link by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling are well founded. I am attracted to the idea of an appropriate stage to ensure that, in plain English, we can convey to those who will be affected by the new route what their rights will be and how they will be affected. For example, there are rights under the voluntary purchase scheme, to which I have just referred, there are blight provisions in the law, compulsory purchase rights, the insulation of properties and availability of compensation, because the provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973 apply to the construction of a new railway line. The suggestion is valuable, and I shall certainly reflect on it.

The main issue concerns the use of the existing railway lines. I am well aware of the problems of those whose properties abut the line. It is not just physical abutment: in the open countryside of Kent and Surrey, although not necessarily in London, the impact of the noise will be felt over a considerable distance. No one denies that. I have gone to listen at night to the effects of the existing passenger trains. No one doubts their effect, let alone that of the freight trains that are to run.

It is important for Ministers and, indeed, officials at the Department of Transport continually to put themselves in the place of a householder whose property will be affected. This is a direct personal matter. Sometimes it can become the most important issue in a person's life and in the affairs of a household.

In answer to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), the Government must proceed with close adherence to the principles of equity, even-handedness, prudence and clarity. I hope that we shall be able to sustain that endeavour in what we seek to achieve over the coming years in relation to the existing lines and the new routes.

Perhaps I could remind the House of what is proposed for this year. By the end of the year, it is envisaged that there will be up to 11 trains in both directions using existing railway lines on their way from Wembley, through which the freight trains will have to pass, to the channel tunnel. That is a maximum of 22 trains per day. They will use either the Maidstone East line or the Tonbridge line.

At night—I am defining night as between 11 pm and 7 am—it is estimated that there will be about five trains in total using the Tonbridge line and four the Maidstone East line. I am attempting not to minimise the problem but to put the matter on the record. On present estimates, it will not be until the year 2005 that the capacity of the tunnel for 35 freight trains a day will be utilised. Of course, the estimate may well change.

We accept my right hon. Friend's understanding and interpretation of the Land Compensation Act 1973. He has drawn attention to the fact that the key provision is section 9(1)(b). His comments and counsel's opinion, which he has read into the record, will be studied carefully. Now that the debate has focused properly and narrowly on this particular issue, it will receive Ministers' close attention.

In past debates, my right hon. Friend has raised the issue of giving the Secretary of State a permissive power. As I recall it, that was the subject of the debate in June 1991. A separate issue concerned introducing an administrative, non-statutory scheme. Now the debate is focused on the existing law and the protection afforded under it to individuals.

British Rail and the Department acknowledge that, under section 9(1)(b), it is open to individuals who believe that they are affected to apply for compensation. That is not the issue, because I certainly accept that as a point of principle. The question is to what extent that applies. There is a question of the information provided to individuals; the leaflet now provided by British Rail was cited. I do not wish to comment on the legal interpretation of the law tonight, and my right hon. Friend was kind enough to invite me to reflect on that, which I shall do.

In the leaflet cited, claims under section 9(1)(b)—I assume that that is the correct reference—prior to 1 April

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

1994 should be made to the British Rail Property Board and after that to Railtrack. That is what the document says. It must be acknowledged that the courts ultimately will interpret the legislation. But there is more to that than merely the Lands Tribunal interpreting a specific provision. British Rail has sought to make a clearer statement of the position, and I shall take on board the criticisms and comments made.

I shall conclude by concentrating on the mitigation measures that have been undertaken. I understand that my right hon. Friend has always concentrated on the property acquisition and compensation for injurious affection issues, rather than the mitigation measures. Nevertheless, they are important.

British Rail has introduced continuously welded rail, which is certainly more environmentally friendly. It has ordered class 92 electric locomotives to haul the freight on existing rail lines. The locomotives are subject to some delay, because the manufacturers have run into problems. I am not blaming the manufacturers. It is a fact that class 92 locomotives will not be running when the channel tunnel opens for freight. Quieter freight wagons will also be used.

The noise barriers which I have looked at will make some difference. Fifty barriers are proposed—30 in Kent, five in Surrey and 15 in Bromley. Those barriers are being erected under arrangements whereby British Rail and the local authority concerned both plan and then finance the construction of them. As for the local authorities concerned, the Department of Transport has provided supplementary credit approval for the local authority share of that programme.

The barriers, which are 2m high, are effective. I have listened to the difference in noise, and the barriers reduce the noise by up to half. It is common practice in France and West Germany, and in other countries, to have noise barriers not only for passenger train noise mitigation but for freight mitigation. That is the situation as far as the barriers are concerned. I hope that other boroughs which are affected will take up the offer made by British Rail to co-operate jointly in the installation of such barriers.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I know that my constituents in that part of Bromley to which my right hon. Friend referred will be extremely pleased to hear what he has said. I must declare an interest, in that the line runs only a few yards from my house. Could my right hon. Friend tell us a little more about the character of the barriers? If they have a noise-dampening effect, that is ideal, but presumably there is a danger that they may have some intrusive environmental effect. Are we talking about concrete barriers, or about trees? Could my right hon. Friend tell us a little more?

Mr. Freeman: The barriers are wooden, and have been appropriately treated. If my hon. Friend or, indeed, any other hon. Members would like to see the Union Railways demonstration barrier at Staplehurst or the barriers erected by rail freight distribution in co-operation with local authorities at other locations—for example, Paddock Wood—we can certainly arrange that.

The barriers are environmentally acceptable, but any barrier is an intrusion. Anyone who has seen the concrete barriers in some continental countries might find them intrusive. Of course, there are ways in which the noise can be mitigated other than by barrier. I have already referred to a number of ways concerning the design of the locomotives, the wagons and the track. Kent county council has a non-statutory programme for insulating isolated properties which are not protected by noise barriers. I welcome that.

In September this year, we hope that it will be possible for rail freight distribution to demonstrate to all Members of Parliament who have constituents whose properties are affected that trains can be run along the route in Kent and Surrey, and in London boroughs, with the new class 92 locomotives and the full weight of the freight wagons. I will ensure that invitations are sent to all those with constituencies that are affected. We will continue to monitor the noise effects of the introduction of the new freight services when they begin to run.

There have been predictions of the noise impact, but it is important to measure the reality against the predictions, and the programme will continue. I re-read both debates, which were fraught and difficult, the first in June 1991 and the second, which I think was in July of the same year. I said at that time that the matter would not go away, and that it would require the attention not only of the Government but of the rail operators until a sensible conclusion was reached.

I believe that what my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling has said tonight will be helpful. It will carry the debate on a stage, and it will focus the minds of those in my Department. Above all, it will focus my mind.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 14 January 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Exports

9.35 am

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the importance of exports to the British economy which was highlighted in debates on the Gracious Speech; welcomes the further initiatives outlined in the Chancellor's Budget Statement; welcomes the initiatives taken by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to improve the marketing of British food and reduce the trade gap in food and agricultural products; supports the work of "Food From Britain" in improving the marketing of United Kingdom produce and, in particular, its new focus on export promotion; recognises that British manufacturers are amongst the more competitive in Europe; and urges continuing Government encouragement for export promotion for the benefit of the economy, employment, growers and processors, and those involved in the important work of export promotion.

I move this motion in a week when a sharp drop in the trade deficit has boosted the prospects for a solid economic recovery in this country.

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): Madam speaker, I spy strangers.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 0, Noes 65.

Division No. 67] **[9.36 am**

AYES

Nil

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Trend and
Mr. James Clappison.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Arbuthnot, James
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Clapham, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cummings, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Fishburn, Dudley
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Madel, Sir David
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Prescott, John
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Soames, Nicholas
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Alexander: I hope that we may now proceed.

I began by explaining to the House the appropriateness of having the debate this week. The provisional figures show that the gap between exports and imports fell from £1,087 million in September to £578 million in October. Imports have fallen, and the value of October's exports —at £10·51 billion—was 2·5 per cent. up on the previous month. Exports outside the EEC are up by 12 per cent. on a year ago.

I pay tribute to the firms, companies and employees who have achieved such figures. I also wish to pay tribute to the economic policies of Her Majesty's Government, which have helped to achieve them. Towards the end of last summer, colleagues from both Houses and I formed the all-party parliamentary group for exports, of which I have the honour to be joint chairman. The object of the group —as of today's motion—is to underline the importance of exports to the British economy, to draw together various aspects of the subject and to see how Government and Parliament can be more proactive in helping to overcome obstacles that prevent this country from achieving an even more successful export performance.

Because the British exporter competes and survives in increasingly competitive markets overseas, sometimes it seems to the outsider—by definition we, as generally full-time parliamentarians, must be regarded as outsiders —that a coherent voice for the exporter is lacking. One asks, is better training the answer? Is the answer to ensure that the Government back up exporters to the extent that those in competitor economies are backed up? Or is a national exporters' council needed, to provide the necessary focus and direction? I shall consider one or two of those options.

I have the honour to serve on the Select Committee on Agriculture. Just before the last election, we produced a short report, entitled "The Trade Gap in Food and Drink". It emphasised the importance of food in the export scene.

We are delighted to have with us this morning the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). We shall listen with interest to his contribution to the debate. I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating him on his personal happiness.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I thank my hon. Friend.

Mr. Alexander: People in other countries enjoy eating Britain's food, and I am certain that they will be happy to consume more. It is good, it is nutritious and it is safe to the highest standards, thanks to recent Government food legislation. We know that; British housewives know that; but our food needs a continuing high standard of marketing, so that people in other countries can be made

[Mr. Alexander]

aware of that and react accordingly. The Select Committee report showed the enormous scope for reducing the gap in food and drink trade.

In crude terms, I suppose that one could say that it is a sprat to catch a mackerel, but the message must be got across.

The motion asks the House to welcome and support the work of Food From Britain, which was set up in 1983 with 60 per cent. of its funding from MAFF and the remaining 40 per cent. from British industry under its own initiatives. The Agriculture Select Committee shared that welcome, but pointed out that the less co-ordinated marketing arrangements in agriculture and the agriculture supply industry often seem to blunt companies' competitive edge.

The Committee also felt that Food From Britain was significantly underfunded in comparison with its European counterparts, and that it should receive £1 from the taxpayer for every £1 from a non-Government source. At present, the figure is £1 for every £3 so received. We can all spend someone else's money better than they can, and the Government must be careful to spend taxpayers' money as prudently as possible, but pound-for-pound support is also favoured by the National Farmers Union.

As hon. Members know, when a Select Committee report is produced, the Government have to respond in a short period. The Government responded to the recommendation. Their comment was that if one goes as far as pound for pound, it will cost £2 million more of taxpayers' money and will take the proportion of Government funding to about 69 per cent., making it higher than what the corresponding organisation receives even in France.

As much of what I shall say this morning asks that our exporters receive equivalent to what exporters receive in other countries, I hope that there may be some scope for compromise. In other words, let us not give more than other countries are giving to their food organisations, but let us give at least what our main competitors are giving.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The hon. Gentleman must be aware that, on Wednesday, there was an Adjourment debate in the House, drawing attention to the difficulties experienced by the Scottish salmon farming industry because of unfair subsidisation by Norway of the Norwegian industry. That has a bad impact on salmon farming in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Does he agree that where others give advantage, we should give at least equal support to our industry?

Mr. Alexander: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comment. I hope that he will be called in the debate to expand on those remarks, but that is very much what I am arguing for, especially when considering food and the possibility for greater exports and for cutting down some of the imports.

I shall conclude this section of my comments about food and Food From Britain by underlining the fact that the current MAFF expenditure plans and statistics show that there has been a healthy increase in the export of food, animal feed and drink in recent years. I welcome that, as I am sure does the House. I have last year's report only, so, as this year's report is likely to be produced in a month's time, I hope that my hon. Freind the Minister will be able to update us on the exact figures and on current thinking on support for Food From Britain. I know that he shares my enthusiasm for the success of Food From Britain.

With my specific interest in agriculture, I have referred in the motion to food, and the remainder of my comments will include food, as it is an important part of the exporting scene. I shall now comment on that exporting scene more generally.

The motion draws attention to the welcome help and further initiatives contained in the recent Budget of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He announced reductions in export credit guarantee premiums for markets in Mexico, India and Turkey. It is important, when we consider what was done in the Budget, that we realise that those reductions come on top of increased cover of £2 billion announced in last year's autumn statement and last year's Budget. The measures recognised that export credit guarantees are crucial for many markets.

I ask the House to share my worry that the Treasury still seems penny-pinching when it considers export credit guarantees. There is some evidence to suggest that it is anxious to cut back on the commitment given on privatisation of the insurance services division of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, known as the national interest facility. Especially, it has decided that business in Kuwait is sufficiently good for that facility to be withdrawn. As a result, business men have to use short-term letters of credit. That is irritating to business men, and I understand that some £32 million of exports could be at risk because of the Treasury's decision.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that issue. I spend a great deal of time in the recesses visiting Qatar, where there is a great demand for British goods. The help given to companies such as British Aerospace, Westland and Thorn-EMI in my constituency is somewhat lax. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been supportive, as has my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. The middle east is important, and my hon. Friend is right to speak about it. I hope that people will pay heed to what he says, because contracts and markets are there to be won by British companies, but they need Government support.

Mr. Alexander: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining what I was about to say about Treasury support. I have the feeling that, by hardening credit terms, the Treasury is in danger of undermining business men's confidence, stability and continuity of cover.

Surely the object of export credit guarantees is not to provide cover as cheaply as possible but to enable business men to export with confidence. Such confidence is often fragile enough, and in the case of Kuwait—my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) gave another example—it is inappropriate to cut the national interest facility commitment given on privatisation.

Prospects for exporters were greatly enhanced by the successful conclusion of the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations on 15 December. That agreement should bring down barriers against our exporters, particularly those who export food, electronics and manufactured goods. It will benefit not just our exporting companies, because it should also bring down prices for consumers, which was partly the object of the exercise in the first place. At long last, the trading practices of

countries against which our exporters compete will go in the face of strengthened new rules on competition, subsidies and dumping. They should be a great improvement on the current GATT rules.

The debate is timely, because it draws attention to the opportunities that the GATT settlement affords, and those opportunities are on top of an already strong export position. We are now the fifth largest exporter of goods and commercial services. We export more per person than the United States of even Japan. I have already paid tribute to the companies that have achieved that and I underline it.

The people who go out and achieve these orders show expertise, determination and hard work, for which they should be thanked. They show those qualities in parts of the world where travelling and subsistence are usually difficult and often dangerous. It is in such difficult markets that such excellent increases in exports have been achieved.

Exports to China more than doubled last year and those to Korea and Japan increased by a third and a fifth respectively. The people who obtain those orders are often young, with young families, and they win those orders at a great deal of personal and family cost. The markets in which they work are often less stable and more demanding than they have ever been.

Given the right encouragement, much of our export-led success can come from the small and medium-sized enterprises, which Britain has in abundance. Future growth in the economy and in employment and exports will come from that source. But because such companies are generally quite small, they must be sensibly linked with export opportunities.

Such small companies do not need brochures and information. In common with hon. Members, companies large and small are awash with information and, like us, they find that much of it is badly targeted. They do not have time to read, review and absorb everything in case some of it may be of use some day. I hope that those who read the report of this debate will take note of the effectiveness of their lobbying of hon. Members.

The small company with export potential will decide that if information is not immediately relevant, it will be ignored. Somehow we must get relevant and topical information to small potential exporters which need it and can use it.

In terms of the small business sector, are the rules restricting the number of subsidised attendances at trade fairs monitored for effectiveness? No one wants to waste money. Big companies will go to trade fairs anyway, but smaller companies need continuing help until they have found their feet in international markets.

I pose another question to which I have no answer. Can the Government do more to encourage smaller firms to export directly and make them aware of the value of exporting? Such smaller firms often rely for basic exports on being sub-contractors and suppliers to larger firms. They should have more easily obtainable advice on such basics as market research on other countries, the availability of finance and how to go about appointing agents or distributors.

Exporters tell me that they regret the passing of the Export Credits Guarantee Department comprehensive short-term bankers guarantee scheme, which gave ⅜ per cent. over base rate discount finance. I understand that that was of great value to small and medium-sized enterprises, which financed their export growth in that way. My plea is for smaller businesses to receive better targeting of information and of financial assistance.

I spoke about the personnel involved in exporting, and what I am about to say does not denigrate in any way many excellent exporters. Because of my interest in the subject, I have received representations from constituents and others that too often there is a lack of professional and specialised training by exporters. A recent Dun and Bradstreet report showed that 38 per cent. of exporters took no outside advice on exporting, and that an amazing 87 per cent. provided no specialised training for their export staff.

The firm of Yvonne Palmer International in Nottingham, which specialises in export personnel, says that while companies are properly prepared to invest in plant and machinery, they are reluctant to invest in personnel who will best produce export sales. It says that they need to be better paid and better trained, and that companies often opt for a recent graduate with no specialised training or experience.

Just because a young man or woman has an honours degree in Spanish does not mean that, by definition or on its own, he or she will make a suitable export sales manager for Mexico or some other Spanish speaking country. To assume that is non-productive and can be damaging, but Yvonne Palmer International tells me that such a pattern is being repeated time and again.

The DTI has recently seconded 100 people from industry to help exporters. So far, so good—that has to be welcomed—but I pose the question to the Government whether perhaps that is just tinkering with the problem, which is much vaster than 100 personnel can possibly cope with, bearing in mind the potential for exports.

In any event, the export strategy of those larger companies, which have released 100 senior personnel to help, must surely be of a different character and pattern from those of companies that have to pioneer new markets, make suitable arrangements and set up agents and distributors. The answer may be for the Government to set up high-level marketing courses for senior, and potentially senior, exporting personnel. They could do that possibly through a national export college, set up and managed under the auspices of the institute of exports.

I am calling not for Government finance, but for co-ordination and training at a very high level. Perhaps the next step might be the formation of a national export council, joining together the experience of exporters, at all levels, who could then decide what specific training would fit the bill. That should not be too difficult a task. The CBI has already established a national manufacturing council. The precedents are there.

There are times and issues in the life of Parliament, and the House of Commons in particular, when party political controversy plays little part in our deliberations. I believe that today's subject is one of them. I have tried to highlight the importance of export markets, particularly food. I have tried to point out the ways in which the industry seeks help, interest and commitments from the Government. If I have succeeded and obtained that, encouraged better opportunities for our exporters and obtained an even greater commitment from Government towards the importance of their work, the debate and the time that we are spending on it today will have been worth while.

10.12 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander). He is a well-known and acknowledged expert, as someone who has taken an interest in exports. I agree strongly with his concluding remarks, that it should not be a matter for hard party political controversy, and that we all have a common interest in trying to provide the conditions and the background against which exporters in this country can prosper in future.

Through his work in the House, the hon. Gentleman has contributed a great deal towards that end, and I think that the whole House is grateful to him for that and for raising the subject today. In my experience, Friday debates are perhaps the most constructive of all in many ways, because people listen to what is said, and the atmosphere is a good deal more conducive to constructive discussion and argument. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Against a background of difficult trading conditions recently, the Government have done quite a bit to try to do what they can to help, but I think that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that more can be done.

From my political perspective, one of the consequences of the Government's policy of adopting a more free market approach is that there is a price to be paid in having a less coherent overall strategy. That is a perfectly legitimate position for the Government to take. I guess that they will argue, and the Secretary of State for Wales is busy writing books, about the global economy. I well understand that there are real challenges in the global economy and all that that means.

I had the privilege of being the guest of the Hong Kong Government for five days in the autumn of last year, and I was astonished at the economic momentum that the Pacific basin has now acquired. There is no doubt that it is easier to do business where tax has a ceiling rate of 15 per cent. The Government must recognise, as I am sure they do, that that puts our manufacturing industry in particular at a severe disadvantage, which we must take account of.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point about the Pacific rim, but does he agree that the Government—of both parties over the years—take a short-term view of where the export interest is? France, Germany and Japan, again in GATT, which I know well, are anticipating gas coming in from new gas fields in 10 years' time. We are still thinking about a job for tomorrow: the rest are seeing it way into the future.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Gentleman tempts me into party political territory.

Mr. Dicks: I did not mean to.

Mr. Kirkwood: He is right. The system that we have evolved, rightly or wrongly, is short-term in a party political sense. If we had coalition government, proportional representation and single-member seats, with all that that brings, we would have a better chance of achieving that. That is true in Germany. I will not develop that thought because of the risk of rupturing the sense of cross-party co-operation in this important debate.

The Government should look at the longer term. We should try to steer them in the direction of getting a more coherent, long-term approach. That would be welcome to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

An important part, too, of refining things in future in a positive way would be an attempt to focus more on manufacturing industry. I perfectly understand that, in their 14 years of office, the Government have paid considerable attention to the service sector. The hon. Member for Newark rightly adverted to the fact that we are the fifth biggest exporter of goods and services. However, the emphasis is probably on service, and that was argued by the Government in their political prospectus. I do not argue against that. We have expertise in the service sector.

From my experience as a Scottish Member, I know that Edinburgh has a good financial base, which does Scotland and the rest of the country a great service. I think that we have ignored the pressures that manufacturing industry has been under in the past few years. That is particularly true, as the hon. Member for Newark mentioned, of the way in which it affects small businesees. When I talk about small businesses, in terms of the Borders of Scotland, I am talking about firms of 10, 12 or perhaps 20 employees at the most.

The United Kingdom has a good system for dealing with bigger companies. The ICIs, the GECs and the rest have a sensible method for dealing with the problems they face. But smaller firms struggle. If we are in a new global economy and are trying to help our export effort, we must pay more attention to manufacturing and try to concentrate as much as we can the scarce available resources in the direction of small businesses.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): The Opposition are fond of saying that we must pay more heed to manufacturing. Throughout the 1980s, Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry paid due heed to the needs of manufacturers. Of course we all know that we must do all we can for the manufacturing industry. When the hon. Gentleman says that we must pay more heed to manufacturing, what does he mean? That is never explained. For the hon. Gentleman just to make that point and then go on to his next point is part of the vacuous argument that we need to do away with.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, as he anticipates the next paragraph of my speech, which refers to an extremely good report on smaller businesses by Professor Bolton in the 1970s. A whole series of recommendations are gathering dust on civil servants' shelves. If the hon. Gentleman is asking me what I would like to do, I would specifically start with recommendation 1. It is a bit out of date, because it was done years ago, and would have to be brought up to date.

The Government should look at the report of the Bolton royal commission into the needs of small businesses. Royal commissions may be a little out of fashion, it might take too long, and there might be a quicker way of doing it, but that is precisely the kind of thing that we should be doing.

Mr. Jenkin: What was the recommendation? If the report is so old and out of date, we can be forgiven for not recalling its recommendations in detail.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Gentleman should go to the Library and read it.

Mr. Jenkin: Tell us.

Mr. Kirkwood: All I am saying is that Governments in previous incarnations paid more attention to the needs of small businesses in the manufacturing sector. The hon. Gentleman asked me what I would recommend, and that is precisely what I would recommend. I do not have time to go into the report's recommendations in detail, but I shall refer to some of them in passing.

I am sure that we all get representations from our constituency saying that the Government have a duty rigorously to monitor the practices of other countries to ensure that they are staying within the rules. There is evidence that some of the rules in the single European market and in GATT are being flouted and side deals are being done in a way that is prejudicial to the interests of our exporters.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Would the hon. Gentleman like to pay tribute to the Department of Trade and Industry for setting up the new compliance unit, which will do exactly what he is suggesting?

Mr. Kirkwood: I was going to do just that. As a Member of Parliament representing a textile area, I was concerned until recently about the breaches committed by China, which was flooding the market with shipments of cashmere garments way over the quotas established under the bilateral deal under GATT. We went to the DTI and, with its assistance, got a mechanism put in place that gave us some assurance that such breaches would be dealt with in future. I think that such breaches are still happening, and I noticed with great interest that the United States took the step of retaliating against China because of the way in which it was dumping, indirectly through places such as Honduras, a lot of Chinese cashmere textiles.

The compliance unit has done a great deal in that direction, but that is only one example, and it had to be specifically requested. The DTI had to go to Europe and get the system put in place. The Government are in a good position to monitor such practices rigorously, and we have to do that through our relations within the European Union.

Probably more than anything else, exporters want from the Government an economic framework that will give them confidence that there will be some economic stability. It is easy to have wish lists and for Opposition parties to ask for them. However, it is important that the Government eliminate uncertainty as much as possible.

In that context, I notice that the pound has been rising steadily; that will have consequences and implications for exporters if it gets out of hand. Although interest rates are lower than they have been for some time, some businesses in my constituency are paying 4 per cent. over base rate, which means that they face relatively high interest rates. That needs urgent attention. The exchange rate has to be set in a way that makes our products more competitive.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kirkwood: I have given way enough, and I have a long speech to make.

An independent central bank that can monitor some of those matters would be in exporters' interests, and I believe that that is being considered. The Government can also help exporters by setting out the rules of trade clearly. The single European market is a great improvement, giving us an opportunity of which I hope our exporters will take advantage. Is enough being done to maximise the opportunity provided by the single market and to police the rules as practised by other countries? My constituency experience leads me to say that we need to open the French and German markets, because efforts are being made in those countries to make it difficult for our exporters to prevail and prosper.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary say something about GATT? Obviously, he will have a direct interest in the agriculture section of GATT, which is important. However, it is also important—if he cannot do anything today, perhaps he will refer the point to his right hon. and hon. Friends in the DTI—that we know more about what exactly has been done to strengthen the textile rules and disciplines within GATT. They have not been properly clarified.

I have been unable to find out what the detailed textile agreement amounts to. Strengthened rules and disciplines are vital to the industry. It would have been sensible to argue for a review period within the phase-out of the multi-fibre arrangement, but that suggestion might not have found favour with other countries within the European Union in negotiating GATT. We must find out what access to third-country markets GATT gives our textile industry.

Will the Minister also say something about how the Government are coping with eastern Europe? The emerging countries of eastern Europe are in a difficult position, and we in the European Union must give them assistance. However, that assistance must be balanced by the fact that, if they get preferential treatment on access, both in agriculture and textiles, once their industries are sorted out that will have severe implications for our industries. I accept that a balance must be struck, and it would be helpful if the Minister could tell us what the Government's thinking is, and useful if he could do it today.

Exporters tell me that they need, in addition to stability and economic certainty, the amount of investment in infrastructure that enables them to compete on equal terms with their opposite numbers, particularly on the continent of Europe. That means having sensible road, rail, air and sea links. That is particularly important for areas such as mine in Scotland, which are that much more remote from the central points of the market within Europe. The key to the European markets for us will be how effective the new channel tunnel, which I welcome, will be in making it easier for my exporters to deliver their goods to the markets they want to serve.

I support what the hon. Member for Newark said about export credit guarantees. The recent improvements are extremely welcome, but they do not go far enough. The Treasury must be put under pressure—I hope that the DTI and the Ministry of Agriculture will continue to do that —to acknowledge and recognise the points made by the hon. Member for Newark. It is difficult for businesses exporting to some of the areas that are not covered to get the export credit guarantees they need.

One of the representations that I most often receive from exporters in my constituency is that they need better assistance for marketing from the Government. That is particularly apposite for agricultural produce. Much has been done, but much more could be done. Scotland is operating a Scottish quality food mark—proposed by the Scottish Office—which is entirely welcome and working well.

Mr. Soames: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to comment on that important point, because I may not be able to do so when I wind up.

I pay tribute to the outstanding work done in Scotland on agricultural quality assurance, which serves as a role model for many other parts of that industry. I was pleased to assist at the launch of a quality assurance scheme for trout farming in Glasgow, and was hugely impressed by the work done there. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will take back to Scotland our appreciation of that work, from which we are doing our best to learn.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful for the Minister's helpful intervention, and I will certainly do as he says.

The hon. Member for Newark mentioned exhibition and trade fair costs. Arrangements in place through local enterprise companies and Scottish Enterprise allow firms to play a larger part in international trade fairs, but more could be done—particularly for agriculture. The quality of Scottish agricultural products should be promoted more vigorously and robustly. The industry has its own part to play in that, but the Government could do more.

The Bolton report referred also to the need for better customer orientation, design technology and training, and for a different attitude towards exporting in manufacturing industry in particular.

I pay tribute to the work done by Scottish Enterprise in the Scottish export assistance scheme. Although it runs well, it, too, could be improved. It allows 50 per cent. of planned export marketing costs to be covered over two years, up to a ceiling of £30,000. However, firms that participate in that scheme are required to pay a 5 per cent. royalty, up to ceiling of twice the assistance they receive. That penalises successful companies, and the scheme should be re-examined.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): In trying to be helpful and to understand what the hon. Gentleman is recommending, perhaps I could ask him to be more specific about the Bolton recommendations that he would like the Government to implement. We are anxious to know the right way forward. If the hon. Gentleman would spend more time speaking about the Bolton report, it would be helpful.

Mr. Kirkwood: I described some of the report's recommendations, such as export assistance schemes of the kind that Scottish Enterprise has developed, which could be further improved and developed. The Scottish export assistance scheme could be enhanced by reducing the amount that must be reimbursed by companies that successfully participate. If the amount on which the royalty is payable were reduced from twice the amount of support extended to one and a half times, or even to only the amount provided, that would encourage more firms to enter the scheme.

South-east Scotland has an export initiative covering the Borders that helps small firms in the way that Bolton recommended. Scottish Borders Enterprise established a scheme that provides support, encouragement and intelligence to help Borders companies with their export activities.

Is it not the case that schemes available to exporters in other countries offer preferential treatment? In Canada, for example, firms in British Columbia can obtain financial support that effectively provides working capital if they win access to export orders—provided that they can prove their manufacturing capacity and financial solvency, and that their customers are creditworthy. That flexible, one-stop shop approach on attractive financial terms could be adopted in this country.

I will conclude with one or two references specific to my constituency. I appreciate that the Minister does not have responsibility for agriculture or for trade and industry north of the border, but the consideration currently being given by the European Union to objective 5b status and funding is crucial to exporters in that region. That is particularly so in terms of infrastructure support and development. The Scottish Office has given stout assistance in trying to achieve eligibility for objective 5b status, and the Government should do all they can to help. I hope that the Minister will relay that sentiment to the appropriate Scottish Office division.

The development of the A1 and A7 and of Eyemouth harbour are sensible infrastructure projects that could be financed in a non-inflationary way, and would help exporters in the Borders.

Mr. Soames: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I spend a good deal of time in that part of the world, and I have long held that Scotland has the best road system in Britain. How would the improvements that he suggests, per pound invested, significantly help the export efforts of Borders companies?

Mr. Kirkwood: The next time that the Minister visits Kelso, I will invite some people to discuss that matter with him over tea at the Ednam House hotel—for which I will pay, if not for the fishing. If the Minister uses the west coast route, travels up the A6, then turns north-east at Carlisle and uses the A7 south of Hawick, he would find himself on a road that he, as an objective man, would consider sub-standard for the requirements of a modern exporting economy. The textile industry sends all its production to the top of the M6 motorway. I appreciate, however, that developing the A1 dualling competes for the scarce resources available for all trunk roads.

Last Friday marked the 25th anniversary of the Waverley rail route closing. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) was on the last night sleeper to run on that line, and played a part in preventing a host of protesters from being incarcerated after they demonstrated against the closure in those bygone days. There is no railway station left in the Borders region, so it must rely on the road network. I am sure that the Minister can be persuaded that longer-term assistance is needed to improve roads in that region.

Much has been done, but more could and should be done in the long term, with particular emphasis on smaller manufacturing businesses. We should examine the constructive incremental steps that could be taken. If the matter were attended to in the way that I suggest, small manufacturers could contribute even more to this country's export efforts than they have been able to do in the recent past.

10.39 am

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): This is an important debate, as other hon. Members have said, because there is no doubt that exporting creates wealth for this country—as does adding value at home and supplying our own markets. The Government have rightly said—and

deeply believe—that farmers, retailers and manufacturers must work together to increase our share of the European and international food markets.

We have heard some interesting suggestions from my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander)—and, to be fair, other hon. Members—about what can be done to encourage small firms to export. There is absolutely no doubt that, in many respects, our small firms are the wealth creators of the future. In my view, they will certainly be the ones to sort out our unemployment difficulties and we must do all that we can to smooth the way for them. That is why I was interested to hear more about the Bolton report. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for referring to that report: it is a document which I shall read with considerable interest myself.

I approach the debate from a slightly different perspective. I hold the view that we should do more to fill our own market with raw materials and added value products and to prevent the importation of food and drink products into Britain by supplying them from our own manufacture. Most food products are highly price sensitive and competition to fill demand for foodstuffs is to be found not only Europe-wide but worldwide. If a few pence can be shaved off the price of an article in a supermarket or shop, housewives, who are canny buyers, will descend on it, recognising that it represents good value.

Within Europe, it is vital that we achieve the same terms and conditions as our partners for production, transportation and processing. We need a level playing field. I know that people do not like that expression, but it is highly illustrative. We need to ensure that we can supply our own markets and go into the markets of our competitors—or, rather, our partners—and it is therefore most important to ensure that the same rules apply throughout Europe and that everyone abides by them. It does not matter how many times we say that: we can go on repeating it. The manufacturers in my constituency with whom I come into contact are above all anxious that they should be subject to the same rules as those that exist elsewhere in Europe.

All too often, we hear that it is easier to do something elsewhere in Europe and that is because the rules that apply here do not apply elsewhere. Let me give an example. I have great respect for my neighbouring farmer. He is a man who embraces the latest technology and does his very best to make ends meet on the farm that he runs. He does a fine job. He recently took a holiday in Spain. Being interested in farming, he was naturally interested in what was going on in the Spanish countryside. He found a Spanish farmer spraying a crop. I cannot give the details of the crop because I do not know them, but my neighbour could tell from the smell what the spray was. When he went to see how the job was progressing, he discovered that the spray operator was wearing no protective clothing and no gloves to protect his hands from the concentrated spray and the tractor had no power take-off guard. In this country, that would have been illegal: if one does not have trained spray operators or a power take-off guard, one can be prosecuted. But it appears that that is not so in Spain.

Mr. Heald: Given the increasing spirit of European co-operation, does my hon. Friend think that it might be helpful if we lent some of our MAFF inspectors to the Spanish and perhaps also to the French and invited some of their inspectors here? Then we could ascertain whether the level playing field for which we all hoped is a reality.

Mr. Marland: That is not a bad suggestion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newark remarked earlier, we recently conducted an inquiry into the preservation of fish stocks. We make great efforts in this country—as they do in Norway and elsewhere—to look after our sea fish stocks. It was put to us that Spain had seven fisheries inspectors——

Mr. Alexander: Fifteen.

Mr. Marland: We were told that the Spanish had 15 fishery inspection officers, all of whom were based in Madrid. We thought it important to go and find out for ourselves precisely what the situation was. Admittedly, it was not quite as bad as we had been led to believe, but none the less that is a fine example of a case in which our European partners do not abide by the same rules as we do.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is a farmer himself and therefore knows a great deal about the business. Of course I accept his strictures about the level playing field—as he knows well because we have discussed the matter regularly. We want our farm labourers and work force to be properly protected and my hon. Friend would be the first person to be furious if a tractor of his did not carry the right protective equipment. But others of our European partners, including Spain, are not wholly developed countries in the sense that we are and the example to which my hon. Friend referred does not represent a competitive factor that affects our trading position in the world. My hon. Friend knows that where the level playing field really matters is in real trade agreements. By building trade and prosperity across the single market, we shall ensure developments in those rather more backward countries, to the benefit of their citizens as well as ours.

Mr. Marland: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention and accept what he says. Nevertheless, it is extremely irritating for a British farmer who is under the impression that we have all signed up to the treaties, that there is a level playing field and that we are living by the same rules, to go on holiday to Spain and find a Spanish farmer spraying crops with no protective clothing and no power take-off guard. I try to talk about such matters from a practical point of view.

Mr. Jenkin: Is not it also a fact that our Health and Safety Executive employs thousands of people all over the country who are engaged in checking not only agricultural businesses but all kinds of business, whereas the French equivalent employs only a few hundred people, who are all based in Paris and who do not travel around a great deal? Is not there a danger in constantly invoking the level playing field and allowing others—particularly European Community institutions—to do the same? By doing that, we simply give a pretext for endless Government intervention and regulation, which we, in our decency, always implement to the letter, but which other countries have absolutely no intention of implementing. Is not the level playing field a concept of which we should become a little more suspicious? Would not we be better off doing more of our own thing and making more of our own laws, with accountability to this House, rather than letting the institutions of the European Community dictate endlessly to us?

Mr. Marland: I undserstand my hon. Friend's point. That is why I responded so warmly to the suggestion of my

[Mr. Marland]

hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) that it might not be a bad idea for us to lend some of our inspectors to our Spanish friends and see how things developed from there.

My next point concerns slaughterhouses. I have two modern slaughterhouses in my constituency. One of them has spent considerable sums on upgrading its premises and the other is in the process of doing so. I have been on a very interesting tour of one of them and have corresponded with the other. On my tour, I was shown the way in which the operators—the men who cut up the animals—have to wash their hands. The House may think that that is a pretty straightforward operation. In an operating theatre, where human beings are being dealt with, it is, indeed, a straightforward operation: one uses elbow taps. We have such taps in the facilities—if I may call them that—in the Lobbies. But one is not allowed to use elbow taps in slaughterhouses—certainly not in Gloucestershire. One has to use a foot or knee tap, which is much more expensive to install and adds substantially to the cost of modernising a slaughterhouse. Yet I understand from an hon. Member who has a cottage in France that the farmer next door to him kills sheep on the farm, virtually with his own hands. When asked about the regulations governing hygiene and slaughter and the duty of care, that French farmer shrugged his shoulders, knocked the ash off his cigarette and said, "These rules are only for the English."

There is some irritation among medium-sized slaughterers in this country about the derogation for small slaughterhouses, which now permits more animals to be slaughtered without the slaughterhouse having to be brought up to EC standards. That is contrary to what they were originally told.

There is substantial duplication of inspection when animals go for slaughter. A slaughterhouse in my constituency is spending between £28,000 and £30,000 a year on ante-mortem inspection. Its animals are often bought at the stock market in Gloucester, where the sale of stock is supervised not only by a vet but by the RSPCA and a local animal health officer. I question whether it is necessary to have so much inspection, which all costs money and makes it more expensive and more difficult for our slaughterers to compete with imports and more expensive for them to export.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, we rightly react positively to health scares. We do not want our citizens to be poisoned by food produced in this country or injured on the farm because there is no power take-off guard on a tractor.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food responded positively to the incidence of lead in cattle feed and of salmonella in eggs. Many would say that there was overkill because enormous numbers of laying hens were slaughtered, but what happened to the eggs? Some egg retailers simply imported eggs from abroad. Eggs from Poland were repacked here and labelled "Packed in England" to reassure buyers that they were salmonella-free. When we asked continuously why eggs could not be tested at the point of importation, we were told that they would have been consumed by the time that the results were known. There is no level playing field for many British producers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark and I are members of the Select Committee on Agriculture, which is currently looking into the chicken industry, the vaccination of broiler chickens and how quickly vaccines are cleared by the Ministry so that they can be used on United Kingdom stock. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that the process is quite slow. In some cases, our producers are disadvantaged by not being allowed to use vaccines, but our friends in Europe use them and we import chicken meat that has been treated with vaccines which our farmers are not allowed to use. There are many examples of there not being a level playing field for exports and imports in Europe.

The United Kingdom imposes rigorous animal welfare standards, with which I do not argue, for pigs, battery cages for chickens and livestock transportation. The Ministry of Agriculture and my hon. Friend the Minister should get due recognition for their diligent and caring approach.

Farmers are concerned about the new ear tags for cattle. Today a cow's ear tag has five digits. It needs to be quite large so that farmers can read the numbers without too much difficulty, but under EC regulation it must have 15 digits. Can hon. Members imagine the size of the tag in the animal's ear if the farmer is going to be able to read it without difficulty? Many farmers, like Members of Parliament, are short-sighted and would have difficulty reading such a tag. Some attention should be paid to the fact that ear tags must not be too uncomfortable for animals.

Does better animal welfare increase sales? Do happy pigs encourage more housewives to buy their pork? I wonder. The RSPCA told the latest sitting of the Select Committee that free-range eggs and eggs produced by happy chickens will sell more than those produced in a battery. I am not sure about that and I do not have much respect for the way in which the RSPCA is treating many Members of Parliament, who are seeking to do what we can to improve the welfare of animals. I disapprove of its recent advertising, which showed some pretty repulsive sights.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the crucial point of animal welfare at transport. He and I wish to see our high standards applied across Europe and I endorse his point about the level playing field. Does he agree that the RSPCA should spend its time worrying not about what we think, because we have led animal welfare in Europe, but about what is happening in Spain, France, Italy and the southern Community states? It should devote its attention to that instead of sucking up to its supporters in big advertising campaigns which imply that animal welfare is bad in this country. It is of a high order and we need to see a dramatic improvement across Europe if there is to be a level playing field.

Mr. Marland: I am not terribly happy with that intervention. My hon. Friend has filched my next point.

Mr. Soames: Sorry.

Mr. Marland: That is all right, but he should be more careful in future.

I was going to mention ritual slaughter. There was an embarrassed silence in the Committee when that was mentioned. What does the RSPCA do to prevent ritual slaughter in this country and elsewhere? The answer is nothing. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, it spends too

much time sucking up to its own members to try to justify its own existence. It should tackle problems that are a great deal more difficult rather than having a go at hon. Members, who are on its side.

Mr. Jenkin: Is my hon. Friend aware that the requirement to allow the live transportation of animals is damaging the reputation of British food producers by allowing diseased animals into this country? In areas surrounding and within my constituency, pig blue ear disease has re-emerged as a problem as a result of the transportation of live animals.

Mr. Marland: I must be more careful about giving way so readily—I was coming to that myself.

We are proud of the high quality of our livestock. We export much pedigree livestock—race horses, breeding stock and dogs. Britain has a fine reputation for high-quality livestock. It is most important that we seek to maintain and, where possible, improve on those standards.

What can the Government do to seek to maintain the high standards of livestock in this country? As my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) said, there is evidence that we are importing diseases. We appear to be doing so from Europe—I suspect from eastern Europe. An in-calf heifer in eastern Europe costs £100, but in Gloucester market it sells for £1,500. I have an auction catalogue from Gloucester market. Twelve French Hostein Friesians—it says that they are French and I have no reason to doubt it; they were definitely imported—and 15 six-month-old Dutch-bred Holstein Friesian calves were being auctioned. We do not know where they were treated or whether there was any relevant information in their accompanying documents, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North said, disease is being imported and it causes substantial difficulties for our farmers. If there is an outbreak of disease, who pays?

I have details of a recent warble fly outbreak near Stroud which was traced to imported cattle that had not been dressed against warble fly. All cattle within three miles of the outbreak had to be treated. In total, 34 farmers had to treat their cattle. It cost one farmer more than £500, but who pays? In the end, of course, farmers have to pay, but they are not happy about it because it adds to their costs. If the problem is caused by careless importation or careless categorisation of cattle, action should be taken. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of the issue because my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has spoken about it—more power to her elbow for doing so.

Tuberculosis in badgers is also a problem in some parts of the country. I again pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for his efforts to devise and improve trapping techniques for badgers. Badgers spread tuberculosis to cattle and if infected badgers are found on a farm that farm is "shut up". The farmer is unable to sell his produce because of the possibility of tuberculosis in the stock. I know that my hon. Friend is aware of the problem and is doing something about it. I am sure that all my hon. Friends will be delighted to know that he has received many compliments in Gloucestershire and the west country for his efforts, and I thank him, too.

I deal now with the vexed question of milk marketing at home and, one hopes, abroad. Even if we are not self-sufficient in milk, which we are not, there is no reason why a well-run milk industry should not be able to maximise business at home and export at the top end of added value products, which is what we produce. That is how wealth is created—one adds value and tries to sell added value products abroad so that one imports only low value added products. That leads to a positive balance of trade with our partners in Europe and further afield.

Changes are taking place, but they engender concern and that is nowhere more evident than in the reorganisation of the milk marketing boards and Milk Marque. The farmers and processors need to work together, but things are not going too well. I compliment my hon. Friend the Minister on his Department's handling of the consultative process involving the milk marketing board's proposals and its willingness to continue the consultation even when things are not going as smoothly as they might.

The milk marketing board has gone back to the drawing board. The Department's willingness to continue to listen to farmers and other interested parties is much appreciated. My hon. Friend has acted prudently in taking heed of the key issues raised by those who responded during the consultation because they realise that their efforts have not been in vain. They realise that the Government listen to what people have to say and the Government are getting the credit that they deserve.

No one wants to see 60 years of the milk marketing board or 50 years of local farmers supplying, for example, the Cotteswold dairy in Tewkesbury, which I recently had the privilege of visiting, overturned in five minutes.

Mr. Jenkin: It is a good dairy.

Mr. Marland: It is indeed a good dairy. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. I am sure that the directors of the Cotteswold dairy will be pleased to know that the dairy has another supporter in the House. It is only one example and I am sure that there are many other local dairies that hon. Members could mention. If they wish to do so, I should be happy to give way. One cannot overturn 50 years of tradition and successful trading merely because the milk marketing board is about to change its role slightly. We must handle the change with kid gloves.

It has not been easy for my hon. Friend and his colleagues to send back the milk marketing board's proposals for further consideration. It would have been easier for them to approve the scheme submitted by the milk marketing board and leave it to be sorted out by the competition authorities and the European Commission. After two years of Milk Marque, the European Commission will hold a review and sort out any problems. It would have been much easier for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to have left it to other authorities to deal with the matter, but my right hon. Friend the Minister is to careful and too good a Minister to walk away and leave things in an unsatisfactory state; and a jolly good thing, too.

Leaving the problem to others would have led to Milk Marque being undermined by the competition authorities just as the milk marketing board has been, which would have further undermined the United Kingdom dairy industry. It would also have shaken the industry's confidence, made it less easy to fulfil the home market and probably made it more difficult to export high value added products, which is what we want to achieve. Any other course of action by the Ministry would not have been in the interests of the producers, processors or consumers of milk.

[Mr. Marland]

A few of my constituents who are milk producers think that Milk Marque should be able to take all that it can unto itself and to blazes with everyone else. I am trying to do my best to persuade them to take a more realistic view of life and to explain that that is not how it will work out. I hope that I am winning.

However, the main concern about the milk marketing board's proposals is that those involved want more openness. They want Milk Marque to talk straight and not to try to steal a march on them. They need to know exactly what they are dealing with to ensure a smooth relationship. They want a far less complicated selling and allocation system for milk than that being proposed by the milk marketing board, which has different levels of service and supply and a range of price options about which little detailed information is available. Milk Marque has also been trying to bounce processors into early contracts, which is thoroughly unsatisfactory.

Milk Marque must state the price that it wants for a steady supply of milk rather than try to coerce processors into a range of price and service alternatives. It is highly likely that Milk Marque will get up to 75 per cent. of the milk from farms and it must act responsibly. The whole point of the changes is to free the market and if Milk Marque tries to keep all that milk to itself, we shall not get very far. If Milk Marque is behaving in this way even before the game has started, I do not hold out much hope for the future.

We are not dealing only with the short term. Producers need processors who in turn need customers in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. They should have a smooth business relationship, not one in which one party tries to hold the other to ransom. Anyone who is or has been involved in business knows that it is a partnership. There is always a tomorrow and one needs a smooth relationship with a satisfied customer. Everyone must make an effort to fulfil his part of the bargain.

There is also concern about the milk marketing board's proposals for haulage. The processors do not want the single option of milk at a delivered price. Many have large fleets of vehicles that they want to use not only for themselves——

Mr. Kirkwood: They want to export.

Mr. Marland: Perhaps they want to use them for export, but they also want to reduce the costs of operating their vehicles. It is important that they should have the opportunity to do so. If the processors want a delivered price from Milk Marque, that is fair enough, but if they want the option of collecting the milk themselves, it should undoubtedly be available to them.

We should also consider traceability. In today's world of "duty of care", it is important that the processors should know precisely where the milk has come from and that it has been tested by their own standards, because if they are held accountable, they must be allowed to know where the milk has come from. It is blurring the issue to say that they would test the milk and that it would all be delivered in good order. I am sure that it would be, but the processors want to know precisely what has happened to the milk.

We should consider the distribution of assets of the milk marketing boards, too, as my right hon. Friend the Minister has already recognised.

Mr. Kirkwood *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Marland: If the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire wants to intervene, he should do so. However, I wish that he would shut up quibbling.

Mr. Kirkwood: The matters that the hon. Gentleman is raising are important, but I am struggling to work out what Milk Marque and the milk marketing boards have got to do with the exportation of milk.

Mr. Marland: I want to see the processors and the value-adders in a position to sell high-value products abroad. They need the raw material and Milk Marque is seeking to hedge round its supply of milk to the processors. Does the hon. Gentleman understand the point that I am trying to make? It is straying a bit far from exports——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We cannot have semi-private conversations between two Members.

Mr. Marland: Between us, I think that we have made the point and sorted it out. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It must be ensured that the distribution of assets is fair and reasonable to all concerned. The distribution of assets applies not only to any accumulated cash that the milk marketing boards may be holding on behalf of their members, but to any future value to milk producers in enterprises such as GENUS and national milk records. Although it is widely put about that those two enterprises have no value today, who knows what could develop in the hands of an upwardly mobile company?

Concern has also been voiced about the possibility of Milk Marque seeking to get back into milk manufacturing. If that co-operative collects 75 per cent. of the nation's milk, the temptation to return to manufacturing could be more than Milk Marque would be able to resist. We must make absolutely sure that that is not allowed to happen, because if it does, we shall be back to square one and the present situation with the milk marketing board.

Obviously, there is concern among farmers, manufacturers, and the boards' employees and shareholders, as well as their customers, about what the future holds. Certainly, there is disappointment that the original vesting day of 1 April will not now be achieved. I hope that 1 July, the next date that those involved have in their sights, will be achieved. The milk marketing board has been a little naughty in trying to gather for itself more than it should have done and has tried to corner the market before the game has started. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister has sympathy with that view.

The question of a regulator was widely discussed in Committee. I ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to pass on to our right hon. Friend the Minister the fact that there is great concern in the market and that the appointment of a regulator for the first two years of operation of Milk Marque would be a great help. Sir Terence Beckett is the present regulator and I understand that it would be acceptable to all concerned if he were asked to stay on for a further two years if he would do so. I wish my hon. Friend on the Front Bench and his partners in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the best of luck in sorting out that difficult situation and I hope that some of my remarks may find favour with them.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, my constituency covers the royal forest of Dean. There are opportunities in

forestry for us to export timber as well as import it if we have a proper, well-run forestry industry, although we are big importers. I am not saying that we do not have a well-run industry, but there are opportunities for more domestic production, which would be a big import saver. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary is aware that the forestry review group, which was set up by his Department, has been asked to examine three aspects of forestry in Britain: timber production, environmental impact and recreation.

First, how efficient is timber production? Can it be improved or increased or can more value be added to the raw timber produced so that we can have more success in exporting value-added products?

Mr. Kirkwood *indicated assent.*

Mr. Marland: I am glad that there are nods of assent from the Opposition Benches. Any Government should ask their various Departments to consider the way in which they are operating to see whether they are functioning as efficiently as they can. We should ensure that the Forestry Commission is run as efficiently as possible.

Secondly, the environmental impact of some of the large, dark blocks of Forestry Commission land with acres and acres of conifer trees is not a pretty sight in some parts of the country. That should also be considered. The felling and replanting of forestry land should be done as aesthetically as possible. Are those who currently run our forests doing what they can to support bird and flower life? In the royal forest of Dean we have verderers, whose important duty it is to look after the flora and fauna and deer there. I am pleased that my noble and learned Friend in another place has recently dicussed with the verderers whether matters are satisfactory and whether there was any threat to the future of the royal forest of Dean from the forestry review group.

Perhaps the most controversial of the aspects which the review group has been asked to consider is recreation. That is important to the public and I know that many hon. Members share my view. It is important that we should take account of the thousands of people who enjoy the freedom to roam, cycle, bird watch, have picnics, go camping or whatever else people do in the estate of the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission is good at encouraging such activities. It has extremely well-organised camp sites and picnic sites in my constituency which are all beautifully signposted. It has built barbecue pits and has taken a great deal of trouble and time to ensure that its visitors are well looked after. There is immense support throughout the country for the activities of the Forestry Commission and it is widely respected. Two local employees of the Forestry Commission in the forest of Dean were recognised in the recent honours list for their work for the organisation and I am happy to pay tribute to that work and to them.

Since 1981, the Forestry Commission has been empowered to sell standing timber. There is considerable concern among many of my constituents that when the Forestry Commission sells off part of its estate, the freedom to roam and that access will be denied by the new owners. I know that that concern has been registered with my hon. Friend and I hope that when the review group reports, some attention will paid to that. I have no argument with the Forestry Commission standing on its feet. It is, after all, a £3 billion enterprise.

I must once again draw hon. Members' attention to the forest of Dean, whose unique status was recognised by the House in 1981. The legislation passed to enable the Forestry Commission to sell off standing timber also stated that it could not sell any part of the ancient forest of Dean and I am anxious that that should remain the case. In fact, I put it on the record that I have not been sent here by my constituents to see the Government privatise the royal forest of Dean and I shall not stand by and let it happen. I am anxious that there should be no misunderstanding, so I shall repeat that: I have not been sent here by my constituents to see the Government privatise the royal forest of Dean. I worked hard to ensure that the uniqueness of the forest was recognised and to get the Forestry Act 1981 passed and I warn my hon. Friend the Minister that if the Government ever seek to privatise the forest, or to go back on that commitment, I shall be left with no alternative but to fight them tooth and nail——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Could the hon. Member enlighten me as to how that relates in any way to exports?

Mr. Marland: I keep emphasising, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, that I feel that a well run—*[Laughter.]*—industry can add to our opportunities to export timber and dairy products. Perhaps, in the interests of greater efficiency, some tightening up of the way in which the Forestry Commission is managed may be necessary, but it is my earnest hope that the forestry review group will recommend that the maintenance of the status quo is the right way forward. I know that I am not alone in that aspiration because many other hon. Members in the House—*[Laughter.]*—and their constituents share that view——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This reminds me of my teaching days, when small boys dissolved in helpless giggles. I thought that we had moved on from there, but evidently not.

Mr. Marland: You will be very pleased to hear, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we are moving on now. I shall turn more directly to the subject of exports and the Department of Trade and Industry. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary and I spend as much time as possible in the countryside. We know that two professions have done more than any other to care for it—the farmers and the metal recyclers, who have been around longer and done much more for conservation than the present group of trendy, woolly hatted environmentalists. Fair enough, metal recyclers have made money out of stopping the dumping of old cars in ditches, but so have farmers. The export of processed metal, in the form of furnace feed, is now big business for the United Kingdom, but there is a cloud on the horizon which may inhibit the trade's development. I am bringing that to my hon. Friends attention so that he can pass it on to his opposite number in the Department of Trade and Industry.

The export of furnace feed from the United Kingdom is big business and represented the movement of about 4 million tonnes of material last year, which brought in foreign currency to the value of about £300 million. There are no controls on the export of furnace feed from the European Community to third countries, but the fact that the material has been wrongly catalogued by Customs and Excise as waste has led to a serious threat to the business.

[Mr. Marland]

Since the mid-1980s, many countries have become aware of the disposal of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries, which is often done in dubious circumstances. While companies engaged in that activity usually operate outside the law, their activities have focused minds—not least those of members of Greenpeace—on the problems of hazardous waste disposal. Much more attention is now paid to any cargo classified as waste, whether hazardous or not.

The Basel convention has dealt with the problem and drafted rules for the disposal of hazardous waste, especially waste that crosses international borders. The convention also sought to distinguish between hazardous and non-hazardous wastes such as furnace feed. However, even for non-hazardous waste, the bureaucracy is horrendous. The likely administrative and bureaucratic delays could cause serious interference in legitimate trade in that material. This country is a signatory to the Basel convention and the rules are generally a sensible precaution when applied to hazardous material, but they can be a nightmare when applied to non-hazardous wastes. As Greenpeace is having trouble distinguishing between hazardous and non-hazardous cargoes because they are simply labelled as waste, it also sometimes causes unnecessary difficulties.

The European Community is trying to frame rules to control the trans-frontier shipment of waste, but while it is doing so I urge my hon. Friend to persuade the Department of Trade and Industry to note the anomalies that are being created, which may damage the trade in recyclable material.

On the subject of exports—you will be relieved to hear that, Madam Deputy Speaker—of reusable materials, I refer to the trade in second-hand clothing, which is an astonishing business and is one that is worthwhile in every aspect. Quite apart from the admirable thrift of the business, it saves natural resources. The textile and clothing recyclers work hand in hand with many charities. The industry is labour intensive and employs many people, some of whom would have a hard task finding work elsewhere. The industry supplies many people in this country with inexpensive clothing, often through car boot sales or market stalls. It supplies textile wiping cloths to industry and a huge amount of raw material for furniture filling, carpet underlay, insulation, blankets and even car dashboards. The advantage of the material is that it does not burn readily or give off noxious gases when it does burn, so hon. Members will realise how popular it is and how responsible it is of furniture manufacturers to use the material to stuff cushions and the backs of their comfortable furniture.

However, third-world countries are the main source of sales for sorted reusable clothing. They buy such goods from this country by the container load and it is a valuable trade, but there is an alarming development. Elsewhere in Europe, certain charities are trying to block such exports by arguing that they harm the economy of the importing country. Informed opinion shows that nothing could be further from the truth. The inhabitants of third-world countries are desperate for the clothing. That is not a problem for United Kingdom textile exporters at present, but I want to make my hon. Friend aware of the problem in case it develops here, too. I hope that he will pass on the information to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Soames: I will.

Mr. Marland: I thank my hon. Friend.

I accept that I have made a diverse speech on agriculture and exporting. I earnestly hope that some of what I have said will be heard in the higher echelons of Government and that my hon. Friend the Minister will pass on the messages that I have sought to give him.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on a matter that I consider to be very important. Will you bear with me while I try to explain a little? As we heard yesterday, the auditor has made a statement about his findings concerning Westminster city council. During his statement he made it quite clear that, under section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, criminal sanctions are applied to anyone who received or discloses information or the full report, which was given to certain named people. I also gather that a case which has a grave bearing on the matter—Bookbinder *v.* Tebbit—made clear what is meant by the statement in section 30(1)(a) of the Act, which clearly states that no information shall be disclosed except

"with the consent of the body or person to whom the information relates".

That case made it clear that it is not sufficient for one person alone to give permission to release information, but that everyone concerned must give their permission. I understand that members of the Press Gallery have received copies of the full report and perhaps others have as well. I consider that to be a criminal breach and I ask you for your guidance and recommendation, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The duties of the Chair may be onerous, but they do not extend to a definitive interpretation of the laws of the land. If the hon. Member seeks that, I am quite sure that the serried ranks of barristers will be only too happy to give him an opinion. As he will know, the ultimate authority is the court.

Mr. Jenkin: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There can be no further point of order. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Jenkin: It is a separate point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have to be ingenious.

Mr. Jenkin: As a result of the auditor's statement yesterday, widespread press coverage has been given to his allegations. They remain only allegations at this stage, however, and they do not constitute a comprehensive accusation. He has said only that he is minded to bring criminal proceedings. He specifically says that he has not cast any doubt on the characters of those named in his report.

Given that some of the press coverage is reporting those allegations as though they were a judgment made against the people named, may I ask for your guidance, Madam

Deputy Speaker? Would it be appropriate to ask the Attorney-General to make a statement about the unfair reporting of those allegations and the likely miscarriage of justice that may occur because of the unfair coverage?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, but it is not a matter in which the Chair can interfere.

11.31 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesborough): I will refrain from commenting on those points of order, although the Opposition would welcome an appearance by the Attorney-General so that we could have a short debate on the auditor's report.

I greatly enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), just as I enjoyed his speech on insider trading the other night. On that occasion he gained the respect of the House with a forthright and incisive intervention on Lloyd's. Today, his speech ranged far and wide in relation to the trade gap in food and agricultural products. It was nice to note, however, that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave a commitment, from a sedentary position, that the royal forest of Dean would not be privatised by the Government. I assure the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West that, in the event of a Labour Government, we would not export the forest. We would ensure that it stays where it is, in comfort, so that it can give pleasure to his constituents and many others for years to come.

The hon. Gentleman made an important and valid point about import penetration in relation to food and drink. That is the other side of the coin from exports, but it is all part of the balance when one talks about exports and their value. The hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) said that exports were worth £10·2 billion last month, but their value must be compared with the level of import penetration.

The hon. Gentleman referred a great deal to the level playing field, aided and abetted by the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). I take the view that the level playing field is nothing short of a literary allusion, and that in terms of economics it is a delusion. I shall elaborate on that later. The Minister did say, however, that he had taken on board the strictures of his hon. Friends about that level playing field.

The hon. Member for Newark has rendered a service to the House by having this debate today. Friday debates are sometimes better than those during the rest of the week. Lloyd George made his name in the House during such debates. I tend to think that they are of a better standard because they are able to range far and wide, in a spirit of objectivity rather than combativity.

The hon. Member for Newark made an interesting point about the hours worked by exporters. I remember talking to one major exporter who said that the test of the great exporter is whether he decides to take up the chance to do business in China on 23 December. That exporter must decide whether to leave Britain for a meeting on 23 and 24 December and to stay for a further 10 days to conduct further negotiations. That expample reminds me of the younger members of my party who come to me and say that they want to get on in politics. I reply, "Would you like to address the North Shields Fabian Society on 24 December?" Judging from the response, I can decide whether those people are serious in their intent. The business man to whom I referred decided to go to China on 23 December and spent 10 days there. He won a major contract and was told that he may be invited back there next year, at the same time. The hon. Member for Newark was perfectly right to refer to the hours worked by exporters, because they are the people who make it all possible.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the statement in the Budget that further reductions will be made in the export credit guarantee premium. The Department of Trade and Industry was right to vaunt that Budget statement. The President of the Board of Trade was able to obtain so-called substantial reductions only for a limited number of markets in Argentina, India, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey. He was unable to offer the same reductions in premiums for China and the Pacific rim, of which we have heard a great deal today, or for Malaysia, to which the Prime Minister recently led a delegation. The premiums should be reduced for those markets, because we need to compete with our French and German counterparts. No doubt there will be further discussion of that today.

It is true that the Budget offered cover of £3·2 billion for 1996-97 on export credit guarantees for the so-called amber zone markets, covering China, Malaysia, South Africa and Indonesia. We need to do more, however, for our exporters through those export credit guarantees.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) mentioned his concern about the GATT rules on the textile trade and how they will develop. The accord reached in Geneva before Christmas is the first step along the highway of trade, because bilateral discussions between the European Union and the United States, within the framework of GATT, must be concluded to reach agreement on subsidies for civil aircraft. That is a matter of interest to all our civil aircraft manufacturers. Negotiations will also be conducted on financial services, including those connected with Japan, and on labour services, shipping and basic telecommunications. It is clear that the GATT round is far from complete.

The endorsement reached before Christmas was important, but negotiations are still continuing within the old GATT round. The new World Trade Organisation, which will come out of those negotiations, has still to have its structures and membership defined and its work programme agreed to. It must also agree a new programme to initiate negotiations on conformity in relation to common standards for professional services, beginning with accountancy. The endorsement reached before Christmas is just one stage of a lengthy process, because the implementation of the new tariffs will not come into effect before July 1995.

This is the first time I have appeared at the Dispatch Box opposite the Minister. It is always a pleasure to see him. In times gone by we shared a flight from Paris to London. I must tell the House that I am a little dubious about the invitation offered by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire to the Minister. We shared that flight, but we had separate seats. We did not hold hands on the aeroplane——

Mr. Soames: Or when we got off.

Mr. Bell: No, we kept away from each other. Although I am happy to see the hon. Gentleman here, I am sorry that the Minister for Trade is not present, although he has

[Mr. Bell]

explained why he cannot be here and his reasons are perfectly acceptable. I am sorry that he is not here because he has a good tale to tell on exports. He has played a significant role in the past 18 months and I am grateful to him for letting me see his Department's programmes and how the Department is working. He has shown me a great deal of work on partnership with exporters: how exporters face the challenge of global world trade and the opening up of markets as far away as China, his rolling business plans, his market-by-market approach, his "Priority Japan" campaign, and his north American campaign. Those are all significant programmes. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that we can always do better in exports, and we must do better.

I am sure that the House also misses the presence of the former Minister for Trade, Mr. Alan Clark. Those of us who followed his career and read his diaries with interest know that he was Minister for Trade for some time. I read in his diaries that at one stage he visited Bulgaria to boost exports. He saw a set of garden cane furniture that he liked, bought it for $270 and had it shipped to England. Although that was a great boost to the Bulgarian export trade, I am not sure what he did for British exports on that trip. However, the Bulgarians were happy with him and delivered the furniture to his castle home in Kent. We can thus see that Ministers for Trade work hard on foreign missions.

Mr. Jenkin: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's amusing story, but does it not contain the kernel of a much more serious point? It is in our interest, and that of Europe as a whole, to import from eastern Europe. Is it not more important to work hard to open up trade between eastern and western Europe than to allow the European Community to remain a protectionist fortress so far as eastern European economies are concerned? It will be impossible to stabilise politics in eastern European countries unless they can develop their economies by exporting their much cheaper goods to us.

Mr. Bell: That is an interesting point. It touches on the point made by the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West, who made an important speech on behalf of his constituents. As the hon. Member for Colchester, North said, products from eastern Europe are cheaper than ours. We therefore have to explain to our constituents why cheap steel and other products are flooding into Europe from the east and doing down our export programme.

Three points can be made in answer to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, although it is always a mistake to say that there are three points because one invariably forgets the third. The third point is that the hon. Gentleman referred to the "European Community" rather than the European Union. There are two ways to proceed in relation to eastern Europe: first, to invest in those countries to develop their economies; secondly, in so doing, to open our own markets to their products.

As the hon. Gentleman implied, we are moving in an area of trade blocks: the European Union, the so-called "Pacific rim", and now the American free trade area. There is therefore a danger of those three trade blocks developing and becoming protectionist. I hope that I have responded to the hon. Gentleman on that important point.

Not surprisingly, until recently, under the Administration of the past few years, neither exporting nor manufacturing has been particularly valued. Exporters have told me and many others that Government policy was working against their interests. Export credit premiums were increasing and cover was becoming harder to obtain. The pound was also overvalued in the exchange rate mechanism, which had a serious impact on our exports.

We have welcomed the change in emphasis in the past 18 months and the fact that the Government have accepted not only the Opposition's criticism but many of the policies that we would have carried out. But however hard the Department of Trade and Industry works, and however well meaning it is, the influence of the Treasury looms over the Department. The hon. Member for Newark discussed exports to Kuwait and said that the Treasury was in danger of undermining the confidence and stability of exporters, and we endorse that significant point.

The Treasury has recognised its shortcomings in that area and announced before Christmas that it sought to reorganise itself by setting up a new directorate to handle policies affecting industry, including education and employment. Although that will be useful, it does not deal with the main question that has come from a centralising Government who, over the years, centralised themselves in the Treasury.

We had a chance to do a lot of reading in the recess and read all the memoirs, diaries and autobiographies. In his autobiography on the so-called Thatcher years, Lord Lawson vaunted the accretion of power to the Treasury, but that power is so extensive that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury can have a view on whether angling certificates should be issued by post offices. We therefore see that the Treasury has extended its influence and authority into every Government Department.

We welcomed the visit of the President of the Board of Trade to Japan last week. He must bow and curtsey to the Treasury each time he wheedles out of it additional export credit guarantees. The Minister for Trade can say how the overseas aid provision has been saved. Labour is often accused of being interventionist, but who has played a more negative interventionist role than the Treasury in the past few years? Who has put forward the view that manufacturing, the balance of payments and import penetration do not matter? Who has said that, so long as the balance of payments deficit can be covered across the exchanges, exports do not matter either? Treasury Ministers standing at the Dispatch Box, with the First Lord of the Treasury in the shape of the former Prime Minister, have led the way in that philosophy. Although that position has changed somewhat, over the years we have seen the dead hand of Treasury intervention lying across our industrial and productive sectors, and therefore across our exports. The true overseer of our economic imperatives should be the Department of Trade and Industry, not the Treasury.

The true assessor of what is required, both in terms of assisted aid and export credit guarantees, should be the Department of Trade and Industry. Our assisted trade provision is not only good for our large exporters: there is a three-way benefit—for the United Kingdom economy, for the exporter and for the developing country.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me yet again. It is true that during the 1980s the Government correctly ceased to bias their assistance

against the service sector. There was a rapid increase and development of this country's service sector which had previously been underdeveloped. Can the hon. Gentleman give an example of a Minister ever saying that manufacturing did not matter? That is a myth.

Mr. Bell: It is not a myth. It was often said——

Mr. Jenkin: When?

Mr. Bell: During the years when the hon. Gentleman was not here, but his father was. If one reads Lord Lawson's autobiography carefully one can find many places where he makes that assertion.

The hon. Gentleman is right that the service sector should be strengthened. The service sector and the manufacturing sector are not mutually exclusive. The manufacturing sector matters. The Government—including the Minister for Trade and the Prime Minister—have said from the Dispatch Box in the past 18 months that manufacturing matters, but for 10 years the role of the manufacturing sector in our economy was not given the importance that it should have had. As I said earlier, the Government believed that the balance of payments deficit was acceptable so long as it was financed across the exchanges. There is no point in arguing about that or saying that it was wrong—it is a part of history and we cannot go back. However, the hon. Gentleman can find many statements to that effect if he reads carefully.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is approaching the subject in a typically sensible and pragmatic way. Does he agree that it is not the service industry or the manufacturing industry that is important, but industry itself? Industry, enterprise and commerce of all sorts are the heart and lifeblood of this country, and no Government, of whatever colour, can afford to neglect any part of industry.

Mr. Bell: I entirely agree with the Parliamentary Secretary, as did the negotiators at the general agreement on tariffs and trade who, for the first time, linked industry and services as well as agriculture. However, I was speaking in a more legalistic sense when I said that the service sector and the manufacturing sector were not mutually exclusive but could and should be advanced together.

I shall return to the issue of overseas trade provision and the ubiquitous Alan Clark, who pops up all over the place. He had the audacity to say to the then Prime Minister that the Overseas Development Administration should be given to the Department of Trade and Industry as part of an overhaul of the machinery of government. The then Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, did not take up his suggestion. I invite the Department of Trade and Industry to reconsider that aspect of its commerce. I think that a review of the possibility of transferring the Overseas Development Administration to the Department of Trade and Industry would be beneficial. We know that overseas trade is not particularly popular with the Treasury, which wants to see it eliminated, but the programme for industrial projects —about £100 million a year—was saved in the latest spending round review before the Budget.

The budget of the ODA is part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is administered by the Minister for Overseas Development, who sits in the House of Lords. The Treasury seems to link export credit guarantees with aid and trade provision, so, rather than negotiating with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—with the Department of Trade and Industry sticking its oar in here and there —the Government should consider whether it might be more appropriate for the Department of Trade and Industry to handle the subject.

The President of the Board of Trade rightly says that the amount available for export credit guarantees should be balanced with the needs of the taxpayer, who has to foot the bill. The hon. Member for Newark said that the taxpayers' money should be used as prudently as possible. However, that is not necessarily the only source of money for the Treasury or the Department of Trade and Industry to use in its export credit guarantees programme. There are ways in which—*[Interruption.]* That is the first time in the House that we have been interrupted by an intervention of that sort. A young member of the community obviously does not like what I am saying about exports, and must have more perspicacity than the rest of us put together.

I invite the Department of Trade and Industry to investigate other ways of raising finance for export credit guarantees and overseas trade provision. I should like the Department of Trade and Industry to see whether it can raise its own long-term bonds in the City of London and so raise more money than the taxpayer is willing or able to pay. It can increase export credit guarantees and the woefully inadequate £100 million provision for assisted aid. It could be said that if it is a technique worthy of the City, it is worthy of the Government, as off-balance sheet investment.

We live in the global market place. The Uruguay round has been endorsed, the Americans are entering their new free trade area with Canada and Mexico, and the economic area of the European Union is being extended. As the hon. Member for Colchester, North said, there are openings into eastern Europe and Russia. Governments on the so-called Pacific rim are opening their frontiers to more and more trade. We need to give our exporters not just a boost but a certainty that if they can expand their trade the appropriate export credit and assisted aid will be available.

I hope that the Government and the Department of Trade and Industry, with the President of the Board of Trade, can somehow break out of the present financial orthodoxy and get out from under the dead hand of the Treasury so that the President of the Board of Trade does not have to beg, plead and wheedle for every pound and penny from the Treasury, having to persuade the Treasury about the expanding marketplace before he can persuade anyone else. Conservative Members wish the President of the Board of Trade to be, in the words of the apparition of a bloody child in "Macbeth", "bloody, bold, and resolute". We wish him to be bold in relation to exporters and exports and resolute in relation to the Treasury in obtaining more money for the exporters.

The President of the Board of Trade has said that he genuinely believes that his Department is doing a good job and that if it is not doing a good job he wants to know about it. He has had some advice today from the hon. Member for Newark and I shall be glad to give him other advice which I have received from people in the export business. People in the capital goods industry, the trading houses, the banks and the export credit insurance world want to keep under constant review the Export Credits Guarantee Department medium-term finance and cover, and especially premium rates to ensure their competitiveness with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development export credit agencies.

[Mr. Bell]

Exporters to Argentina, for example, tell us that there is still no level playing field in relation to premium rates and availability of terms. Where our premium rate for export credit guarantee insurance is 10 to 13 per cent., for German exporters it is 6 to 6·5 per cent. To echo the words of the hon. Member for Newark, our exporters should receive what other exporters receive. We ask for the so-called optical illusion of the level playing field.

Exporters to Kuwait tell us—as was mentioned, not only by the hon. Member for Newark, but, in an intervention, by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—that in relation to the national interest facility operated by ECGD, support for exports, at the behest of the Treasury, has now to be on letter of credit terms, thus adding to the difficulties of exporters. They also tell us that appropriate export credit guarantee cover significantly affects jobs, foreign currency earnings, retention of skills and diversification of contracts away from the Ministry of Defence contracts, and that there must be a European Union harmonisation of medium-term export credits, with some unease at the direction of a draft European directive which could be to the detriment of our exporters.

Those exporters are also concerned to know what the political risk reinsurance cover will be for 1994, having noticed that the cover last year was put in place only in October, at the time of the Conservative party conference, and had to be dragged out of the Treasury. Notwithstanding the efforts beng made by the Minister of Trade, exporters are asking for better co-ordination between Government Departments, especially in relation to ministerial visits abroad. Are the people who make the trips fully briefed? Have they told the exporters where they are going?

Exporters ask for ever-closer liaison between Government and exporters and draw attention to the fact that visits to boost trade should be made primarily to countries with adequate credit insurance cover. They want to establish an exporters' forum—also mentioned by the hon. Member for Newark—with direct links to the President of the Board of Trade and the dreaded Treasury. They tell us that they want a stronger representation in Brussels, to ensure maximum benefit for the United Kingdom and to ensure that other European countries, especially France and Italy—also referred to by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington—comply with the European Union directives on fair competition and subsidy of manufacturing companies. The exporters emphasise, however—and the Government accept—that they want support and not subsidy.

As I said earlier, it is always a pleasure to speak in the sensible debates that are held on Fridays. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, they are the best debates. I have referred to him extensively as he is my only Opposition collaborator in the debate. I always like to throw in a few lines of poetry at this stage on a Friday. That has the merit of gaining the attention of the whole House because no one knows what is coming next. Most of the time I stand corrected on my poetry. People write and say, "You have the wrong poet," or, "You got the lines wrong." I think that it was Browning who said

> "a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for?"

Exporters in a nation that has been built on trade and has perhaps slumbered too long—notwithstanding the £10·5 billion of exports last month referred to by the hon. Member for Newark—now see massive opportunities for expansion in the global economy. They see a need to cast their eyes beyond the European Union with its slow growth; they recognise the strong and wilful competition from other industrialised countries such as Germany, France and Italy, quite apart from that of the industrial giants the United States and Japan: and they recognise that it is important to work in partnership with a Government who comprehend. The Government have an ideal opportunity to work with exporters for the good of our economy and our country and, to end with an erstwhile political slogan, it is up to the Government not to chuck it away.

12 noon

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on initiating this extremely important debate. He was remarkably successful in drawing the motion. As the House knows, and as my hon. Friend so kindly said, under normal circumstances my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade would respond to the debate. However, as he told my hon. Friend, he is at an important meeting with colleagues in the Department, and I have been deputed to respond.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark is an acknowledged expert not only on export matters. He is a member of the Select Committee on Agriculture and is uniquely placed to initiate a debate that has already stimulated a wide range of comments from all parts of the House. That underlines the importance that we all attach to the subject.

As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) rightly said, by and large Friday debates have a tenor and tempo and a civilised and more deliberative nature than other debates—except those on fox hunting. Such debates are well worth taking part in and listening to.

All hon. Members know that we must foster with all the means at our command a healthy export culture. I shall come later to the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark, but I should like to deal first with the thoughtful and well-informed speech by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. He was possibly not quite as well informed on the Bolton report as he might have liked to be, although that comment may be extremely unfair. The hon. Gentleman probably knows it from cover to cover, but he may have temporarily mislaid it.

I remember the Bolton report, which has regularly been prayed in aid in all parts of the House. I agree that it was an important report, and I am quite sure that, from time to time, officials and Ministers return to it when they wish to reframe or, as our much-lamented friend the hon. Member for Eastbourne, Ian Gow, used to say, refashion—policy. Just because the reports were written some time ago does not mean that the ideas they contain are not still fresh and worthy. I am sure that there is good stuff in the Bolton report, even if it comprises some part of the Liberal Democrat manifesto. On a non-partisan occasion such as

this, I believe, as he does, that we should try to deal in a serious and sensible way, as he did, with the many important points that the House will wish to discuss.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire rightly drew the attention of the House to the great opportunities, which he saw when visiting Hong Kong, of, for and in the Pacific rim. I am happy to say that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) is more than a colleague in the House—he has been a friend of mine for many years. As he said, he and I used to travel to Paris on Sunday evenings, when he was working in a great Anglo-French commerical enterprise.

We used to travel across together on Monday evenings. Of course, he came back on Thursday nights, because he was a rich lawyer, and I came back goat class on British Airways on the last flight on Friday evening, if I was lucky. He has a profound understanding and knowledge of industry and of the matters that we have discussed today. The House will have listened with care and attention to what he had to say, and I shall deal with his point about export credits later on.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned the level playing field and GATT, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland). Other colleagues will wish to speak in the debate, and will also rightly be angry on behalf of their constituents and the enterprises within their constituencies. They will insist on the level playing field—one of the most hackneyed phrases in the English language, but nevertheless one which conveys the real anxieties of people in the country—and that we should enforce the law, because we are a law-abiding country.

We should regard that trait as a great plus, not a minus. The law means something here. The fact is that those less favoured countries where the legal system is quite different possibly do not have the same high regard, not only for the law, although that might be quite untrue, but for its enforcement.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that the conclusion of the GATT talks was important for the country. He is quite right. I particularly noted his point about objective 5b status for the Borders. My view on the Borders is that they have quite enough already. In my judgment, they are the most beautiful part of the whole of the United Kingdom. To go banging on asking for more money is asking for more than they are entitled to. It is a prosperous, healthy and wonderful place. I wish the hon. Gentleman every success with it, although I can think of one or two places that are perhaps more deserving than the Borders. I hope that that goes down well up there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West made what I can only describe as a truly remarkable speech. It was one of the most remarkable speeches that I have heard in the short time that I have been in the House. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newark, my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West is a member of the Select Committee on Agriculture, and chairman of the Back-Bench committee on agriculture. He is also a member of that very sadly vanishing tribe within the House—in his own right, he is a farmer; he knows what he is talking about.

My hon. Friend dealt with a whole range of problems not immediately concerned with the motion, but I shall try to deal with them one by one. On his question about the level playing field, everyone understands what he means. I understand the irritation that his farmer friend feels when he goes to Spain and sees a tractor not properly fitted with safety equipment, and the man spraying without proper equipment. I perfectly understand that, and did take the point.

To me, the issues of the level playing field, as my hon. Friend knows, because he knows the system better than I do, are more profound than that. It will come in time. The single market has been in place for a year precisely. We have to travel an enormous distance, as everyone knows, before we get truly level competition.

Mr. Jenkin: On the level playing field point, the set-aside rules are universal to all member states. Because we in the north-west of Europe, particularly in East Anglia, are having rather a wet time, sugar beet farmers have not been able to get their sugar beet out of the ground in time to meet the set-aside target, which is tomorrow. Is there any possibility of the rules being relaxed, or of a derogation being obtained, so that gound in which sugar beet is left after tomorrow will still qualify for set-aside in the following year?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend has raised a point which is of profound concern to sugar beet farmers, some of whom are having a difficult time. I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that, thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister and our officials in Brussels, the Commission agreed yesterday that farmers will be able to harvest crops from flooded or waterlogged set-aside land up the end of February. That is good news and I hope that it will calm some of the anxieties of the sugar beet farmers of East Anglia.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West spoke about slaughterhouses and health scares. He and I have been through a couple of those since he became chairman of the Back-Bench committee and I became the Parliamentary Secretary. We have been round the course of slaughterhouses on many occasions. I am fully aware of the concerns of the industry. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would talk to me about his concerns about the two slaughterhouses. I should be happy to visit them with him. One of the less agreeable tasks performed by the Parliamentary Secretary—the rear gunner's brief—is visiting slaughterhouses. I shall be happy to go down and look at those two to see how they are getting on.

As I am sure many hon. Members know, the slaughterhouse industry faces many problems, which are not just connected with the new hygiene regulations, although those have played a major part. The industry is also suffering from huge over-capacity. We are anxious to help to manage the transition of the industry within the context of the new meat hygiene rules, which are necessary. I agree with every hon. Member who has raised points on the issue over the years by correspondence, question and debate about the necessity for pragmatic, sensible and realistic enforcement, rather than enforcement that drives small businesses to the wall. I assure the House that ensuring that is at the top of our list. We believe that when the new meat hygiene service comes to fruition, its advantages will be seen. New regulations going out to consultation will make the inspections about which my hon. Friends complained—understandably, because they are expensive—more effective and less expensive.

A number of hon. Members have commented on animal health within the context of the single market. It is true that the relaxation of the single market has led to farmers being

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rightly worried about the import of animals from countries whose animal health standards are not as high as ours, which are the highest in the world.

I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) about pig blue ear disease. For years, without any help from the Government, the pig industry has maintained high standards, as a result of which our pigs are wanted and exported all over the world. I share the anxieties and concerns expressed by hon. Members, and I assure them that we have built in a proper defence and proper checks and balances to ensure that we maintain our high animal health standards.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Parliamentary Secretary look at that question the other way round, and consider the equally important ban on the export from the United Kingdom of pedigree livestock, because of unwarranted scares about BSE? Are the Government doing what they can to get that export side of the trade sorted out as early as possible?

Mr. Soames: I agree with the hon. Gentleman: that is an important point about the impact of BSE on our exports. A number of countries are behaving unreasonably. Others are beginning to change their minds, and a consignment of Galloway cattle went to the former Czechoslovakia the other day. The Germans, however, remain difficult, and we have mountains to climb before we get our business back in that country. That matter is of prime importance and great concern to any Minister concerned with trade—particularly the cattle trade.

At the Smithfield show, I talked to a number of breeders who shared the hon. Gentleman's anxieties. Animal health is an important issue and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West for his remarks about tuberculosis in badgers. What with slaughterhouses, badgers, rabies and everything else, right hon. and hon. Members can see what an attractive brief I have. TB in badgers is a peculiarly intransigent problem, which gravely affects not only the health of cattle but the economic interests of farmers. My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the awful effect it has when a farm must be shut.

Recently, I was not far from the constituency of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, where I watched badger-trapping operations and the sophisticated new tests to ascertain whether a badger has TB. If it does, it is destroyed immediately. I hope that that new regime, which has secured almost the consensus of the badger panel on our advisory group, will command also the confidence of farmers. We wait to see. TB remains an aspect of great concern.

I refer finally to the peroration by my hon. Friend on the privatisation of the forest of Dean, which I love. My hon. Friend has done an enormous amount for it, and spoke vigorously in its defence. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Middlesbrough say that, if Labour ever returned to power, it would not export the forest of Dean. It is not for me as a junior Minister to pronounce on such weighty matters, but I will ensure that my hon. Friend's warning—I noticed that the Whip present at the time quivered in his shoes—will be passed on to my noble Friend Lord Arran, who has responsibility for the forestry review group. My preliminary advice to people concerned about my hon. Friend's remarks is that they need not be over-worried.

My hon. Friend made much of the export of furnace feed. I found it difficult to follow his argument initially, but I did so eventually. It is plainly an important matter, and I will ensure that his views are drawn to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough made a measured, sensible speech with which none of us could find much to disagree. I was grateful for his kind words about my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade.

The hon. Gentleman said that, over the past 18 months, the Exprot Credits Guarantee Department has made substantial reductions in its premiums and improvements in the availability of cover for the United Kingdom's key markets. ECGD premiums are now about the average charged by the export credit agencies of other G7 countries, and the Government will keep those rates and cover availability under close review. We are well aware of their importance to UK exporters, and I will ensure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is made aware of the comments in today's debate.

The Government's overall economic objective is to promote sustained economic growth and higher living standards by ensuring that markets work properly and establishing a stable economic environment in which business may have confidence for the future. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was right to stress the importance of that. That requires directing monetary and fiscal policy at the key objectives of low inflation on a permanent basis, as we now have, and sound public finances.

We also have responsibility for ensuring that markets work properly. Economic growth is generated by businesses and employees, not Governments. With the notable exception of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, that lesson has not been learnt by Labour.

The reforms of the 1980s fostered small and medium-sized businesses, promoted self-employment and restored respect for entrepreneurship, management and wealth creation. They swept away the effects of the dead hand of socialism—probably for ever. We are continuing those reforms by pressing ahead with privatisation and deregulation, by cutting out waste and by fighting for open and competitive markets. Those policies are demonstrably working, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newark paid handsome tribute to their success. We are a true exporting country—a country whose lifeblood is exports—but without such proper economic policies, we would be unable to operate a proper export policy and our companies would achieve little.

My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget has placed public finances on a sound footing. Gross domestic product was nearly 2 per cent. higher in the third quarter of 1993 than it was a year earlier, and has now risen for six consecutive quarters.

Mr. Heald: Would my hon. Friend like to pay tribute to the chemical industry, including Johnson Matthey in my constituency, which has this year won both the Queen's export award and the Queen's award for the environment? I ask because the chemical industry is our top exporting industry, contributing £3·5 billion net to the balance of trade each year. My hon. Friend may feel that more attention should be paid to that industry's achievements.

Secondly, does my hon. Friend agree with Dr. Keith Humphreys, the president of the Chemical Industries Association, that the White Paper "Realising our Potential", which deals with improvements in our science base, makes an important contribution to the debate about how to achieve sustainable development?

Mr. Soames: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend on both points. I pay a warm and handsome tribute to the chemical industry, which is a fantastic business. We are lucky to have such a marvellous industry and one that is doing so well. I wholly endorse the remarks that my hon. Friend cited. The expansion and development of our science base will be critical as we seize the opportunities of the 1990s, which I predict will be Britain's years. We must push ahead with the report in question, and I will pass my hon. Friend's remarks to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with whom I shall be spending tomorrow and who is responsible for it.

Gross domestic product in the third quarter of 1993 was nearly 2 per cent. higher than it was a year earlier, and has now risen for six consecutive quarters. That is very good news. Export volumes, excluding oil and erratics, were 4 per cent. higher in the third quarter than they were a year earlier, with imports more or less unchanged.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark rightly paid tribute, as I should like to do, to all the companies and people involved. Exporting is a difficult game, which involves people being separated from their families, sometimes in hostile parts of the world, but it is a business which Britain is fantastically good at. We should continue to be good at it and to cultivate the ideas and policies that have made Britain a great trading and merchant power of which we should be very proud indeed.

That growth has occurred at a time when the world, and especially the European, economies are weak. Inflation has been below 2 per cent. in each of the past 10 months—something not seen since 1960. The underlying rate of 2·5 per cent. is the lowest for more than 25 years and, at 5·5 per cent., base rates are at the lowest since 1977 and the lowest in Europe.

With the rise in productivity—in my judgment, we still need to make improvements—unit wage costs in the second quarter fell by more than 1 per cent. over the year, the largest fall since records began. I hope that, irrespective of our politics, we shall all agree that exporters have never been better placed to take advantage of this country's uniquely favourable economic climate and the many opportunities that are becoming apparent to us in emerging and new markets—quite apart from existing and mature ones.

It was because of the Government's determination that markets should be allowed to function freely that the United Kingdom did not sign the social chapter. The Government believe that, by taking this course, we have avoided the imposition of extensive centralised rules, which would have damaged competitiveness, destroyed jobs and hindered exports. All those matters are of grave concern to many of our European partners, whose social costs are much higher than ours but whose benefits are not much better than ours. That puts Britain in a good position.

Our approach to the market economy, including our rejection of the social chapter, is the main reason why we have been so successful in attracting such a remarkable amount of inward investment, which has greatly strengthened our ability to compete. Those investors are very welcome in Britain.

The success of our policy is becoming clear. In 1992, the United Kingdom was the largest recipient of foreign direct investment among OECD countries for the second year running. The United Kingdom attracted about 40 per cent. of Japanese and American investment in the Community in 1992, and I am confident that this exceptional performance will continue, because the Government are truly committed to helping British industry to compete at home and in world markets.

It is on world markets that we depend for much of our prosperity. Exports are therefore absolutely vital to Britain's economic well-being and we are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark for moving the motion and allowing the House to discuss them today.

The importance of exports to the United Kingdom economy is often not well understood. They provide a major source of employment, wages and profits for United Kingdom citizens. The value of our exports of goods and services is equivalent to more than one quarter of our gross domestic product and, as I said earlier but have no hesitation in banging on about it again, Britain is, by any standards, truly a great merchant nation.

Exports enable United Kingdom producers to sell to a wider market. This can help firms to spread their overheads over a higher level of sales, lowering the unit costs of goods and services destined for the domestic market. Exports spread the risk that markets face: when the market in one country is depressed, others will be buoyant, and this helps firms to invest and innovate for the future. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) mentioned the chemical industry, which is a tremendous example of an industry that for many years has used its size, technical expertise and spread to deal with its problems.

Britain has a clear and enviable competitive advantage, which is one of the reasons why I cannot understand why people try to run down our economy. It lies in our flexibility and in our long experience of world trade and world affairs—two matters which we should not ignore. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has rightly said so often, we are managing to punch well above our weight precisely because of our experience and our knowledge of world affairs and our position at the high table in so many international organisations.

Britain needs to fight even harder to keep its share of world markets. It is crucial that firms look to exporting as an absolutely integral long-term part of their business strategy, not merely an ad hoc way of disposing of domestic surplus. The Government are more than ever committed to helping United Kingdom companies to win in overseas markets, and hon. Members on both sides of the House have suggested how we should best do it.

To achieve this, we are developing a long-term export strategy involving a partnership between Government and industry. We intend to give exports the highest priority. I pay a warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, whose energy, devotion and imagination have paid remarkable dividends for British trade in the past few years.

The United Kingdom has an historic commitment to free and open trade. The single most important recent event on the world trading scene was the completion of the GATT Uruguay round last month—a result for which the

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Government fought hard, and which has been welcomed on both sides of the House. Let me remind the House why the Government are so wholly committed to free trade.

First, the economy as a whole works more efficiently if we concentrate on manufacturing goods and providing services in those spheres where we are efficient and import in those where others are more efficient. My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West made a very good point with particular reference to the milk industry. Secondly, by opening markets, we all benefit as consumers from the widest possible choice and best quality at the very keenest prices. Thirdly, by forcing industry to compete and innovate, open markets allow us to allocate scarce resources efficiently without supporting uncompetitive industries.

GATT has served us very well. I note the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the textile industry, and I shall ensure that his views are passed to my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. GATT was set up as a response to the experience of the 1930s when protectionism was rife. Since 1947, when GATT was established, tariffs on imports of goods to industrialised countries have fallen from an average of 40 per cent. to 5 per cent., while the volume of trade has increased twelvefold. The importance of free trade can therefore hardly be overstated.

The OECD predicts that, by the end of the decade, the planned cuts in tariff and non-tariff barriers on industrial and agricultural products could increase total world income by more than $200 billion a year, but the Uruguay round involves much more than trade in goods. Huge benefits to the United Kingdom will accrue from the extension for the first time of GATT rules from goods to invisible trade to services, intellectual property and investment.

Although there was some discussion and va-et-vient about services as against manufacturing industry, services are now the fastest growing sector of the world economy and account for 69 per cent. of our output. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire would probably say that that was too high; perhaps it is, but the balance is reflected in terms of world trade, and that is merely a response to it. There is substantial potential for growth not only in the service industries but in manufacturing industry.

By promising a stable and predictable climate for international trade, the conclusion of the GATT round has brought an immediate boost to world business confidence. Those involved in overseas trade can now plan ahead with a much reduced threat of trade disputes boiling over into wider protectionism. My hon. Friend the Member for Newark will be glad to know that, prior to the signing of GATT, the signing was the most important concern expressed at my Department's regular meetings with the food industry, individually or with its representative groups. The impact of the signing on the food industry will be dramatic. As a result of the agreement, consumers can look forward to lower prices and greater choice.

As for GATT and the food and agriculture industries, after seven long years, we now have agreements—especially on agriculture—which mark a significant and irreversible step forward. I am confident that British food and drink processors will be keen to explore the new opportunities for access to third country markets. It will help to ensure that non-tariff barriers and similar restrictions on trade—hidden and not so hidden—are replaced by more transparent tariff equivalents.

Moreover, all GATT contracting partners are firmly committed to ensuring that tariffs and tariff equivalents will be significantly reduced over the six-year lifetime of the agreement. There will be cuts of 36 per cent. across all sectors, with a minimum cut of 15 per cent. for any single product line. That is the first step towards a much better reduction of barriers to trade, giving better market access especially to key sectors in north America and the far east.

In some cases, offers of improved access have already surpassed that required by the letter of the agreement. For example, thanks to the agreement reached at the Tokyo summit last July, exports of Scotch whisky, which are already worth about £2 billion a year to United Kingdom companies, will now have the tremendous advantage of the complete removal of large import duties in far eastern markets such as Japan, Korea and Singapore. That is indeed progress compared to the enormous barrier of some duties being as high as 250 per cent., on which exports of Scotch whisky have had to make headway in the past.

Cuts in the tariffs on import of goods will be supplemented where volumes were previously low by new preferential import opportunities.

By the beginning of the next century, that will guarantee that up to 5 per cent. of any domestic consumption will be satisfied by imports. UK exports in a number of sectors are well placed to take advantage of that, and I am sure they will.

Some markets in developing countries and the far east have also posed particular problems for United Kingdom exporters because of inadequate copyright and patent protection. Here, the GATT agreement marks another huge step forward. The promotion and marketing of high value-added products in third countries requires a significant investment in advertising, the consistent supply of a quality product and the establishment of a brand identity.

Sadly, that investment has sometimes been undermined regularly by counterfeit inferior products produced and sold locally. The GATT agreement will, for the first time, provide basic protection against trade in counterfeit goods. I know that that will be especially welcome to United Kingdom food and drink manufacturers.

Finally, on GATT, what will be the impact of the agreement on British agriculture, and how will that relate to exports of farm produce? I know that some farmers view the agreement with disquiet, but I am sure that much of the anxiety is misplaced. They have a good deal to gain under a common agricultural policy which develops in a more stable framework, free from the uncertainty of challenge in the GATT.

The farmers also have much to gain in the longer term from a CAP which is less heavily dependent on artificially high prices, and closer to the needs of the marketplace. That is because a significant reduction in the volume of subsidised farm exports on world markets should help to firm up world prices and so increase the share of revenue that the farmer gets from the market rather than the taxpayer. British agriculture is undoubtedly among the most competitive in the world. Efficient British farmers therefore have little to fear from that liberalisation of trade. They, and the processors who depend on them, can only

gain from a steady trend towards more realistic pricing, less Government intervention and greater responsiveness to world markets.

The exceptionally favourable economic conditions that the Government have brought about and the new GATT agreement augur well for businesses in every part of the United Kingdom. However, that is not the end of the good news. The introduction of the European single market, with all the problems that were associated with it, the new European Economic Area agreement and the prospects of further enlargement of the Community, all point to even greater opportunities ahead.

The completion last January of the single market programme provides increased opportunities in Europe for exporters in a market of 350 million consumers. It is the most sophisticated and prosperous trading market anywhere in the world. The sweeping away of border controls has in many cases yielded tangible savings for exporters in reduced transit times and associated costs. The successful negotiation of a series of Community-wide measures such as those for animal health, which we have talked about, and hygiene means that in most areas, exporters know that if they sell a product here, it can be sold anywhere else in Europe.

In the year ahead, the Community will be developing ideas to ensure that the single market directives operate effectively. I note and applaud the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West about the need for a level playing field in the single market. It will come in time. Rome was not built in a day. Until it comes, I am afraid that there will always be a degree of irritation across a vast range of areas in which enforcement is not carried out in the same way.

The Government fully support the practical approach to enforcement and making it better. As the hon. Member for Middlesbrough knows, the Department of Trade and Industry has set up a compliance department to monitor such work and, under the Maastricht agreement, we shall be able to get satisfaction in the European courts.

This month marks the entry into force of the European Economic Area agreement; as a result, the tariff-free market for exports of process goods will expand by a further 25 million consumers. We also have the imminent prospect of four EFTA countries—Sweden, Finland, Norway and Austria—joining the Community, further opening up markets as they apply the CAP and the single market rules for food. Taken together, the single market and the growing size of the Community mean that the opportunities for our exporters have never been greater.

I should like to deal with the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the enlargement of trade with eastern Europe. The United Kingdom is committed to progressive liberalisation of trade between the European Union and east European countries. Under the association agreements, there will be increasing prospects for investment and co-operation in many sectors—in Poland, Hungary, the former Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. I am leading a trade mission to Hungary and Czechoslovakia in October, which I am sure the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire would like to join.

The European Union is also developing closer ties with Albania and the Baltic states, in co-operation with Russia. United Kingdom companies will be well placed to take great advantage of project and consultancy work arising from European Union bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes, targeted in the region. The hon. Gentleman is right to have raised the matter; it is important, and a huge and opening market for our industry. At the same time, we must stick rigidly by the rules on free trade if we are to give those countries any chance to emerge from the years of communism, which so damaged their economies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West dealt at great length with the dairy industry and its place in agricultural exports, which was also referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark. The dairy industry is on the threshold of the most important and sweeping reform of the milk marketing system for 60 years; a reform which is all the more important with the opportunities created by the single European market and the GATT settlement.

I note the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West made about the need to get those matters settled, and I am grateful to him for the way in which he phrased it. My right hon. Friend the Minister has done exactly the right thing. It would be absolutely wrong to have such a major change if we did not get it right. It must be right from day one. It is better to take time, and I hope that farmers will understand that it will be done as quickly as possible but meanwhile they should be patient until the matter can be resolved, as it will very shortly.

Farming conditions in the UK are ideally suited to milk production, and our dairy industry is capable of producing high-quality products, which can take on and beat the competition, whether on the domestic market or overseas. I wholly agree with the arguments on that subject of some of the hon. Members who have spoken in those terms.

Mozzarella is a good example. We are now the second largest producer of that variety of cheese in Europe and, what is more, we export it to Italy. Somerset brie and camembert are also now a familiar sight on our supermarket shelves, along with a host of speciality cheeses from processors who are carving out their own niche market.

Despite all that, however, the UK dairy industry's ability to respond to market opportunities is hampered by EC production quotas; we simply do not have enough milk quota to meet all our needs. The Government's ultimate objective is therefore to get rid of the quotas and to expose the dairy industry throughout the Community to the free market forces of supply and demand. That is not going to be achieved overnight, so, in the meantime, we must make the best of the present arrangements and minimise the burden that the quota system places on the industry.

We can do that in three ways. First, we must avoid arbitrary quota cuts. We have been successful during the past two years in doing so, and have even succeeded in securing a small increase in quota last year to meet needs arising from recent European Court rulings.

Secondly, we must ensure that our national quota is fully utilised and that the operation of the quota system does not impair the development of fair competition under the new milk marketing arrangements. We have already published proposals for amending the quota regulations to take account of those new arrangements and to remove restrictions that would distort competition between producers.

Thirdly, we can continue to press in Brussels for the maximum flexibility for transferring quota from one producer to another, including transfers across national boundaries. Clearly, it would make sense to allow quota to migrate to those parts of the Community, like the United Kingdom, where milk can be produced most efficiently and

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effectively. The Government are committed to achieving that in the long run and, in the meantime, to minimising the burden of the quota system.

For its part, the United Kingdom dairy industry must make the most of the limited supplies of milk that are available. By innovation and by adding as much value as possible to the milk, the trade gap in the dairy sector can be reduced.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newark was a member of the committee that wrote the report on the trade gap for the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which has so informed and guided the Department in the way that we are seeking to go about reducing that gap. He will be pleased to hear that my right hon. Friend the Minister has set in train a range of initiatives to see where we can make a real difference, and where we can put producers together with processors in a way that has never happened before. Were my hon. Friend and his colleagues on the Select Committee to produce a further report in a couple of years' time, I hope that they would find that the Ministry had made great progress.

Another success story is that of the red meat sector. Although trade data for 1993 have yet to be finalised, it is clear that United Kingdom meat exports have increased considerably. The devaluation of sterling in September 1992 and the abolition of the monetary compensation amounts at the end of the year increased the competitive position of the United Kingdom on the continental market.

It is estimated that United Kingdom beef exports increased by more than 20 per cent. in the first six months of 1993, and that total United Kingdom beef exports will have risen by some 18 per cent. in 1993, to almost 150,000 tonnes. That is a major achievement by our exporters, especially considering the low level of supplies available on the domestic market.

Another strong export performance by the United Kingdom in 1993 was achieved by the sheepmeat industry. With our natural advantages and the quality and efficiency of our production, our sheepmeat producers stand in a unique position to exploit the fully harmonised single market. The value of United Kingdom exports of sheep and sheepmeat has increased from £87 million in 1983 to £277 million in 1992. That trend has continued during 1993.

For some time, cereals has been one of the few agricultural sectors in which the United Kingdom has enjoyed a positive trade balance. In 1992, this amounted to more than 2·6 million tonnes. That was achieved despite our need to import a certain proportion of the cereals we use because of climatic factors.

Another highlight is the thriving export trade in malt. For many years, we have been a leading world supplier of top quality malting barley and malt. In 1992, the United Kingdom exported some 380,000 tonnes of malt, more than three times as much as we imported. It is important to remember that the positive trade balance in grain has been produced in the context of high support prices and high export refunds; these were unsustainable and helped lead to the recent reform of the common agricultural policy.

We took an important step forward when we negotiated new support arrangements with lower prices and compensatory area payments linked to a set-aside requirement. Those will, of course, lead to reduced cereals production and less grain will be available for export.

The GATT settlement will also affect exports. There are likely to be reductions in the level of subsidised exports and improved access to the European market for third-country cereals. So we will face increased competition in our market, but, equally, our exporters will be able to compete on fairer terms with other countries on the world market without the distortions that the system of subsidised exports brought about.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my hon. Friend agree that the £940 per family cost of the common agricultural policy is still unacceptably high? Does he also agree that British farmers are in the best position, being among the most efficient farmers in the Community, to profit from the reforms that we are implementing?

Mr. Soames: I will not be drawn on my hon. Friend's first question. I quite agree with his second question. Because British farmers are so efficient, they are uniquely placed to respond to a market—oriented agricultural policy. My hon. Friend is aware that my Department's policy remains to move to far more market-oriented common agricultural policy. The problem that we face is rather like that of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in its campaign to promote animal welfare—the problem does not lie in this country, but elsewhere in Europe. We must persuade our European partners of that. The sums involved are subject to increasing scrutiny and I believe that public opinion may well dictate that the process towards a more market-oriented agricultural economy is speeded up. My hon. Friend and I would welcome that.

A more perplexing case than the success achieved in the beef and other agricultural sectors, is that of the fruit and vegetable sector, which accounted for some £2·8 billion of the United Kingdom's trade deficit in 1992. That was considered at great length in the Select Committee report. That is surprising in a country with such a technologically advanced and innovative industry.

In the same year, we exported only £300 million-worth of fruit and vegetables, which is a tiny proportion of our total production, and I am sure that we can do better. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is chairing a special committee that seeks to see what it can do to encourage horticultural exports and beef up the industry's marketing success.

However, there have been some spectacular successes in the whole horticultural sector: the Cambridge salad producer who exported five million heads of lettuce and celery in 1992, much of it to Spain and Italy; the Somerset firm that has sold 50,000 date palms worth £750,000 to the middle east; and a total of £48 million-worth of exports of potatoes and potato products.

As with milk, once our potato growers are released from the constraints imposed by the dead hand of the potato marketing scheme, we expect our industry to be able to improve its performance dramatically.

Our food and drink industry is one of the most highly developed and sophisticated in Europe. In my judgment, as one of the Ministers responsible for it, we are lucky to have such a fantastic food industry. We have a remarkably successful bunch of companies. I have visited factories of all sizes, manufacturing various products, throughout Britain and have seen for myself the efficiency of their modern manufacturing technology, the skill of their

employees and their huge investment in food safety and hygiene, which makes them pre-eminent among many of this country's industries.

Our manufacturers produce excellent, wholesome products designed to meet the requirements of modern British consumers—requirements which have been exacting as consumers have become more selective and their tastes more sophisticated. We all expect our food to be attractive, healthy, convenient and, above all, enjoyable. If manufacturers can meet that specification—in my experience they can—they will be able to sell their wares anywhere in the world. And they do. They export pizza bases from Manchester to Italy; sliced bread from Bolton to France; and lemonade from Glasgow to Spain. Marks and Spencer sell over 14,000 sandwiches a week in Europe. The House will be pleased to hear that the best-selling beer in Marks and Spencer's store in Paris is called "Black Sheep"—no pun intended. In 1992, exports of biscuits were worth almost 20 per cent. more than in the previous year, and cake exports were up by more than half. The praise for those achievements belongs to the British firms whose hard work and skill has made them possible.

It would be a serious omission if I did not mention one of our major export success stories—our alcoholic drinks industry, which has made an impressive and ever-increasing positive contribution to our balance of trade for many years. It is an area where Britain is the dominant international force, with three of the world's top four companies British-owned. Our export of spirits, beers and wines totalled £2·37 billion in 1992, a 50 per cent. increase over five years and our largest export earner in the food and drink sector by far.

That excellent achievement is fundamentally based on the success story of the Scotch whisky industry. The 110 Scottish distilleries generated export sales of £1·95 billion in 190 countries in 1992, making the industry Scotland's second largest exporter. It directly employs 15,000 people in production, and many times that figure in support and other associated industries.

Our producers of white spirits, like gin and vodka, also make an important contribution; and our brewers are having increasing success in introducing the world to fine traditional British ales. In 1992, beer exports increased by over 20 per cent. and stand at around twice their level of five years ago in both value and volume.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark discussed some of the tangible, practical things that we are doing to help our industries and exporters take advantage of this dynamic world marketplace. I begin with Food From Britain, quite rightly mentioned in the motion. Again, my hon. Friend spoke with great authority about Food From Britain, as he was a member of the Select Committee that examined the food trade gap.

As the House will know, last year my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister called together leaders of the agriculture and food industries to No. 10 to discuss the importance of marketing abroad and at home.

Following that seminar, Dennis Stevenson was asked to review the role and functions of Food From Britain. On the basis of his report, my right hon. Friend the Minister announced that Food From Britain would focus its efforts on promoting exports.

The report concluded that Food From Britain has been doing valuable work in supporting British food firms, particularly small and medium-sized firms, in export markets. We firmly believe that Food From Britain is the right organisation to help the British food industry to benefit from the export opportunities that are opening up in Europe and elsewhere.

I note what my hon. Friend the Member for Newark said about the request for pound-for-pound funding. As he knows, the Government already provide core funding for Food From Britain, plus £1 for every £3 raised from the industry—60 per cent. It receives a higher proportion from public funds than does its equivalent in any other country.

In agreeing on the independent Stevenson report on Food From Britain, we have made it clear that FFB needs to raise a higher proportion of its funds from industry. We will maintain our contribution—this year, it is £5 million. FFB is for the benefit of the industry, which must raise its own contribution.

My hon. Friend also asked how Food From Britain compared with its equivalent in other countries. The United Kingdom's funding for FFB is more favourable than that of France and Germany. Our contribution is 60 per cent. In France, Sopexa receives about 50 per cent. from the Government, and the equivalent in Germany receives nothing from the Government and is entirely funded through a levy on the industry. I hope that those figures will interest my hon. Friend.

I appreciate how my hon. Friend feels, as, when I go to trade fairs, I see what appears to be fantastically lavish expenditure by other countries. However, it is largely generated by the companies in those countries. We accepted the recommendation that the savings generated by rationalisation should be used to increase export effort.

I pay tribute to the remarkable work that Food From Britain does for specialty food producers—the small businesses that produce the high-class specialist foods so prized in this country. That affects the constituencies of all hon. Members, particularly the rural districts. Food From Britain has done a remarkable job, including the staging just before Christmas of a three-week food fair at Selfridges, which was visited by the Prince of Wales. It was an outstanding success, and resulted in Selfridges selling only British bacon. Thas shows what can be done when people try and one is able to put buyers in touch with producers.

The specialty food producers in this country have unique opportunities for exporting. Food From Britain is the right organisation to look after them. It is now under the new and energetic leadership of Geoffrey John, the highly successful former chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission. Mary Curnock Cook runs the specialty food section. The organisation is doing a marvellous job, and I am glad to be able to report that FFB is an agency of which we can be proud. It will go on to make considerable improvements, strides and progress. I warmly congratulate it and I am sure that the House wishes it well in promoting British exports.

We know that Ministers and civil servants are not always the best people to diagnose economic or business problems. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hosted two seminars in Downing street for the leaders of the industry to tell us what they think. The momentum of those seminars is being effectively maintained by the group of industrialists called together by David Naish following the last seminar. That is why we set up the Ministry's market task force to develop close contacts with the movers and shakers in the industry and,

[Mr. Soames]

with them, to address the sticking points. That has been a tremendous success, and I hope that it will produce some valuable work.

We have held seminars for exporting companies—nearly 150 of them—to hear what problems they face and how the Government can help, either by doing something or by ceasing from doing something, by deregulating. The Ministry is launching a major initiative in 1994 to alert British food suppliers to opportunities on the continent.

The continental challenge, as it is to be called, begins next week with a conference in London that is to be opened by my right hon. Friend the Minister. An audience of food suppliers will be addressed by leading continental retailers and successful British exporters about the opportunities that are available to them and the ways to exploit them. The conference will be followed up in the succeeding months by a practical programme to help companies to find out more about individual markets and to prepare their approach to the continental buyer.

My Department has consulted the industry about proposals for a range of new grants to help to develop the best marketing and export practice in the United Kingdom. That will be developed mainly to help the small and medium-sized companies that have the opportunities and the products, but not the experience. We have had an exceptionally positive response, showing that we are speaking the right language to the industries that we sponsor.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough, in an excellent speech, mentioned that the Minister for Trade would have been here but is elsewhere, at an important meeting. It therefore falls to me to say a few words on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, together with the Prime Minister, as the House knows, is leading the most dynamic and important export drive that the country has witnessed in decades. I pay tribute especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), the Minister for Trade. I believe that, with his unbelievable energy, enthusiasm and drive, he beats people into buying the goods. That is the way in which I think he does it.

Mr. Bell : That is why black sheep sells so much at Marks and Spencer in Paris.

Mr. Soames: Exactly. His energy and enthusiasm are harnessing and driving that export achievement in the private and public sectors. As the hon. Member said, remarkable gains have been made in the past year in China, India and many other places.

The DTI and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office jointly provide a first-class information, advice and support service for United Kingdom exporters under the banner of overseas trade services. I noted what my hon. Friend the Member for Newark said about the importance of providing that information concisely so that everyone can understand it and I shall say something about that later.

Listening to business is a vital part of our strategy. I listened carefully to what was said about export credits, and I will ensure that those views are passed on to the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury.

The Government's principal adviser on trade promotion activity is the British Overseas Trade Board. Under the energetic chairmanship of Sir Derek Hornby, the board is made up of a dozen senior British business people, who freely give their time and experience to help to determine the best use of our export promotion funds.

In addition to the board, there is a network of more than 200 business people with experience of markets around the world, who help through 14 area advisory groups. They ensure that the needs of business are reflected in the operations of the overseas trade services and they help to formulate initiatives to increase trade.

One such initiative is the "North America Now" campaign, which the President of the Board of Trade launched last March. That aims to help British industry to reinforce its trading position in the United States and Canada and to increase its market share by 25 per cent. in the next three years. That is a very ambitious target. It means increasing our visible exports by at least £3 billion. We have every confidence that British business will rise to that challenge and secure that important business for our country and our people. The "North America Now" initiative, the "Priority Japan" and "Business in Europe" campaigns help to raise the profile of the trading opportunities that are available to British businesses.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned a substantial issue about trade fairs. The Department of Trade and Industry provides tangible support for British companies in their efforts to promote their goods and services abroad. The support for overseas trade fairs and missions will account for £16·6 million this year, with an estimated 290 trade fairs supported. The trade fairs scheme is under review, and I will ensure that the Department takes account of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

The House may wish to know that, from time to time, I have the opportunity to visit trade fairs. I visited Anuga in Germany last year, the most remarkable food fair that I have ever attended, where the British had a stand. There was a large area in which hundreds of companies displayed their goods. Those companies went there to sell their goods, and the event was outstandingly well run and set up.

Such trade fairs are important, but the key is to separate the very important ones from those that are not so important, and to decide where to allocate fairly scarce resources. A particularly good example of partnership between Government and business is the export promoter scheme. The DTI is recruiting people with expert private sector experience as export promoters. Some 60 are already in post and actively helping business, and those secondees bring to government a business-orientated way of tackling problems and promoting expert opportunities. They add enormous value to our operation, because they understand what our customers want and help us to deliver it effectively.

As part of the overall strategy for export promotion, market plans are being drawn for each of the United Kingdom's top 80 overseas markets to guide future export promotion work programmes. This will help to ensure that resources are focused to best effect. Small and medium-sized enterprises in particular often need help to develop their export potential, and the Government are making sure that they get the right kind of help, where and when they need it. They can take advantage of personal support and advice from export promotion executives and export development advisers attached to chambers of commerce. These work hand in hand with business to get them ready and able to export.

The range of support that the Government offer is indeed wide. It includes grants towards the cost of participating in overseas trade exhibitions, visiting foreign markets with an organised mission and hosting visits by important overseas buyers to United Kingdom-based companies. Our support has increased from some £15 million in 1990-91 to an estimated £16·6 million in the current year. However, large United Kingdom companies make the biggest contribution to United Kingdom exports, and they, too, need Government support.

The Government, through the Overseas Projects Board, are committed to supporting major overseas projects. Specialised groups have been created to promote capital exports in sectors such as airports, power, transport, water, and education and training. Further groups will cover telecommunications, oil and gas. The aim is to target overseas projects more effectively and encourage businesses to work more closely than they have in the past.

We recognise, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newark rightly said, that the diversity and range of this help may at times be bewildering to the very people it is designed to help—and perhaps especially to smaller companies, which do not have the experience and the spare people to find out about it. That has led the President of the Board of Trade to create business links, the offices of which are local partnerships of all those who can deliver business support services. Those include chambers of commerce, training and enterprise councils, local authorities, educational establishments, local enterprise agencies, the DTI and others.

With Government support, these new partnerships will create hard-headed, practical, effective business support tailored to local business needs. That is an important and fundamental change in the approach to business support. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newark will feel that that has covered the point that he raised and that the partnerships will be a great help to companies which use them. We aim to have 200 business links in place in the next few years, and help for exporters is one of the key services that they will offer.

The services that I have described so far represent the bedrock of export promotion. In addition, Ministers and members of the royal family undertake a series of high-level visits each year with business representatives. I mention particularly the outstandingly successful visit by the Prince of Wales to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. In the past year, there have been a number of successful overseas visits to promote British trade. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Minister for Trade, the chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board and others have visited many countries, including China, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Austria, France, Germany, Spain, Slovakia and, of course, the European countries that are visited as a matter of course.

Ministers from my Department have led export visits to Uruguay and Paraguay, to which my right hon. Friend the Minister paid an outstandingly successful and productive visit and from which has flowed some hopeful agricultural orders. My hon. Friend the Minister of State paid a successful visit to India, which will be followed up this year, and he also visited Turkey. My noble Friend Earl Howe paid a successful visit to South Africa in 1992.

Taking just one of those as an example, let me show how those visits are helping Britain to increase its world share of trade. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited India, he was accompanied by a team of 17 captains of industry. During that visit, he and his Indian counterpart launched the Indo-British partnership initiative, designed to maximise the opportunities for further trade and investment between the two countries.

As a result of that initiative, more than 10,000 British companies now know that India is a market on the move, offering immense potential for business development and very real opportunities. The year's highlight was the visit of the royal yacht to Bombay in November for an Indo-British week of trade. Deals worth £1.2 billion were agreed during that week alone. If I may say so, that is a very good reason for keeping the royal yacht.

Britain has always been a great trading nation. We currently export more per head of population than the United States. We even export more than Japan. We are truly a merchant country. Exporting is something which we are very good at. The opportunities are greater than ever before. The GATT round is concluded, with all the advantages to trade that that will bring. The single market in Europe is complete and is beginning to make a real difference to businesses, large and small, that have woken up to it and realised the opportunities that exist for it.

The European Economic Area is in place and we look forward to the further enlargement of the Community and the opportunities that that will bring. The channel tunnel will open this year, undoubtedly boosting opportunities for trade through improved communications. I cannot think of a time when the climate for exports was more propitious. We have exceptionally favourable economic conditions at home: that should not be a matter for political argument.

The respectable economic opinion is that the 1990s could be absolutely brilliant for Britain. Certainly, at the present time, the British and American economies are bright beacons burning in a pretty dismal picture. We have low inflation and low interest rates, brought about by the Government. Britain has a remarkable ability to innovate. People from all over the world come to Britain to look for ideas and learn from our people.

We must ensure that we capitalise on that. We have a committed and competitive work force, who, when well led and well run, are one of the best in the world. In the industry that I know, we have the highest standards of food safety, hygiene, welfare, innovation, research and development in production, anywhere. We have a Government who are truly committed to helping to build on those assets and drive forward a great export-orientated economy for the benefit of all those who live in this country.

With those advantages and the tremendous opportunities open to us, I am quite confident that Great Britain will continue to show the world that, at our best, we are the best.

1.13 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): It gives me great pleasure to take part in the debate, for several reasons. First, in my business life before I joined this place, I was heavily involved in exports and the Scottish textile trade—a number of medium to small-sized companies were referred to earlier. Secondly, I come from Kincardine and Deeside, which is largely an agricultural constituency and, therefore, one which has a great bearing on today's debate. Thirdly, I come from Scotland, which is a major exporting nation and has a record second to none.

[Mr. George Kynoch]

Today's debate is indeed propitious. As a past exporter, I know very much that, when embarking on exports, the one thing that business looks for is stable conditions, which must begin at home. They have to start with the economy and, given the current economic climate, there is no better time for exporters to go out and export.

The debate is not just about exporting but about how exporters can be helped to export. No business likes interference from Government, and Government should not interfere in the workings of business, particularly not in export matters. Rather, they should be there to assist, encourage and develop. Having come from an industry where competition from abroad, particularly from the far east, was significant, I know only too well the assistance that the Government have given to a major core exporter, the textile industry.

I had the privilege of chairing for several years the Scottish Woollen Publicity Council, which was the promotional arm of the Scottish wool and textiles industry. It is important that, in its exporting efforts, an industry first gets the product right. Any assistance given to it must be directed towards helping with market research. I must sing great praises of the British Overseas Trade Board and, in Scotland, the then Scottish Development Agency, now Scottish Enterprise, for the significant efforts that they have put into trying to give corporate assistance in market research and development.

Throughout the 1980s, the textile industry in Scotland, which was traditional in that it had traditional products and export markets, largely in Europe, needed to break into new markets in north America and the far east. Until almost the present day, the tariff barrier against Scottish wool textile products in the USA has been 38 to 40 per cent. That barrier must be broken and I am pleased with the outcome of the GATT negotiations. It has taken seven years to get there, but I am glad to know that, at least, the American tariff barriers are beginning to come down. I believe that they have further to go and that our textile industry deserves better.

The Scottish Development Agency worked closely with the Scottish textile industry in promoting exports for their quality and origin. The Government can help best by helping not individual companies but the industry as a whole. Those in the industry must get together and follow the classic example of the food industry in Scotland. Reference has already been made to quality assurance. The textile industry also had a good trade organisation which worked well. Each individual company could not, on its own, put in the effort required to break into new markets, but, once having established that group, it could go out and build on that.

The Scottish Development Agency gave pump-priming assistance to that trade body of about £150,000 over three years. That may not seem a lot, but it got the exercise going. Sadly, it was necessary to continue that assistance because the industry then went through difficult times. We need a flexible approach from Government to ensure that, when they have started something good, help is not cut off just when it is needed for a little longer. We run into the danger of industry believing that the Government will carry on funding it, so it does not need to put in anything itself. The basic responsibility of industry is to fund its own business so as to get the rewards. However, flexibility is sometimes required to ensure that the initial pump priming does not go to waste.

Trade fairs are a classic example of short-termism—particularly in the far east, which has major export potential, but is difficult to penetrate. I visited Japan twice a year for 12 or 13 years and discovered that relationships and trust must be fostered. It is not just a matter of parachuting in and spending 10 days there. Reference was made to a visit to China just before Christmas. It may be a gesture of commitment, but the timing may not be convenient, at least to the exporter. It is necessary to make repeat visits, to convince potential markets that one is serious and will return year after year. One must also convince those markets that one is listening to their needs. When it comes to the crunch, one cannot export—with all the Government assistance in the world—if one does not have the right product at the right price.

The Government can contribute to market research and significantly to trade fairs. The British Overseas Trade Board already does so, but sometimes it reduces its support too early. I know from experience the cost of exhibiting at major trade shows in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Osaka. Those costs are significant in the budgets of small to medium-sized businesses, particularly when one does not know how quickly one will enjoy any return. I urge the DTI to take a longer-term view of assisting businesses with trade fairs in particular—but it should not necessarily promise help ad infinitum.

Almost every export industry argues that competitors receive more assistance. We should not try to match support by interfering and intervening in British business, but should try to ensure fair competition and an open market.

There has been a change of attitude among British embassies. On my first visit to the United States to break into that market with textile products, I arranged through the BOTB a visit to the British embassy, to obtain the names of agents and potential customers. A large proportion of the individuals identified were either no longer with the companies listed or even in the industry.

I know from constituents that that situation has changed dramatically in recent years. There is clearly significant and welcome co-operation between the DTI and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade for his considerable efforts abroad. In October, I had the privilege of being the guest of the Hong Kong Government. I know from the comments of members of the chamber of commerce there how much they appreciate my hon. Friend's involvement in knocking again on doors, to ensure that British quality of service and product and commitment to exporting is shouted from the roof tops.

I hope that British business will follow the Government's example. The Hong Kong chamber of commerce said, "Please ensure that not just the sales representative or manager is made to believe that this is a major market. Please make sure that it is the senior director, the chairman of the company or managing director who clearly sees the growth rate in, say, China and the potential for marketing in this area in the years to come." One reason why the Americans had high import tariffs was to protect their domestic industry. They had to do that because America was not a very good exporting nation. I am afraid to say that the Americans are catching on fast and are now much better at exporting. The message

from Hong Kong was that if the British do not get a move on the Americans will be there in such large numbers that the trade will have gone. I hope that business will go out and grab the opportunities and use the assistance offered to it by the Government.

Another factor must be got right if one is to export: there must be competitive economic conditions. Today's debate has so far kept fairly clear of party political points. I must say, however, that some of the Labour party's suggestions and policies——

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why we have steered clear of party political controversy is that there has been only one member of the Labour party here all morning?

Mr. Kynoch: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I must now make a party political point, however: some of the social and employment policies of the Labour party would make it exceedingly difficult for British business to be competitive because they would remove flexibility. I refer, for example, to the imposition of a minimum wage.

I firmly believe that British business needs stable conditions and it needs to know that the Government will not hamper it with false costs through conditions of employment. In the not-too-distant past, Arthur Scargill, the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, said on "Question Time" that the solution for all economic ills in Britain and throughout Europe—unemployment in particular—was to move to a four-day week with no reduction in pay. Even the simplest of us would know the increase in costs that that would bring to British or European industry. We live in a highly competitive world and we must give our businesses maximum flexibility so that they have the best possible opportunity to compete equally in world markets in terms of prices.

The Export Credits Guarantee Department has been refered to. I warmly welcome the announcements made at the time of the Budget about the premium reductions in ECGD. I can well remember using ECGD for all our exports—indeed, it made sure that our business continued uninterrupted despite the failure of a major customer in, of all places, West Germany. I have nothing but praise for ECGD—especially in the light of the Minister's announcement today that the rates are clearly in line with the G7 average. We must maintain that state of affairs so that our exporters have the best possible security before they export.

One point has not been mentioned, however. In the announcement made at the time of the Budget, we heard of the 20 per cent. premium reductions in respect of Argentina, India, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey. In addition—and I quote from the relevant press—

"the President also announced that cover of £3·2 billion will be available for 1996-97 for 'Amber Zone' markets (where the risk is significant or ECGD's exposure is most concentrated) eg China, South Africa and Indonesia. This represents a near doubling of the annual allocation of Amber Zone cover since 1991-92, bringing the total cover available for Amber Zone markets over the next three years to over £9 billion."

In the past, the ECGD has been conservative and prudent in taking steps to help our exporters in markets where there is a risk. I welcome the steps that it has taken.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who is no longer in his place, expressed disappointment that the short-term bank guarantee operated by the ECGD was no longer in existence. I have news for him. I suspect that the reason is that many banks operate an exporter scheme for small and medium-sized businesses and do so probably more efficiently and with less administration than the ECGD. They still use the ECGD cover as the guarantee for the scheme, but they offer favourable financing rates.

The major industry in my constituency is the oil industry. Although it is not situated in my constituency, it is adjacent to it and many executives and employees live there. At a time of transition and change in the North sea, companies in my region are now having to look to export. I should like to single out Grampian Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise for the significant support, guidance and encouragement that they are giving, particularly to the smaller oil service companies that need assistance and guidance in seeking exports. One might imagine that the oil industry is the same world over, but it is not. The method of taking oil out of the North sea is not the same as that used in Russia. I hope that the efforts of Government agencies such as Scottish Enterprise will be maintained and encouraged and that when a business can sustain itself, that help will be weaned down so that the business carries on and invests.

That leads me aptly to agriculture. We have heard reference to the quality assurance schemes in Scotland. We should be able to export Scottish agricultural products—and well. Scottish exports tend to succeed because their quality is high. It might interest you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to know that the value of manufacturing exports per employee in Scotland in 1991, which I think was the last recorded year, was more than £22,990 per employee—some 19 per cent. above the United Kingdom figure. I am pleased to be standing here as a Scottish Member and I am proud that Scotland is leading the way in business, as it leads the way in so many other sectors.

The quality assurance schemes should promote the quality of the product so that it can achieve a premium price. If we can achieve premium prices for our farmers, we will help with the capacity problem because the requirement to produce so much may not be so great. The problem, however, as was pointed out to me the other night at a meeting in my constituency with the local National Farmers Union, is that the farmer is reluctant to contribute towards the schemes. Again, I ask that the Departments of Agriculture, both in Scotland and south of the border, do everything possible to encourage farmers to participate in the quality assurance schemes, to recognise their benefits and to work towards making a major contribution to them. Our exports will succeed only if we have a quality product.

I recently had the privilege to attend the opening of an expansion programme at a local slaughterhouse run by McIntosh Donald with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the Minister responsible for agriculture in the Scottish Office.

It has spent £3·5 million on a programme of expansion, modernisation, effluent treatment and the general upgrading of its facilities to keep itself at the forefront of the industry in the United Kingdom and to try to break into more export markets. McIntosh Donald has a turnover of £65 million, approximately 20 per cent. of which is exported. It is seeking to increase that to 30 per cent. with an export drive. Its current markets, in which it is very active, are Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland and Switzerland, but it believes that, with a quality product and with quality promotion, it can also target Spain and Portugal. The company exports beef and the sheep in meat

[Mr. Kynoch]

form and promotes the fact that, as we all know, the north-east of Scotland produces the best beef in the world in the form of the Aberdeen Angus.

It would be wrong of me not to mention Food From Britain, which does an excellent job. As for the quality assurance scheme to which the Minister referred, I believe that lessons can be learnt which are relevant to the agriculture industry as a whole.

I must also mention Scottish salmon farmers. It has already been said, but I feel bound to repeat that the industry is having an exceedingly difficult time. There is no point in talking about exports if there is no industry. Due to the prices being charged by the Norwegian salmon farmers, there is a grave risk that the Scottish industry will soon cease to exist. The industry's figures show that it is currently losing about £1 million a week. That may not sound much, but it employs 6,000 people across Scotland in key locations and in the countryside where there is no other employment. The chairman of the Scottish Salmon Growers Association says the association has employed Ernst and Young to research the Norwegian market. I urge salthon growers to ensure that any evidence that they may have of Norwegian contravention of trade agreements is passed quickly to the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Agriculture. The industry wants and needs a level playing field. It has an excellent quality product, but the premium for quality needs to be far greater than is achievable at current prices.

Another major exporting industry in Scotland that has also been mentioned is the Scotch whisky industry. Before the Budget, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor was kind enough to listen to the industry's lobbying about the importance of the duty system in the United Kingdom. If we do not have a good home industry, we cannot build a good export industry, although the GATT reductions in tariffs in Japan will be of significant benefits to this major exporting industry.

The Government have done a tremendous amount to help exports. To judge from the days when I began exporting, I know that there is now a great difference in attitude and a great desire to ensure that British industry is at the forefront of the export market. I hope that, with the lead given by the Government, exporting manufacturers will seize the new opportunities, grow and do even better.

1.39 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on securing the debate and for the way in which he introduced it. I also congratulate him on his chairmanship of the all-party exports group in the House, of which I am happy to be one of the two vice-chairmen. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for a speech which was both a tour de force and tour d'horizon and set in context many of the issues raised by hon. Members today.

Britain has been described over the years as many things, but perhaps most frequently as a nation that trades or dies. There can be no doubting the importance of today's debate in highlighting the issues that concern the House and the nation in seeking to ensure that we continue to be a successful exporting and trading nation in years to come. I have had the opportunity in the past few months to visit one or two overseas countries and I have been struck each time by the enthusiasm of the people that I have met for the chance to trade with the United Kingdom. Of course they wish to export their goods as well, but, equally significantly, they want to have the opportunity of doing business with Britain, which means that we should export to them.

I have been to Tunisia already this year and I was impressed by the friendly attitude of the people I met there towards Britain and their desire to trade with the United Kingdom. Some 15 or 16 months ago, I was in the United Arab Emirates, where exactly the same point was made. Britain was regarded as a country which can be relied on in its trading relations and can be trusted to do business on an honourable basis and as a country with which those countries would be pleased to commit more business in future.

Having said that, in each of those countries I was told that there were other nations around the world that seemed far more determined to seek trading links with them than the United Kingdom seemed. The House will not be surprised to hear that the names of Germany, France and the United States came up frequently. I do not want to denigrate in any way what my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary said, or to imply that Britain's trading record is not one of which to be proud, but that suggests that there is more to be done. This not only concerns companies in Britain that seek to expand their activities by trade; it is a matter for the Government, and that is why we have the debate in the House today.

I shall concentrate my remarks on manufacturing exports because it seems that they are ultimately crucial to the success of this country's export effort. I took advice from the National Manufacturing Council, which was recently established with the support of the Confederation of British Industry and came up with a checklist of what it felt were the essential elements of a successful exporting economy. First, it identified the need for an economic climate conducive to sustainable growth. We have precisely that climate at the moment as a result of the policies pursued by the Government over recent years.

Secondly, the council strongly advocated the need for enhancing capital allowances to encourage an investment-led recovery. That is a debate in itself and not the one that we are having today, so I will merely put it on the record and leave it as it stands.

Thirdly, the council identified the need to achieve national targets for education and training—again, a subject for a separate debate. I am sure that the House would agree that it is crucial to ensure high standards in those areas for those who set out to export from Britain.

Fourthly, the councils said that there was a need for investment in transport infrastructure—a point which was well made by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, who mentioned the channel tunnel, which will be the most significant single contribution to the transport infrastructure that is designed to help exporting in Britain's entire history. It levels the playing field between this country and other members of the European Union in a way in which nothing else has or could. I look forward to the day when an ever-increasing amount of freight will travel through the tunnel.

Fifthly, there is a need for the improved policing of the single market and action to remove unfair distortions. As hon. Members have said, much progress has already been made in that direction, but the single market is still in its

infancy. I hope that the Government will look carefully at the arguments made during the debate about the need for policing fair trade within the European Union. That seems to be essential if we are to achieve the best interests of British exporters.

Sixthly, effective support is required for exporters, in line with competitor countries. That comes close to the nub of what this debate is and should be about and I shall return to that subject. Finally, there must be genuine industry involvement in the setting of priorities for science and technology. The Government made an important contribution by the publication last year of their White Paper, "Realising Our Potential". I have no doubt that further progress will be made in that direction as a result of the White Paper and the responses to it already being received by the Government.

Manufacturing output in the United Kingdom increased by 2 per cent. and manufacturing productivity by 7·3 per cent. in the first half of 1993. Similarly, exports were up 15 per cent. in the year to August 1993; much has therefore been done, much has been achieved and all the evidence shows that upward trends of that nature are continuing satisfactorily.

I contend that the key to our success is not to be found in the raw figures that I have just given but in the degree of competitiveness that this country has with the countries with which it is competing daily. In that context, the GATT agreement on 15 December 1993 was historic and vital to our country's interests as a trading nation.

Lower tariffs, the ending of restrictions and controlling subsidies will all help, but it will be the policing of the new agreement that will achieve success and enable this country to benefit. If the arrangements being put into force and coming into effect next year are not adequately policed, the problems will remain and we shall continue to hear, as I heard last week in Tunisia, of such things as soft loans designed to encourage support for a company from a particular country. If each country does not back its companies to seek trade overseas with the same enthusiasm, the playing field is not level. If that sort of soft loan—only the tip of an iceberg which involves a little lower down some things that might be described as dirty tricks—is not dealt with, whatever our exporters achieve, Britain will stand to lose out considerably. We must decide whether we should join in with the sort of behaviour that puts some companies from certain countries at an advantage or whether we should stay out of it and seek to prevent other countries from indulging in such behaviour. I have no doubt that the Government would wish to pursue the latter course, but British exporters will want to know that the Government are being rigorous in their pursuit of countries which seek to deflect from the honest and straightforward path of equal terms of trade.

I welcome the setting up of the export promotion team by the Department of Trade and Industry and I pay a warm tribute to my geographical neighbour, the Minister for Trade, who represents the rural part of north Wiltshire while I represent the urban part. We work together as a team at local level and I am delighted to support him in what he is seeking to do in the Department of Trade and Industry. I wish that the Foreign Office was not at the same time reducing its commitment to commercial work within our embassies around the world. I appreciate that the growth in the export promotion effort by the DTI is designed to balance that reduction, but how I wish that both efforts could continue to offer full support to British exporters around the world.

I hope that the target of 100 export promoters can be achieved quickly and that, if so, a new target can be set to enable those promoters to achieve even wider coverage of potential markets. We are still missing out on export opportunities for the lack of those promoters in some parts of the world. I draw the House's attention specifically to those countries that used to make up the Soviet Union. Those newly independent states are desperately anxious to form partnerships with the United Kingdom. They hold our country in the same high regard as those other nations that I mentioned earlier. They are conscious, however, that far greater effort is being make towards trade promotion by Germany, France and the United States.

Support from our Government is crucial in difficult new markets such as Kazakhstan, because our would-be exporters will otherwise find it difficult to make the kind of necessary links and to make them fast enough to get ahead of the existing competition. I ask for nothing that is not within the spirit and the letter of the recently signed GATT agreement. We need such support, however, because we are missing out, despite the efforts of the Minister for Trade—a fact which is, I am afraid, all too easily verifiable by those who have sought opportunities in such countries.

The south-west is keen to participate in increased export activity. According to a recent survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry, 50 per cent. of firms said that they expected their growth to be driven by increased sales in overseas markets in the foreseeable future. The recession in mainland Europe will not make that easy because, traditionally, British firms have sought trading links in Europe as their first port of call. It has been a recent development, perhaps driven by the economic circumstances in western Europe, that those companies have sought to extend their activities to far-flung parts of the world.

Another survey conducted by the Swindon chamber of industry and commerce suggested that some United Kingdom firms with United States parents are actively discouraged from seeking export opportunities in the Pacific rim and other parts of the far east because that is the territory of their American parents. Looking at the globe, one can see the logic behind that. For that reason, the activities of some companies in this country may be subject to an inevitable trading depression. That aspect must also be addressed.

Firms can and must do a great deal to help themsleves. I would not want to give the impression that I regard the Government as wholly responsible for the success of our exporters. Firms must develop their language skills, because the time has long gone when British personnel could travel overseas in the belief that they merely had to speak English louder to attract attention and business.

The development of personal links overseas is crucial in any prospective market. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) that they are achieved through long-haul effort and that we cannot rely on short-term quick fixes to establish good connections in overseas markets. It is not a matter of just going to China for Christmas but of going back there again and again to win the confidence of those with whom we seek to trade.

The survey of firms in the south-west also raised the question of the kind of help that firms sought from the Government. It is clear that help can be given and I

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

welcome the Department of Transport's commitment to rail franchises long enough to ensure investment in the electrification of the Great Western line. That is a key feature of transport infrastructure in the south west, linking it with the national network and the channel tunnel, without which firms in the south west will find it much more difficult to achieve long-term export potential.

The region needs support to obtain the maximum available funding from the European Union with particular reference to defence industry contraction. CBI members would also like more marketing by the DTI of the export promotion scheme. I have paid tribute to the scheme's work, but have some doubt about the effectiveness of the marketing of its availability. The scheme's launch at the recent CBI conference was a great success and most helpful, but clearly more needs to be done to make medium-sized firms aware of the help that they can obtain from the scheme. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade will take my remarks on board.

It would be helpful to know whether the Government are minded to support joint initiatives in the south-west to promote the region to obtain funding to support export activities. I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister will be keen to help in any way he can. Again, I pay tribute to him for the positive and helpful attitude that he has sought to bring to his job in dealing with firms in our region.

In my constituency, a majority of exporting firms are involved in manufacturing, mainly in high technology areas. Some two thirds of the manufacturing process of those firms is undertaken in my constituency and Queen's awards for export are by no means uncommon in my constituency.

We have heard much about manufacturing and food, but so far we have heard little about service industries' contribution to exports. The decision by the Department for the Environment to approve the opening of THORP is much to be welcomed and I hope that the legal process now in train will not delay its operation for too long. We need the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield open not only to show our commitment—we have made commitments to overseas users of the facility—but to show that the Government are prepared to stand up to those who wrong-headedly try to stop such investment in any industry in which Britain leads the world.

I also pay tribute to consulting firms such as that of Sir William Halcrow in Swindon which has a deservedly high reputation and earns huge returns for the United Kingdom economy through its work in civil engineering all around the world.

British Gas was frequently mentioned to me during my recent visit to Tunisia. All around the world, British Gas is developing consultancies and other contracts that will bring much-needed revenue to this country. I hope that nothing currently under discussion in the Department of Trade and Industry about the internal arrangements for our gas industry will do anything to prevent British Gas from continuing to be a player on the world stage in consultancy and other activities. A balance must be struck between competition at home and the ability to compete overseas, a point which I hope will not be lost on the President of the Board of Trade and his Ministers.

The tourism industry makes a huge contribution in the form of revenue from incoming tourists. There is a great need to narrow the gap between inflows and outflows by implementing the most vigorous marketing policy for British tourist attractions. Many countries lost a valuable link with Britain a few years ago when grants and scholarships to overseas students were cut in the mid-1980s. At the time, it was seen as a cost-cutting measure and was supported by many of us as a way of helping to balance the British economy, but, over the years, it has come to be seen by many of us as a mistake. The policy led to the transfer of allegiance of many of the future leaders of foreign countries from this country to, for example, the United States, where they now go to learn the English language rather than coming to this country. That policy should be reviewed and reversed if Britain's interests are to be best served.

Many other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall conclude by saying that Britain has made tremendous strides in its export potential in recent years. There is more to be done, but with a Minister for Trade such as my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) in charge of our activities, I have no doubt that a most positive attitude will be taken towards the problems and challenges that lie ahead, and that the greatest success will attend his and the Government's future efforts.

2.2 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I commend to the House the powerful, comprehensive and robust speech of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary. He covered a wide range of topics, on some of which I shall elaborate. I also wish to discuss in detail the other side of our export market: project finance, capital flows and obtaining dividends from joint ventures around the world.

I am blessed by having in my constituency some of the largest multinational companies, which have chosen to locate their headquarters in Brentford and Isleworth. Doubtless the fact that Heathrow airport is a mere two miles away has some bearing on the matter. I am proud to say that I represent firms such as SmithKline Beecham, a world giant in the pharmaceutical industry, Gillette, the blade manufacturer, which I do not use very much, and Data General, a computer company with a worldwide network of export opportunities. My constituency also houses Pharos Marine, a company which makes lighthouses. Last year it won a large contract worth about £20 million to supply lighthouses to the Philippines. There is also Black Arrow, an office furniture manufacturer with a world wide reputation, as well as Fullers brewery, Wang, a computer company, Bull, Alfa Laval, which manufactures machinery for the food industry, Mercury, Heidelburg, which manufactures printing machinery and Honda Cars (UK). There are also other companies such as the Blenheim Group.

Today's debate takes place in the aftermath of the successful completion of the Uruguay round of negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Sir Leon Brittan and the others involved in bringing that important matter to a successful conclusion. GATT has changed the future of world trade and Britain's trading opportunities. The signing of the agreement has added 4 per cent. to Britain's national output and generated up to 400,000 new jobs for the coming decade. It is estimated that it has added about $700 billion to the total sum of

world trade. Industrial tariffs were 40 per cent. in the late 1940s and have come down to no more than 5 per cent., with 42 per cent. of imports entering this country duty free. That has helped provide access to world markets for both developed and newly industrialised countries. It has added to global interdependence and the growth of comparative industrial advantage, increased the number of jobs, both here and abroad, and helped the consumer by providing cheaper goods.

In agriculture, GATT will also lead to low food prices in currently protected countries, giving better market opportunities for efficient producers such as Britain.

The agreement is a boost for trade in services, especially in financial services, telecommunications, air transport and the movement of labour. It will have a profound impact on the current $900 billion trade in services and the $3,000 billion trade in the business of foreign subsidiaries. In that respect, Brentford and Isleworth is well placed, as the headquarters of many multinational companies, to take advantage of the new agreement.

The intellectual property rights agreement on patents, copyrights, performing rights and trademarks is a tremendous boost to foreign investment and technology transfers. The multi-fibre arrangement, dismantling quotas progressively in 10 years, will enable developing companies to sell more textiles and clothing abroad, which will in turn enable them to earn hard currency to import more value-added, high-tech goods from developed countries such as Britain, to the benefit of both.

Safeguards against dumping, subsidised exports, transparency in Government procurements and more global technical standards will all contribute massively to the growth of world trade, to the advantage of the richer and the developing countries. We need to view Britain and her trading opportunities in the context of that worldwide trade liberalisation as we move towards the millennium

It is no secret that the next century will belong to Asia. More than 1,000 million new consumers are poised to emerge, with the purchasing power parity of western Europeans, into the world marketplace in the next seven years. More than 70 per cent. of them will be in Asia, with the balance in Latin America. The economic miracles of the Asian tigers, especially in the ASEAN countries of the Pacific rim, is beginning to be repeated in the vaster, enormous markets of China and India. Instead of being frightened by their emergence into the world marketplace, we must remain challenged and prepared to seize the opportunities that are now being presented to create once again, after nearly 50 years of slumbering, a worldwide trading network, which this country, above all others, understands as a result of our shared history of the past 300 years.

We seize those opportunities in a post-war period when cyclical economic factors are finally being played out. The giants of the 1970s and the 1980s are beginning to lose their vigour and zest. The Japanese economic miracle, it appears, is over and Germany, with the problems of reunification, is in no state to take part in the great worldwide adventure. The oil-rich kingdoms are no longer that rich.

The United States, with its extraordinary ability to change and remain dynamic, has put in place the North American Free Trade Agreement, which opens up a vast new market in Latin America with cheaper labour. The next phase of dominance—I use that word advisedly—in world trade belongs to us, and by "us" I mean Britain, until France, having laboured and failed under socialism, has put her house in order and until Germany has come to a final and equitable reckoning on the cost of reunification. Britain's window of opportunity is now—not next year or the year after, but now.

That opportunity would never have been available to us had the Labour party been elected to govern the country. We have had an agreeable debate this morning and we have not made many political points, but, with respect, that opportunity would have passed us by had we remained a country dominated by trade union power, motivated by sectional interests and overwhelmed by protectionist sentiment. That opportunity would have never been possible if the Labour party had, in government, done in the past few years that which they are prone to do, as they did in the 1970s, when they gave us high taxes, high inflation, exchange controls and a flight of capital, with the gnomes of Zurich and the International Monetary Fund having to bail Britain out.

That opportunity is now available to us because successive Conservative Governments have worked to make the country one of the most competitive, innovative and forward-thinking. In the United Kingdom, as we heard this morning, inflation is at a 30-year low and, as a result of the fall in interest rates, industry has saved about £12·5 billion, which it can invest profitably elsewhere.

The matters that I have mentioned are without doubt the reasons for the United Kingdom's recent success. In the past five years, the United Kingdom has become the largest recipient of overseas investment. Government policies have resulted in British manufacturing moving from what it was in the 1970s to what it is today. The conditions created by the Government have led to vast increases in the investment portfolio and direct investment by foreign firms in the United Kingdom. However, there is another side to that—the fact of British investment all over the world.

One of the main policies of Conservative Governments since 1979 was the privatisation of many nationalised industries, such as British Telecom, gas and electricity. That handed back the nation's utilities to the private sector and to ordinary people, and the concept of privatisation set a trend throughout the world. It became the fashion not only for Britain but for developing countries and for the newly emerging nations of eastern Europe to divest themselves of their loss-making nationalised industries.

The World bank and the International Finance Corporation, which is its private sector arm, the IMF and the Asian and African development banks have encouraged developing countries to help themselves by selling off their loss-making state industries to the private sector and international investors. It was not anticipated in the debates about privatisation that newly privatised British companies would take or manage large shares in newly privatised companies in the developing world.

Today, British Telecom, British Gas, Thames Water, National Power and PowerGen are pursing large market shares in the privatised utilities of the developing world. They own, or jointly own, power companies, water companies, airports and gas and oil exploration companies in many parts of the rapidly growing Pacific and ASEAN countries. They are followed by institutional money. The portfolio investors of the pensions and savings funds of the City of London are ploughing huge amounts through the capital markets of Hong Kong and Singapore into these joint ventures.

[Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva]

By 1992, the net book value of British overseas investments was estimated at £360 billion. That comes from institutions, firms and citizens of the United Kingdom. When we compare that with the total value of the capitalisation of our stock market—which is put at £1·1 trillion, or £1,100 billion—we see that over 35 per cent. of our national assets are held overseas, and the amount is growing. Last year, we earned £26 billion in dividends and earnings from overseas investments.

It is an extraordinary story and it should be understood by the country. We should shout it from the rooftops. The growth of our direct investment abroad is shown by the fact that between 1987 and 1989 it reached 4·5 per cent. of gross domestic product, a percentage not matched by any European country. In the decade to 1990, the value of British corporate acquisitions in America stood at £90 billion, more than double that of Japan. I could go on, but I am conscious that some of my hon. Friends wish to take part in the debate.

During the Christmas recess, I was privileged to be invited by the Government of India to visit India to see the progress of the India-British partnership initiated last year by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. As we heard in the debate, 70 memoranda of understanding have been signed and £1·2 billion of joint investment is being made. We have identified in India a new, emerging market of 200 million people with the purchasing parity of western Europeans, and they will be coming on stream in the next seven years.

It is a vast opportunity, particularly because we have a common language, a shared history, the same institutional arrangements and the same commercial law and because the process of doing business is the same. India's huge industrial infrastructure needs to be upgraded. For example, British Aerospace has formed a joint venture to promote and sell software engineering processes to the rest of the world. Those are the sort of challenges that are being met by our business community. It is a story about which one should hear in the media. Our people should understand what is going on around the world while we sit here and debate other matters.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great benefits of joint ventures and investment overseas by British companies is that this country can justify much greater research and development facilities than we might otherwise do, so that companies such as BAe, ICI and so on have substantial R and D facilities in Britain, which are servicing companies and sites across the world?

Mr. Deva: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point. Science parks are emerging in India, which will benefit from technical expertise, as my hon. Friend said.

In summary, we are back and we will seize, for the betterment of the United Kingdom economy, the opportunity for growth, prosperity and jobs at home, a sound economy, sound money to keep inflation low, and a positive balance of payments so that we can go forward towards 2000 with one of the most successful, competitive productive economies in the world and again become the envy of the world.

2.16 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I should first, in what may be the last speech in the debate, thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), for such a wide-ranging and thorough speech. He stood in at the last moment and has shown that his grasp of international commerce is as good as his appetite for international cuisine. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) for raising the subject for debate. I shall not dwell on some of the more agricultural aspects raised today, as the warble fly, of which we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), is hardly the main topic of conversation in the wine bars of Kensington high street, although the well-manicured lawns of Kensington park are regarded with the same passion as my hon. Friend regards the forest of Dean.

The essence of the debate is not only the future prosperity of the United Kingdom, but something more important. It is about the very thing that makes us tick: in what direction do we want to take this country? In what way do we wish to bustle over the next generation? We make the choice either to bustle internationally and be fully part of the world, or perhaps retreat into a rather attractive theme park in which we let history pass us by.

One prediction that we can make with confidence during these next few years is that Britain's economy, relative to that of the rest of the world, will get smaller. That is not controversial. We are, after all, a static and aging population of about 56 million people. We live in a world that is ever younger, ever more capitalist and growing at a much faster rate than any of the countries of western Europe. The population of the United Kingdom currently constitutes just 1 per cent. of the world's population. Within the next generation, that will fall to a much lower percentage.

Even now, China, Mexico, Brazil, India and Russia are, by the size of their gross national product alone, able or worthy of being members of the group of seven largest industrial nations in the world. All of them are larger than Canada and, in size of their gross national product, are biting at the heels of the United Kingdom. There is little doubt that in the next decade or so they will overtake the United Kingdom in size.

All those facts point to its being ever more important that Britain's future should be entirely cosmopolitan and international, part of a world that is flourishing and exciting. At the start of the century, 20 per cent. of the world's wealth rested within the shores of these islands. Despite all the great empire, it was not necessary to bustle in the world to be commercially successful because there was enough wealth within our borders. By the end of the century, Britain's wealth might constitute 3 per cent. of the world's gross national product. Therefore, it is all the more important for our prosperity, and our morale and feeling of vigour in intellectual and commercial life, that we should be entirely international.

The prosperity of the United Kingdom rests on one thing and one thing alone—whether other people over whom we have no control and over whom, thank goodness, our politicians have no sway, choose to buy British goods because they find them competitive, good value for money, the right thing. Success in terms both of the volume of British exports and of the fast growth in their value shows

that, at last, we are on the right track. It matters not at all whether the goods that we export are manufactured goods or service goods.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): In this debate on exports we have heard some excellent speeches, but not one has referred to an industry which has made enormous steps forward—the British coal industry. We are now producing coal at world market prices. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that Britain could export its coal to Scandinavia or the European Union while ensuring strategic supplies and thus maintain the future productivity of British industry when, because of the change in world circumstances, gas prices are likely to be pushed up within the short to medium term?

Mr. Fishburn: I should be the first to welcome the export of British coal to any market in the world. What matters is that it should be desired by other people and purchased by them, rather than produced against that market. If there is that market for British coal, I only hope that it flourishes and succeeds. It does not make any difference whether what is sold abroad is a manufactured product or a service industry. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) made that point, and we debated it.

In the early 19th century, a number of old buffers, most of whom would now be Labour Members, said that the new industrial revolution bringing in steel, coal and textiles was of no worth and that only agriculture mattered. What nonsense that was, and what nonsense it is today when people say that wealth lies in coal, steel and textiles rather than in services. Wealth comes from what other people are willing to buy. The most rapid developments in British exports have come in the service industry, but greatly to be welcomed is the growth in manufacturing industry as well.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Gentleman began by talking about the glorious halcyon days of the turn of the century when Britain was exporting all around the world and dominating all those pink parts of the map. Much of the exports were in coal, but the hon. Gentleman gives the impression that, somehow or the other, we have lost that wonderful position by accident. The truth is that most of the countries now exporting to us, and other countries, support their own industries. As the Parliamentary Secretary is here, that big bladder of lard—[HON. MEMBERS: "Order!"] He has accepted it before, so it is surely in order.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary understand that if coal had had the subsidies that agriculture has had for decades we would not only be exporting coal to every part of the world but giving it away? Why does he not concentrate on the fact that it is possible to export? As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) said, we are competitive, and productivity in the pits has gone up by 360 per cent. since 1984.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That was a long intervention.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) was filibustering.

Mr. Fishburn: Had the hon. Gentleman been in the Chamber for any part of the past four hours, he would have heard exactly how the Government are encouraging exports that the world is willing to buy, which is making all the difference to Britain's export performance and balance of payments.

The future for the next generation will depend not only on exports by traditional industries but on something greater. Britain must be the cosmopolitan centre for the eight hours in which the sun shines on our part of the world and the world market comes to rest here. That ambition is not just for London but for the whole of Britain. We have heard of the overwhelming growth in the population of Asia and the southern hemisphere, but there is no doubt that there will continue to be great prosperity and enormous opportunities in the peaceful and prosperous part of the globe that our eight hours of the market represent.

It is crucial that the United Kingdom should be the chosen centre of that cosmopolitan and international trade. Already, one job in three in Britain rests with international trade. As time passes, it will be a major success if that proportion increases to one job in two, and eventually if every job in the United Kingdom—including in the coal and gas industries—is completely integrated with international markets. The world's future presents dramatic opportunities for Britain as an historic trading nation which trades more of its wealth overseas than Japan or the United States.

If Britain can sustain the success that it has enjoyed over the past four years in terms of export volumes and value, it will provide for its citizens a truly excellent and valuable way of life and sense of purpose—which we shall risk losing if we turn our back on the opportunities, grow smaller by comparison with other countries of the world, and become just a theme park. Opportunities exist, and my hon. Friend the Minister clearly spelled out the way in which the Government are seizing them.

2.27 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on his choice of subject for this debate. Unfortunately, I was detained earlier by a constituency engagement, but I enjoyed the stirring speech of my hon. Friend the Minister, who sounded exactly the right note. Many of us are sick of people running this country down and suggesting that it does not produce fine goods and services that can be sold abroad.

The House will join me in wishing my hon. Friend the Minister well and every happiness in his marriage which took place during the Christmas recess.

Mr. Skinner: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is a plan afoot to get rid of the present chairman of the Tory party, who has been a bumbling idiot during the course of the past few weeks, and replace him with the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Amess: I had better not comment on that.

Over the past few years, I have done my best to promote the town that I represent. Last week, I was in Omaha in Nebraska, as the guest of First Data Resources, which has an office in my constituency but headquarters in Omaha. I was treated extremely well, and I was offered the key to the city and had talks with the governor and the mayor. As a result of my trip, businesses in my constituency have much to which they can look forward in respect of export opportunities in the months and years ahead.

[Mr. Amess]

Basildon is a thriving export centre of 20 manufacturing and service sectors. I have a long list of firms in my constituency that have achieved magnificent export records over the past year. The first is Hawtal Whiting, nearly 50 per cent. of whose turnover goes in exports. Some 25 per cent. of the turnover of Brentpak plastic packaging goes in exports. Gilbarco's exports are steadily growing—it exports all over Europe and throughout the world. Burlington air express, a new company formed last year, has quadrupled its labour force and exports more than 90 per cent. of its product. Fisherman's Friend is also in my constituency and 93 per cent. of its product goes in exports. The tractor plant, now run by Fiat, produces the finest tractors in the world and has managed to keep its export share. Last year, I was privileged to open an automated machinery company called Froehlich whose export sector is growing——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 19th January, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall not later than Seven o'clock put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Hunt relating to Employment and Training—[*Mr. Conway.*]

Guy's Hospital

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful for what I hope will be a timely opportunity to discuss the future of Guy's Hospital. I am glad that the Minister has got here in the nick of time—perhaps the debate, comes in the nick of time, too.

It is the pride and privilege of the Member of Parliament representing Southwark to represent Guy's hospital, founded by a former Member of this House more than 250 years ago. In recent years, the hospital has gained pre-eminence as one of the great teaching and clinical specialist hospitals not just in this country and this capital city but in the world.

Following changes in the health service made since 1991 and the more recent changes set in train as a result of the Tomlinson report, there is now a suggestion that the future of the hospital may be less than secure. First, I shall explain why I believe that it is imperative that we do not close hospitals in London at a time when, and in a place where, they are needed. Secondly, I shall deal with the decision-making process that will determine the future of Guy's.

A record number of people are waiting for hospital beds. The figure increased again in the last quarter for which figures have been published—more than 1 million people are waiting in the country as a whole and more than 250,000 in London. Those of us who represent London constituences can confirm that our constituents feel that the health service is not in good shape. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) initiated a debate on London hospitals in December in which she recounted her experience of going round several London hospitals the previous day. She reported these experiences in a recent article in *The Guardian.* As she made clear in many cases, the way in which we treat patients admitted into our specialist hospitals is far from satisfactory: people are still being left on trolleys in corridors instead of being in beds in wards.

That is not just a politician's view. In its report in the *London Monitor* published this month the King's Fund reached a similar conclusion:

"The population of London might be forgiven for failing to recognise current changes to London's health care system as an improvement. Indeed neither would many of those working within the health care system. We do not argue that change in itself is wrong and support strongly for a body such as LIG"—the London implementation group—

"taking an overall view of the process. However, a definite lead is now required, and urgently, with sufficient funds to drive change through to a positive outcome. The alternative is to risk the disintegration of the system of health care in London with detrimental consequences for the health of Londoners."

Guy's hospital opted to become the flagship NHS trust; it was the first to set sail. It was much applauded, much watched and much regarded by the Government. It is a local district general hospital, it is the community hospital for Bermondsey and north Southwark, it is a speciality hospital for the region and its patients also come from much further afield. It has more than 800 beds and many of its departments have an excellent reputation. It is on a prime site at London Bridge.

Guy's became part of the Guy's and Lewisham trust. It began to build a phase 3 development, costing about £130

million, which is nearly completed and is called Philip Harris house. Earlier last year, as a result of Tomlinson, it renegotiated its marriage and became part of a new trust with St. Thomas's, and Lewisham became a trust on its own. In April 1993, Guy's and St. Thomas's, which is represented here by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey), with whom I have had many discussions and who fights equally hard for her constituents, merged and became the largest hospital trust in the country, with 6,500 staff and an income of £230 million a year.

The trust was asked to make a proposal for future management, with the implication that it should try to find a one-site solution. It produced a consultation document in September called "Options for Change". The options were no change, a single-site hospital on either Guy's or St. Thomas's site and a two-site hospital. The deadline for consultation was the end of October. I, like many others, submitted a response to the consultation, reflecting the views of the community which I represent and the GPs. My argument is that two into one cannot go; it is not possible to put a quart into a pint pot.

We have a deprived area with a high incidence of admission. There is no guarantee that primary care is sufficient to take the load off the acute sector. The population in north Southwark and docklands is rising. We have good transport links and serve directly areas such as Kent and we are about to have significant new facilities, such as Philip Harris house and others. I argued that it would be illogical to decide the future of the accident and emergency units at either hospital until the London-wide accident and emergency review was completed.

I argued for a two-site option, preserving the best of Guy's and St. Thomas's, ensuring flexibility and, above all, giving a real opportunity for an academic acute and elective hospital with innovative community provision to be based on two sites relatively near to each other south of the river.

On 4 November, the board decided to put its proposals to the Government. It considered four options, which contained sub-paragraphs. It decided to pursue 3(b), a two-site option. That was the decision of the board. It was not what the Tomlinson report had intimated or what the Secretary of State had suggested that she required.

The option appraisal document, in summary form, was sent to the wider public in December and I was promised that the full report would follow. It never has, and on the very day when I read in my newspaper that NHS pay secrecy is to end and trust directors' salaries will be published, I received a letter from the Secretary of State. She said:

"I refer to your letter . . . requesting a copy of the Trust's options appraisal document."

I had previously contacted the trust and its chief executive, then the chairman, then officials in the Department of Health and, finally, the Secretary of State, but had got nowhere. The letter continues:

"This is a technical document prepared confidentially for the London Implementation Group. I have been advised that it contains a level of detail about the Trust's business that it would not be appropriate to release. You may be assured, however, that any proposal for a material change in the pattern of Guy's/St. Thomas's will be subject to public consultation."

We know that because, thank God, in Britain one cannot yet close a hospital without some consultation, but it is clear that the full appraisal document is not in the public domain and is not going to be. That is a matter of sufficient concern, but other matters have come to light that are extremely worrying and which, I contend, should not be secret or the subject of negotiations behind closed doors. I therefore bring them to light now.

It has long been the view of nearly all the clinicians that there should be a single site. The clinicians at Tommy's argue that it should be at Tommy's and those at Guy's argue that it should be at Guy's. Great concern was expressed as the analysis in the appraisal document of the two-site proposal was considered by those lucky enough to see the document. Objectively chosen, a single site would potentially find favour among clinicians at both hospital sites, but that solution is not acceptable if the issues have been badly analysed and decisions made in secret and through an inaccurate process. Indeed, some clinicians have said that the two-site proposal would be disasterous, but the way in which they are attempting to bring the issue to a one-site conclusion is equally unsatisfactory.

Some management consultants were asked to consider the appraisal document and they produced a report at the end of November. It is a damning indictment of the document produced by the trust and makes it clear that a great deal of fundamentally important work was not done or was not done properly. I shall cite only a few examples although I have the whole document.

Under the heading "Benefits, Costs and Evaluations", the report states:

"In non-financial terms there are serious problems associated with the service specification associated with the preferred option . . . aspects of the capital costs, especially of the single site options, do not withstand detailed scrutiny and look unduly high . . . and estimated revenue savings for all of the options are not matched by agreed, planned, efficiency improvements and cost estimates for the preferred option in particular may suffer from optimistic bias."

The report contains consistent criticism of each part of the proposal and states:

"There are considerable clinical disadvantages in the model proposed . . . the option is dependent on the acquisition of all the neurosciences work coming from the Brook hospital . . . it is not possible to assess accurately on the basis of the information supplied the importance assigned to the financial and non-financial issues."

Much of the proposal is dependent on, for example, the neurosciences coming to Guy's. It would have helped if Guy's management had put their case for the neurosciences some months earlier instead of doing it so belatedly that, by default, the neurosciences will go elsewhere, despite the fact that those involved wanted to go to Guy's

Apparently a meeting took place in December between the regional health authorities at which there were some interesting revelations, including the fact that the Treasury was anxious to avoid any implied commitments to future capital expenditure in any of the review announcements. The Treasury is therefore saying that there is to be no more capital money. There was an acceptance that the strategy for London hospitals was "salami slicing" in respect of the Treasury and public expectations. I interpret that to mean that hospitals are picked off one at a time in the hope of deflecting the flak. There were also suggestions that the solution might be determined by whether, for example, the special trustees of St. Thomas's dug into their pockets and put £30 million into the kitty, which would clearly make St. Thomas's a more popular option for the Government if there were to be a single site.

There are other factors which make it clear that work will be driven out of London all together. What is certainly clear is that if the option that we were meant to be considering was of one site and if we were all allowed to

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

address our minds to the matter, each of the three regions in London, apart from the relevant south-east region, has a clearly expressed preference for Guy's rather than St. Thomas's, for all sorts of reasons, not least strategic guarantees that health service provision would be spread evenly around London.

Only this month, literally days away from the expected date of the announcement, a new secret option, option 5, which is meant to be a modification of option 3b, emerged. Option 5 would bear careful public scrutiny if the public were allowed to see it and it bears careful scrutiny for those of us who have been lucky enough to have seen a copy, which, clearly, we were not meant to see. For example, it would effectively mean the closure of all but the mental health in-patient beds in Guy's. Not only would the whole calculation depend on the £30 million from the St. Thomas's special trustees fund, but it would depend on a capital payment from the Treasury, which has said that it is not keen to fund.

The capital payment from the Treasury is made up by a bid for the same amount of money which has no justification at all and appears to have been arrived at on the basis that somebody has said that if money was wanted, it could probably be provided—up to a total of £60 million—and that if a bid just short of that were submitted, it would probably be granted. Surprise, surprise, a figure of around £57 million appears as the amount of extra money that would be needed. There was no argument, no foundation and no substantiation, but merely a response to a hint from somebody who was given the wink.

That would be bad enough, but one other factor makes the matter even worse. A lot of people have put money —£130 million—into the planned development at Guy's. Philip Harris house, for example, has received £1 million which was contributed by kidney patients and their families for the renal unit at Guy's. Having had contact with the people who organised those initiatives, they were not delighted by the fact that suddenly the new unit for which they had been raising money for years is not to be built. The Imperial Cancer Research Foundation has raised money to contribute significant sums of money. It has not been handed over yet and it was not raised specifically for Guy's, but it was always assumed that that was where the money would go. There are other donors and some of them may want their money back if Guy's is not the site that is kept, or if Guy's is not a site that is kept as part of a network of provision which many of us believe is justified by the shortage of beds in London.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I understand exactly the hon. Gentleman's point about the contributions made by many people to particular causes at Guy's. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that has also happened at St. Thomas's and throughout London? As a result of Government policy, one group of patients is almost being played off against another group of patients and one group of hospital staff is being played off against another group of staff and, at the end of that, the management of the trust has been put in the impossible situation of trying to come up with an option that is acceptable to the Government rather than something acceptable to the people of the area.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady is completely correct. As she knows, my view was that both hospitals should be kept. Those of my constituents who live at that end of the constituency go to "Tommy's". The vision that the trust set out was one of creating an academic and teaching and acute specialist hospital, which would also be a district general hospital and would have all sorts of community initiatives. It would be consolidated with Guy's and St. Thomas's medical school and King's medical school would be brought in to join it. It would keep the dental school at Guy's, which is the best in the country, and would probably bring King's College on to that site, too.

We must have ambition and vision as well as meeting need.

I shall mention only two more subjects as I am intrigued to hear the Minister's reply and I hope that he will tell us that what has been going on in secret will now go on in public, so that our constituents and those who use the health service can have a say, rather than merely those people employed in senior administrative posts in the health service.

The proposal to bring King's College hospital on to the site is the last part of the equation that clearly also does not work. The fifth option does not allow enough space for King's College on the Guy's site, as it would want all the site, which no one is arguing should be released from the health service entirely, or it would not be able to go there at all.

Proposals that do not add up financially and in space terms are just not good enough. I am making a plea to get the debate out in the open, to have the real facts and figures and to get to the truth of the matter before a decision is made, rather than do so inadequately afterwards.

When the trust was set up it was the flagship. The secret fifth option could mean that the closure of most of the beds at Guy's would be announced within a few days by the Secretary of State and would be decided on the basis of false facts and figures and in secret. One of England's premier teaching hospitals and part of the largest hospital trust in the country is in danger of being closed on the basis of secret discussions and deals. The public accountability of Ministers to the House for the health service means all but nothing. The facts should be in the public domain. Decisions about health service flagships should be out in the open. If we do not get the process out in the open there does not seem to be much hope for the rest of the health service, which is also facing reorganisation. It is our health service. It is the people's and the patients' health service and they all want to have a say in what happens to it.

2.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I thank the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for the measured way in which he approached the subject, which is of enormous importance and interest to him and his constituents. I hope that he will accept that the Government do not intend him or his constituents to be kept in the dark. Decisions will not be taken on the basis of false facts or conclusions. After more than a year of careful examination of all the many complicated factors in coming to a decision on such a matter, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall not decide it on the basis of anything but the best information most carefully worked over by many specialists in the subject.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman did not seek to challenge the basic thesis behind the decision, which is

underlined by the Tomlinson report—the fact that there are many acute beds in the London hospital system and that the health service is changing in such a way that action needs to be taken. That fact has been underlined this week by another King's Fund Institute report. In its *London Monitor,* it stated:

"There remain dramatic differences between inner and outer London, and between inner London and the rest of England."

In particular, it points to the fact that

"Expenditure on hospital and community services in inner London, at nearly £600 per capita, is 80 per cent. greater than the England average."

Although the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) are aware of some of that information, for those listening to the debate I stress that the Government must take action, difficult though it is in view of the affection in which many of the institutions concerned are held.

Many reports have pointed to the problems of an excess number of beds and sites at London hospitals. Some estimates—they were mentioned in the report by Professor Tomlinson—have suggested that between 2,000 and 7,000 acute beds need to be taken out of the hospital system.

The Government responded to the Tomlinson report with the document entitled, "Making London Better". We made it clear that we would look carefully at the proposals and take no decisions until we had done that. We particularly recognised that if we were to make changes to the acute hospitals, we needed to recognise the lack of primary health care and community services in many parts of London. We established the London initiative zone to focus new money and new ideas on primary and community services. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced at that time that £43·5 million had been directed at primary care developments in the London initiative zone in 1993-94 and that £170 million has been made available for investment in capital projects during the next six years.

In the hon. Gentleman's area this year, the family health services authority will be making available £7·5 million revenue and £2·5 million capital to resource the development plan that it has drawn up. Those resources will set in motion the improvement of more than 100 premises in the next five years and fund more than 150 nurses and 47 therapists. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree on the important part that primary and community services play in meeting the health needs of local people.

When the trust covering the two hospitals was established in April, it was charged with bringing forward proposals for consolidating hospital services with a view to locating them on one site. The hon. Gentleman has outlined some of the stages of that process. The trust has now submitted an outline business case in support of its proposals for the future disposition of its clinical services. Lord Hayhoe, the chairman of the trust, explained recently in another place that it had been concluded that clinical services should be retained on both the main sites, but in a radically different manner from the current pattern. In essence, the trust proposes that St. Thomas's should provide accident and emergency services, along with associated support services and facilities, while Guy's should develop as the major specialist tertiary centre in south-east London.

The outline business case is now being assessed by the Department, specifically by the management executive southern outpost, and will be subject to the normal rigorous assessment. I cannot make any announcements or predictions to the hon. Gentleman, as I hope he will understand, about what the outcome will be, but I should draw attention briefly to a number of important factors which must be taken into account.

Accident and emergency services are of enormous importance to the public in terms of their assessment of their safety and that of their families. We must be sure that we have an adequate network of such services. The London ambulance service, which has had problems in the past, is being strengthened and substantial extra resources will be given to it.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to education, and it is clear that a decision must be taken about the possible transfer of academic facilities.

Many factors have to be taken into account. I regret that I cannot enlighten the hon. Gentleman as to what will take place, but what he has said so eloquently today will be a major factor in those deliberations. I can assure him that my right hon. Friend will not delay unnecessarily in reaching a decision on this important matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 17 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Health Authorities

1. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with Welsh local government organisations the level of representation the planned unitary authorities should have on health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I have no plans to alter the present arrangements.

Mr. Llwyd: How does the Minister square last week's appointment of Mrs. Lynette George to the chair of Derwen health trust in Dyfed with the Welsh Office's recent pronouncement that membership of quangos would be open to all and that there would be wide and extensive advertisement of appointments? Does he accept that the appointment was not advertised in the local newspaper that serves Dyfed, Powys and South Gwynedd and that Mrs. George is the wife of a previous Tory parliamentary candidate in Ceredigion? Does he also accept that the process is a complete sham and is wholly unacceptable to the people of Wales, who are not so easily fooled?

Mr. Jones: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. He should be aware that there is extensive advertising for all public appointments in Wales and that that has resulted in many people putting their name forward for our register of such appointments. I resent his implication about that particular appointment, not least because Mrs. George is well acquainted with health matters and is presently a member of the national health service trust for Ceredigion.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my hon. Friend agree that it will be easier to deal with that question when the Opposition have resolved their differences about the future shape of local government and, in particular, the dispute about the boundary between Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, about which my constituents are extremely concerned?

Mr. Jones: I know from my hon. Friend about his constituents' opposition to the proposal. I am also aware, as I think he is, of the way in which the imperialist ambitions of South Glamorgan are hotly resented by the Labour parties in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. I have sympathy for the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who has continuing difficulties in obtaining agreement among his comrades.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister must be cuckoo if he thinks that merely asking people to put their names forward for authorities introduces an element of democracy into the system in Wales. What matters is not the people who put their names forward but the selection of the people who are appointed, and that selection will remain in the hands of Ministers. There is no democratic accountability or relationship with the new local authorities that have been set up, so will the Minister accept that we do not like his system and wish that the people appointed were more accountable?

Mr. Jones: Accountability never stops because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State remains answerable at the Dispatch Box to all hon. Members for his actions, including appointments and the activities of those appointed. We welcome recommendations and suggestions from everyone so that we have the broadest choice and my right hon. Friend always tries to appoint the best person to every post.

Student Unions

2. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to safeguard Welsh interests on the proposed reform of student unions.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the interests of students at Welsh institutions will be fully safeguarded.

Mr. Jones: Is the Minister aware that the excellent newspaper *Gair Rhydd* which, by the way, features the Secretary of State prominently in this week's edition, will be endangered and will probably have to close as a result of the proposals? What proposals does the Minister have to safeguard the important work of Welsh student unions, which translate so much into Welsh so that there can be equality between the two languages in Welsh institutions? How does the Minister propose that that work will be done in future?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Education Bill does not prevent students or student associations from undertaking any activities, including those that he described. There is no reason why such activities should cease. Students should consider different methods if the Bill prevents them from using such funding. For instance, activities could be funded from personal subscription, fund raising by students or sponsorship from the private funds of universities or colleges, as well as from public funds.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister agree that the development of Welsh language courses in colleges in Wales is not a core activity, as defined by the Bill? Does he believe that it will add to the financial burdens of the majority of the 130,000 students in Wales and that the reforms will totally ignore the special characteristics of Welsh further and higher education and will plunge Welsh student unions into administrative chaos?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I do not agree, because our proposals will not reduce the resources provided for universities and colleges, which will continue to decide for themselves the total funding that they make available for their student

unions. Clause 22 allows for flexibility in different parts of the United Kingdom. That will permit variations to reflect any differing circumstances, including those in Wales.

Voluntary Organisations

3. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of grants from his Department to voluntary organisations in each of the last three years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available figures at outturn prices for direct and indirect grants are £144·9 million for 1990-91, £182·2 million for 1991-92 and £213·7 million for 1992-93.

Sir David Knox: Is not that a cost-effective form of public expenditure? By how much has it increased since 1979? How many organisations receive those grants?

Mr. Jones: I share my hon. Friend's impression of the cost-effectiveness involved. I seem to recollect that during the past financial year, more than 420 voluntary organisations have been assisted in that way and that since the Government came to power, support for voluntary organisations has increased threefold.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Minister will be aware that many voluntary organisations, which run village halls and other community centres in Wales, were disappointed last year when no money was made available under the usual scheme. Does he propose to reinstate that scheme for the present year, so that many excellent local facilities can be properly resourced?

Mr. Jones: We try to consider all applications for financial assistance. I remind the hon. Gentleman that during the two-year period, we set aside £2·5 million for the community revival strategy and that, under the strategic development scheme, voluntary organisations will attract 16 per cent. of the total, which is almost £6·5 million.

Job Creation

4. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will adopt to create jobs and to bring down unemployment.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): Low interest rates, the promotion of Wales as a great manufacturing and service centre and low inflation underpin our policies to promote Wales vigorously and get unemployment down, and they are working—in the past month alone, there were 1,800 more people back in work.

Mr. Jones: With the massive number of 127,000 jobless Welsh people, will the Secretary of State pledge that the Government will protect national and constituency interests in the aerospace industry, bearing in mind the outstanding GATT negotiations and the airbus project? Will he step up his efforts for manufacturing jobs and attack single-parent families less? Will he also work harder to tackle unemployment and engage less in Cabinet intrigue?

Mr. Redwood: I am promoting Wales vigorously—far more vigorously than are Opposition Members. As a result, a lot of investment is coming to this country and our national policies are working, at a time when unemployment is rising on the continent of Europe. Unemployment in Spain is at 22 per cent., in Germany at 10·5 per cent., in France at 12 per cent., in Italy more than 10 per cent., in the United Kingdom below 10 per cent. and in Wales less than 10 per cent. and falling. Of course I will do anything in my power to carry on the recovery in Wales, because we need more jobs and we shall get more jobs by following Conservative policies.

Mr. Richards: When my right hon. Friend visited Pilkington Optronics in my constituency last Monday, did he get the impression that it was a company bristling with optimism and ideas? Does not that augur well for the future of manufacturing in Wales, which has been helped not least by my right hon. Friend's decision to give the green light to the Rhuddlan bypass?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with my hon. Friend and I am grateful for his kind comments about the bypass scheme. I saw Pilkington Optronics and I saw other companies there at the leading edge of technology, with extremely good manufacturing activities, going for the best in the world and making sure that they win the markets accordingly.

On Saturday, I had the privilege to see the Welsh rugby team sweep magnificently to victory. It was winning for Wales, just as the industrialists of north-east Wales are winning for Wales. I am sure that all hon. Members present will want at least to send our congratulations to the Welsh rugby team.

Mr. Roy Hughes: In regard to the proposed reorganisation of local government in Wales, does the Secretary of State appreciate that many employees in that service are apprehensive about their future employment prospects? Bearing in mind the tremendous service that local government has given to Wales for so many years, will the Secretary of State give an assurance to those employees today that their future is secure?

Mr. Redwood: I can assure the vast majority of people working in local government in Wales that their futures are safe. Their employers will need them even after the change of responsibilities and the introduction of the unitary councils. The vast majority are providing services to the public and they will be as needed in three or four years' time as they are today. However, if there is waste and bureaucracy, we hope that that will be sorted out during the transfer to unitary status. Sensible councils will plan ahead so that they do not need to sack people but can use natural wastage to make the necessary adjustments.

Mr. John Marshall: Has not the Welsh economy benefited from the inward investment that has taken place because of the low corporate tax regime that the Government have encouraged, because the Government refused to leave the European Community, as advocated by the Labour party in 1983, and because they refused to sign up to federalism and the social chapter, as it advocated in 1992?

Mr. Redwood: I agree that our low income tax rates and our low corporation tax rates have been important in attracting investors to Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom. What is more, were there ever to be the type of assembly that Opposition Members seek, with powers to impose extra taxes, laws and regulations on Wales, that would drive those investors away. That is why we do not want such an assembly. We want Wales to be open for business and winning in the world.

Mr. Ron Davies: It seems that we have a developing tradition of English Members of Parliament who become Secretary of State for Wales being overcome by their own hype. I do not think that any of us in Wales would share the present Secretary of State's views that he made much of a contribution to the marvellous victory that we had on Saturday over Scotland.

Does the Secretary of State realise how dishonest he is being in ignoring last week's devastating news of nearly 1,000 job losses in Wales, most notably at BP Baglan bay and at Wella in Llantrisant? The continuing pattern in Wales is the replacement of full-time jobs with unskilled temporary employment and, despite wages being the lowest in the United Kingdom, unemployment is more than the national average. The number of vacancies is down and unemployment is falling at a slower rate than in the United Kingdom as a whole.

If the Secretary of State wants to get back to basics, why does not he start doing the job that he is being paid to do —arguing for policies that will get Wales back to work? Does not he realise that his petty squabbles with the Prime Minister about personal morality are bringing him into contempt and ridicule and that the people of Wales have to pay the price?

Madam Speaker: Order. If I heard correctly, I understood the hon. Gentleman, in his earlier remarks, to accuse the Secretary of State of being dishonest. I believe that he did so and I should be very grateful if he would amend that comment.

Mr. Davies: I did not accuse the Secretary of State of being dishonest. If I have done so, I withdraw the remark and apologise.

Madam Speaker: I am much obliged.

Mr. Redwood: I am obliged to you, Madam Speaker. The text of my remarks will show clearly that I was praising the rugby players for their victory. The victory was theirs and theirs alone, although the whole of Wales takes great delight in their success. It is my job to lead the Welsh team in the industrial and commercial area to equivalent success.

Mr. Rogers: What about jobs?

Mr. Redwood: It was a long question, which included rugby as well as jobs. Of course I saw that some unfortunate job losses were announced over the past month. I also saw many job gains announced. I am pleased to say that the gains outstripped the losses and that unemployment fell. I saw the Royal Opera house announcement, the Calsonic announcement, the Greenberg Glass announcement, the Europressings announcement, the Cardiff Carbides announcement and many others. We need many more such announcements and I will press on to get many more. If there are areas of especial trouble, Welsh Office assistance will, of course, be there in especial quantities.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are currently in employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The current civilian work force in September 1993, the latest date for which we have figures, was 1,119,000 people.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend share my view that the Development Board for Rural Wales has played a key role in defending jobs within its area? Has he noticed, however, that there appears to be a growing disparity between the board's performance in the Montgomeryshire area, where it is based, and its performance in some other parts of Wales, such as my constituency? Has not the time now come for the board to consider moving its headquarters further south?

Mr. Redwood: I am sure that the board wants to help all the areas for which it is responsible. Its members will see our exchanges today and I trust that it will redouble its efforts in my hon. Friend's constituency. Where the board sites its office is, of course, a matter for it. Again, its members will see my hon. Friend's remarks. Meanwhile, it is a fact that strikes, inflation and interest rates are down, while productivity, output and jobs numbers are up— *[Interruption.]* Although Opposition Members do not like that, it is the key to our recovery.

Mr. John Morris: Given the recent announcement that 600 jobs will be lost at BP Chemicals at Baglan, coming on top of the imminent loss of hundreds of jobs at Freemans Cigars, will the Secretary of State now reconsider the Government's decision to downgrade Port Talbot and Neath from development status?

Mr. Redwood: Assistance will still be available for various programmes in that area. We came to our best judgment at the time and we got an extremely good deal for Wales—a deal on which Wales can go forward and prosper.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Is not the Government's job in the Principality not directly to seek to increase the number of people in work, but to work to build the right economic framework and climate in which businesses may flourish, something which the Welsh Office has been so successful in doing in recent years?

Mr. Redwood: I agree that the main thing that helps to create jobs is the right economic climate, which is why in all my answers today I have stressed that inflation is down and that productivity is up—the right conditions under which business can trade successfully. There is a job for the Government as well. They need, for example, to pay money to clear the land and to lead regeneration schemes to deal with areas that have been damaged, especially by large nationalised industries. It is the Government's job vigorously to promote Wales as a place in which people can manufacture profitably, as many are discovering for themselves.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Secretary of State agree that, although the scissors effect worked very well on Saturday, the economic scissors effect—by which part-time jobs in service industries are up in Wales while full-time jobs in manufacturing are going inexorably down—is doing to the Welsh economy what the Prime Minister is supposed to want to do to him?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman is as wrong in his quotation from the Prime Minister as he is in his general remarks on the Welsh economy. Rather than making a

good debating point, he cheapens himself by his remarks. Many extra jobs are being created in Wales as a result of our initiatives and those of private investors and they are by no means all part-time jobs or jobs offering lower wages. On my recent tours, I have seen extremely good full-time jobs for men as well as women being added, involving a high degree of skill and good wages.

Dairy Industry

6. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the dairy industry in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Dairy farming will continue to make a significant contribution to total agricultural output in Wales. The changes being made in marketing arrangements following the passage of the Agriculture Act 1993 will help to ensure that.

Mr. Carlile: May I make an effort to investigate a little further the Minister of State's platitude? Does he accept that the future of dairy farming in rural Wales will be extremely bleak unless the Milk Marque co-operative is brought into being soon? Will he undertake to make every effort to ensure that it is operating by not later than 1 April? Will he assure the House that not only he but the Secretary of State are committed to the future support of farmers throughout rural Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Of course we are committed to the future support of farmers throughout rural Wales, especially those in the dairy industry. Of course we are all disappointed that the negotiations, which could have involved a vesting day of 1 April, have clearly shown that that cannot be achieved on that date. Meanwhile, the current arrangements will continue.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister confirm that there will be a meeting next Monday between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Milk Marque to discuss that issue? Will he give an assurance that there will be representation from the Welsh Office at that meeting and that it will press for as early as possible a vesting date to remove the uncertainty of the matter? Is he aware that every month that goes by until the matter is resolved means a real loss to the income of dairy farmers?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I can confirm that there will be a meeting next Monday and, as my right hon. Friend has responsibility for agriculture in Wales, he will be one of the Ministers involved in determining the Milk Marketing Board's scheme of organisation. Given my right hon. Friend's quasi-judicial role, the hon. Member will know that the decision cannot be pre-judged and that, of course, I must refrain from making any detailed comments on matters related to those negotiations.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Minister should come clean on the matter. It is a question not of the negotiations having failed, but of the Government vetoing the proposals that were put to them by Milk Marque. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that he understands the deeply damaging nature of the decision to reject Milk Marque's proposals. Is not it the case that the Government know that that decision and the decision to cut £25 million from hill livestock compensatory allowances will undermine confidence in the future of agriculture, but that they are proceeding anyway because, in their view, public sector intervention in any industry is ideologically unacceptable?

Sir Wyn Roberts: On that last point, I assure the hon. Gentleman that total support is up, despite the reduction in HLCAs. He has clearly misunderstood what I said. No one has been talking of rejecting the Milk Marketing Board's scheme. Nor did I say that the negotiations have failed. In fact, I said clearly that negotiations were to be resumed on 24 January, next Monday. It is important that whatever new arrangement is made should be in accordance with the Agriculture Act 1993. It is in the best interests of producers, consumers and dairy farming as a whole that we should have the right and proper arrangements.

Toxic Waste

7. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding has been earmarked in 1994-95 for the removal of toxic waste deposits from former industrial sites in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Approximately £12 million.

Dr. Howells: Is the Minister aware that throughout industrial Wales many people are forced to live alongside sites that contain industrial toxic waste? Is he further aware that many of those sites, such as that at Coedely in my constituency, resulted from the activities of the National Coal Board and British Coal, yet the same directors who are running down British Coal, who are closing mines and who closed the mine at Coedely and others will be allowed to pick the cherries of the industry without having to pick up the cost of the filthy tips? The cost of putting them right will fall on hard-pressed local authorities such as Mid-Glamorgan. When will the Minister stand up for the people of Wales and ensure that money is made available to remove this filth from our landscape?

Mr. Jones: As I have said, approximately £12 million is available for such measures in the current year. I understand that the specific case of Coedely is a matter for the Welsh Development Agency, for the hon. Gentleman's local authority of Taff Ely borough council and for Mid-Glamorgan county council, which are giving it the most serious consideration and are ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in hand. I remind him that, under the first programme for the valleys, 2,600 acres throughout the valleys of south Wales have been cleared —a record which can compare with the best in Europe.

Mr. Dickens: What steps has the Welsh Office taken to identify contaminated land across Wales?

Mr. Jones: The Welsh Office is keenly interested in this matter. It has already conducted two reviews and the matter will continue to receive its closest attention.

Disabled Facilities Grant

8. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people in Wales currently waiting for a disabled facilities grant; and how many have waited for more than two years.

Mr. Redwood: The figures are not held centrally because it is a local authority-administered scheme.

Mr. Wardell: Will the Secretary of State collect those figures and, when he does so, will he accept that it is not appropriate for elderly people to be discharged from hospital only to find that they must wait two or sometimes three years for a shower or a stairlift to be installed in their property? Will he review his policy, under which he transferred the only mandatory housing grant from the supplementary credit allowance to the basic credit allowance system? The sooner he does so, the better community care will be.

Mr. Redwood: What an indictment of Labour local government in Wales. I give it more discretion and more money, yet the hon. Gentleman says that it does not meet its targets. The targets are very clear. Someone who applies for such a grant should receive it within six months of a proper application being submitted. I shall give the hon. Gentleman some idea of the amount of money that is involved: in 1992-93, £26 million was made available to local authorities, but they spent less than £10 million under this heading, which is the only statutory requirement in the £26 million block. That is their expression of priorities. They are letting down disabled people in Wales and it is time that they did a better job. For next year, I am increasing the amount of money that I make available for disabled facilities and schemes by £6·6 million and I hope that local government will be with me and will put its money where the hon. Gentleman's mouth is.

Environmental Priorities

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his environmental priorities for 1994.

Mr. Redwood: A little change of tone now, Madam Speaker. I see that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is pleased that I am answering this question personally—he wants my personal attention for these important policies.

My environmental priorities are proper environmental protection, vigorous urban renewal, removing dereliction where it is a scar on the landscape, promoting energy efficiency and sensible planning to preserve the best in Wales while allowing sensible development.

Mr. Hughes: I was pleased to hear that the last two of the Secretary of State's priorities related to the subject of wind power, which is a controversial matter in Wales. As 10 million homes could be partially powered by wind power by the end of the century and as 200,000 homes are already powered——

Mr. Rogers: Especially in Southwark.

Mr. Hughes: Calm down.

As 200,000 homes are already powered by wind power, will the Secretary of State do all that he can to ensure that the guidelines for wind power development are introduced quickly because, in sensitive areas of Wales and elsewhere throughout the United Kingdom, people are trying to exploit the position to everybody's disadvantage whereas others are proposing good schemes that would be to the energy and personal advantage of the people of Wales?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman delivered, almost with a straight face, a question about wind power which, for the Liberal party, is quite an achievement. After all, the Liberals are experts on that.

However, I will ensure that we look again to see whether we can produce guidelines that might help in that situation. That could be a productive way forward, but we must be sensitive about the environment in which these structures might be placed. The main problem is the visual intrusion. I have asked the wind power industry to consider ways in which it could improve the structures to make them less obvious on the horizon. I believe that that would help. People are sometimes worried about noise. The structures that I have seen have not been too offensive, but clearly a planning committee must consider the wind noise issue before granting permission. I will see whether I can clarify the matter further in the way that the hon. Gentleman wishes.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The Secretary of State included in his priorities avoiding dereliction and positive planning policies. Is he aware of the anger and anxiety in Morriston about the potential long-term pollution dangers from Cwmrhydyceirw quarry which stem directly from the original planning permission in respect of which the Welsh Office overrode very strong objections from Swansea city council, which was the planning authority? Will he therefore accept responsibility now for what has happened and be ready to compensate Swansea city council if it were to decide to rescind that planning permission and also give the council money to make good the damage that has been caused?

Mr. Redwood: I should like to send a written answer to the hon. Gentleman because it is a serious question. I believe that I need to research the facts more before I give a straight answer.

British Geological Survey

10. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the future of the Wales office of the British Geological Survey at Aberystwyth.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations expressing concern at the proposed closure of the survey's district office at Aberystwyth.

Mr. Dafis: Does the Minister recognise that the Wales office of the British Geological Survey is a significant component in the infrastructure of Wales as it provides important information to local authorities, to developers and to the Welsh Office—when it chooses to ask for it? Does he accept that it is vital for economic development in Wales as it provides information on matters such as energy and mineral extraction? Does he also recognise that it will be impossible to provide that service properly if the archive that is presently located at Aberystwyth is removed from Wales together with the interpretive expertise at that office? Does he recognise that the removal of that office should not be an option? Should not the Welsh Office properly intervene to ensure that the office survives and can develop in future?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the office at Aberystwyth is part of the British Geological Survey, whose parent council is the Natural Environment Research Council, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I have made inquiries with my right hon. Friend

the Chancellor of the Duchy and he will provide me with further information. I am due to see the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), who will, I am sure, bring his representations very much to my notice. Meanwhile, I assure him that the mapping needs of Wales will continue to be met by the survey. I understand that those employed at Aberystwyth will, for the most part, be transferred to the centre at Nottingham.

Arts Council for Wales

11. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision he is making for the Arts Council for Wales for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Subject to parliamentary approval, the council will receive grant in aid of £13·541 million in 1994-95. That is 4 per cent. above provision in the current year.

Mr. Evans: Did my right hon. Friend see the gloomy prognostications of a mythical Member of the House, who was described in *The Western Mail* as being the Member for Caernarfon and Ceredigion and Pembroke, North? Will my right hon. Friend underline and appreciate how much of a welcome there is in Wales for the positive announcement that he has just made in place of that mistaken gloom?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am happy to do so. My hon. Friend is correct. The story about a reduction in the Arts Council for Wales grant was totally untrue. As I have said, there will be a 4 per cent. increase. I see the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) brandishing a headline about the Welsh national opera company. I am pleased to tell him that the Arts Council for Wales element of grant will increase by 2 per cent. next year.

Manufacturing Employment

13. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many manufacturing jobs there were in the valleys initiative districts in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The census of employment shows that there were 62,300 people employed in manufacturing jobs in the programme for the valleys area in 1987, and 57,400 in 1991, the latest year for which census of employment data are available.

Mr. Hain: Does not the Minister's reply give the lie to the way in which the Secretary of State is talking up what has been happening in the valleys? It is a devastating indictment of the Government's policy that full-time adult male jobs, predominantly in manufacturing, for which people might earn about £300 a week are being replaced by part-time jobs for which one is lucky to receive £100 a week. There will be a devastating future for the valleys if the policy continues.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is wrong and I am surprised at what he says. During that period, the valleys fared better than Great Britain as a whole. There was an 11 per cent. fall in manufacturing employment between 1988 and 1992 in the programme for the valleys area, but in Great Britain, over the same period, the fall was 14 per cent. That is a fair measure of the value of the programme for the valleys.

As for unemployment generally, I am sure that even Opposition Members will be glad to hear that unemployment is coming down faster in the programme for the valleys area than it is in the rest of Wales and indeed in the rest of the United Kingdom.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Asil Nadir

29. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding the case against Mr. Nadir.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The Crown is ready to proceed. Mr. Nadir should return to this country forthwith.

Mr. Winnick: He should indeed, but in view of all the allegations that have been made about the Nadir case, has not the time come for an independent inquiry into all aspects of the case? Of course, such an inquiry would examine the very close relationship between the Tory party and Mr. Nadir. Will the Solicitor-General try to persuade the Prime Minister to ensure that all the moneys that have been donated by Mr. Nadir to the Tory party will be refunded to the creditors? Surely that is the least that the Law Officers should be doing.

The Solicitor-General: This is very old hat. Calls for an inquiry have been made time and again. An inquiry was fixed. A date was fixed in October for a trial at the Central Criminal court which Mr. Nadir should have attended. He did not attend. He should put his arguments in front of a British jury and let them determine the issue. A British jury should be the inquirers in this issue.

Mr. Ashby: As the Serious Fraud Office wrongly and improperly got hold of all the defence papers in the Nadir case and had a chance to peruse them, is there any chance that Mr. Nadir could have a fair trial?

The Solicitor-General: The view that the Serious Fraud Office got hold of all Mr. Nadir's private and personal papers is totally misconceived. This matter has been dealt with by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General in correspondence with the previous solicitors of Mr. Nadir. There were just a number of papers. They were extracted at an early stage. When Mr. Nadir comes back to this country, the issue will be put in front of the trial judge by the Crown. There really is no excuse for Mr. Nadir staying away.

Criminal Law

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Attorney-General what are his priorities for the discharge of his duties to enforce the criminal law during 1994.

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General's priority is to continue to work with the Director of Public Prosecution and the Serious Fraud Office to ensure the robust and effective prosecution of criminal offences by the prosecuting authorities.

Mr. Hughes: Given the provisional findings of the district auditor with regard to Westminster city council last week, the allegations about Wandsworth and, for that matter, the findings with regard to Tameside, will the

Solicitor-General undertake that it will be a priority for his Department to investigate whether, in addition to any breach of the law that is currently being investigated by the auditor, there has been a criminal conspiracy in any of those places wrongly to spend public money for party political ends?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman should be slow to equate provisional findings with fact. The auditor made it plain that he was minded to find certain things, subject to the respondents being given an opportunity to show otherwise. They will be given that opportunity and will have the possibility of explaining to the district auditor that their behaviour was lawful. It would be wrong to speculate about the outcome. As to the hon. Gentleman's specific request, if he has evidence of a criminal offence, he should place it before the police and the matter will be rigorously pursued.

Mr. Rathbone: My hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the difficulties which were identified and reported in the newspapers over the weekend about an important and large drugs case. Can he give some reassurance that there is the necessary co-ordination of activities between the police, the Law Officers and Customs and Excise? In so far as there is a case to be brought, can he be wary of those siren voices which say that indictments must be made in relation to seizures at port of entry? It is extremely important in many instances to allow such consignments to go to their destinations so that we can track down and bring to trial the big boys in such deals?

The Solicitor-General: This case was dealt with properly. All decisions were taken by Customs and Excise, which is an independent prosecuting authority. The Attorney-General's limited role in the case was entirely proper and in response to an approach from defence counsel. The decision to drop the case against Mr. Charrington was taken by the commissioners of Customs and Excise. Two defendants are to be retried in June. Hon. Members may wish to be circumspect about their comments, bearing in mind the fact that those two cases are sub judice.

Mr. John Morris: Is the Solicitor-General satisfied that the Attorney-General was told all the facts concerning Mr. Charrington? Who was present at the meeting of defence and prosecution counsel, which the Attorney-General chaired? Can the Solicitor-General assist the House as to why a local news agency was urged not to publicise details of the story?

The Solicitor-General: I am not responsible, nor is my right hon. and learned Friend, for reports in local newspapers. I can assure the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the matter was properly investigated. As I said, there was a meeting which was requested by counsel for Mr. Charrington. That meeting was chaired by the Attorney-General, and counsel for the prosecution and I were present. The matter was dealt with properly. As I said, the prosecution was taken by Customs and Excise. That Department took all the material decisions about the conduct of the case.

Lloyd's

31. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Attorney-General when he has been consulted on prosecutions in the Lloyd's insurance market.

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General has not been consulted about any such prosecutions. He has given instructions that I should deal with any matter in connection with Lloyd's which arises in his Departments.

Mr. Hain: Does the Minister agree that in Lloyd's recently there has been well-documented evidence of insider trading, criminal activity and fraud, and that the Government have treated the whole corruption of the Lloyd's insurance market with a cavalier disregard which contrasts with the way in which they pursue ordinary citizens who may top up their social security benefits with a bit of part-time gardening or something similar? Are there not two standards—one for the rich and one for the poor?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman addresses me as a Minister. I am a Law Officer of the Crown and I have duties in respect of the public interest which other Ministers do not have.

The hon. Gentleman asked a specific question about Lloyd's. Where there has been evidence of dishonesty, investigations have been rigorously pursued by the regulatory and the prosecuting authorities. The Serious Fraud Office is pursuing two cases which involve Lloyd's and the Crown Prosecution Service is pursuing one.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is extremely important for all hon. Members to consider carefully what they say about Lloyd's insurance market? Clearly, untoward things have gone on in Lloyd's during the past year or two, but there is a particular responsibility on the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) to check his facts before he makes wild allegations. Shortly after the general election, the hon. Gentleman released to the press a list of a number of seats where hon. Members were, he said, names at Lloyd's. That list included my parliamentary seat, because the hon. Gentleman had not noticed that my predecessor had retired. I am not a name at Lloyd's and the hon. Gentleman, despite being made aware of that fact, has refused to apologise either to me or to my predecessor, Sir Peter Blaker.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Member for Neath apparently is not very well informed, but there is not much that is new about that.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid (Population Activities)

37. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the total aid programme is devoted to population activities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): About £28·6 million or 1·55 per cent. of the total aid programme was identified as being spent directly on population activities in the calendar year 1992. There is, in addition, much spent through the multilateral institutions.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The Government stated in the United Kingdom report to the International Conference on Development and Population that development assistance "remains too low". What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to increase resources and, more importantly, to encourage new donor agencies, particularly in the European Union, where countries have not previously contributed aid in that area?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government continue to encourage the mobilisation of additional resources for population in all suitable international forums, which must include the European Community. My hon. Friend referred to the conference on population, which is in Cairo this year. That provides opportunities for reminding and encouraging greater commitment to population issues.

Mr. Worthington: Does not the Minister think that the people of sub-Saharan Africa, where the population doubles every 25 years, have the same right to choose the size of their families as do the people of Italy, where the population doubles every 3,500 years?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we want policies which encourage people to reach decisions by choice, not by chance. The purpose of all our policies is to give people, and women in particular, the right information and assistance to come to their own decisions about the size of their families.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my hon. Friend aware that last November the United States State Department established a global action committee? Is he further aware that one of that committee's objectives is to give full access to contraception for all people across the globe by 2000? Does my hon. Friend share that objective and, if so, what percentage of the ODA budget should be allocated towards such a programme?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are always loth to adopt specific targets, but we certainly share the objective which my hon. Friend is encouraging. It is significant to remind my hon. Friend that British ODA aid for population has increased by about 60 per cent. during the past four years.

Aid Policy

39. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the main change in direction in the use of the resources available for overseas aid in the year 1994-95.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The priority objectives for the aid programme for 1994-95 were set out in the speech of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development at Chatham House on 18 October 1993, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Pike: In that speech, the Minister for Overseas Development said that the poorest nations were unable to benefit fully under the Trinidad terms and that there was a need to extend and improve those terms. In the year ahead, do the Government intend to do that for the poorest and most needy nations in the world?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This is an area of policy in the world in which Britain has always led. We launched the terms in 1990. Eighteen countries, including 13 in Africa, have so far benefited. We have also relieved developing countries of £1 billion of aid debt burden. We are continuing to examine debt relief in conjunction with the Paris club.

Mr. Lester: Does my hon. Friend agree that both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have committed themselves to the Trinidad terms and argued strongly at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting and the World bank meeting in Washington for not only the Trinidad terms but the extended Trinidad terms, to which the Government are also committed?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I heartily endorse what my hon. Friend has said. The British Government, and in particular the two members of the Government to whom my hon. Friend referred, can take the fullest possible credit for the Trinidad terms. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched the Trinidad terms himself. I agree with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If everything in the garden is so lovely, will the Minister explain why only last week we had an announcement of 47 redundancies of scientific personnel at Chatham? Does he accept that is a direct result of the real cut in overseas aid by the Government, including a cut confirmed in the last Budget? Given that 47 people are to lose their jobs and that some of the poorest countries in the world benefit from their crucial scientific research, where is the Government's strategy for any development for the poorest of this universe?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I cannot accept that the job losses at Chatham are a direct result of some suggestion that the Government's aid programme is not substantially increasing. It has increased by 10 per cent. in real terms in the past six years. Of course, there will be redeployment within the aid budget and I suspect that that is what is happening at Chatham. I or my right hon. and noble Friend will write to the hon. Gentleman to give him further briefing on that.

Mr. Brandreth: Has my hon. Friend had the opportunity to read UNICEF's latest report on the state of the world's children? It reminds us that, while much progress has been made, disease still claims some 8 million children's lives each year. That is far more than famine or warfare. Will his priorities include the UNICEF priority of the elimination of disease, especially diarrhoea and pneumonia in children?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British aid programme is concerned with the elimination of disease, with particular emphasis on assistance to the poorest countries.

Development Assistance

40. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of the current position with the general agreement on tariffs and trade for the United Kingdom programme of development assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcome the successful outcome of the Uruguay round, which potentially can do more than anything else to boost economic growth in the developing world.

Ms Quin: What plans does the Minister or his Department have to examine the position of countries which it is forecast will not do well out of the GATT agreement? I am thinking in particular of African countries south of the Sahara. Is not that something which his Department should examine urgently in conjunction with the Minister's European counterparts? What will he do to make sure that our aid and trade policies complement and do not contradict each other?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The conclusion of the Uruguay round is of benefit to the world as a whole. It is not a zero sum gain. Everyone could benefit from it, including developing countries. However, the hon. Lady has touched on a point that was anticipated. In the short term, some developing countries that are net food importers will have difficulties. The Uruguay round anticipated that difficulty and the agreement includes provisions to assist those countries. The important thing for the developing world is that it will have better market access to the prosperous countries of the world and will face lower protection in those countries in domestic agricultural products, which is what the poor world wants to export to us.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is not it the case that, as a result of GATT, developing countries will be able to increase their exports to the extent that the revenue that they will receive therefrom is greater than the aid programmes of the entire western world and Japan put together? Is not that important, because it will allow those countries to get away from the begging-bowl mentality so favoured by Opposition Members?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I agree with my hon. Friend. Various studies have concluded that the developing world earns three times as much from trade as it does from aid and that third-world countries will benefit to the tune of some $78 billion per annum once the effects of the agreement have worked through.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Kaufman on a point of order.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): My point of order arises out of the Prime Minister's evidence to the Scott inquiry this morning, but I raise it with you, Madam Speaker, because it relates to the Prime Minister's dealings with Members of this House and with Government evidence to the Select Committees of the House.

The Prime Minister this morning told the Scott inquiry that he did not know until November 1992 that the guidelines with regard to the embargo on arms to Iraq had been changed four years earlier, in 1988. In a letter to me dated 17 February 1992, the Prime Minister said:

"Let us get the facts straight . . . Guidelines laying down which types of equipment could be licensed for export, and which could not were first introduced in 1980, were revised and made more stringent in 1984, and were announced to the House by Geoffrey Howe in 1985. The guidelines announced by Geoffrey Howe remained in force until the invasion in 1990 when they were replaced by a total embargo . . . The guidelines were enforced carefully and strictly through interdepartmental machinery established for the purpose."

The Prime Minister today has confirmed that, in fact, the guidelines were not those of 1985 but were changed in 1988.

I raise the matter with you, Madam Speaker, for two reasons. The first is that, when the Prime Minister was challenged on 16 November 1992 about his failure to inform me in his letter of 17 February 1992 about the change in the guidelines of 1988, he did not say as he said to the Scott inquiry today that he did not give that information because he did not know. Rather, he made it known through 10 Downing street that the information had been given to a Select Committee of the House—the Trade and Industry Select Committee—on 28 January——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must ask the right hon. Gentleman the point of order that he wishes me to deal with. Will he now come to that point?

Mr. Kaufman: Yes, of course, Madam Speaker. There are two parts to this point of order relating to you as Speaker of the House.

The first is that the Prime Minister's office announced that the change in the guidelines, which the Prime Minister now denies he knew, was made known to a Select Committee of this House of Commons on 28 January 1992, and that therefore the Prime Minister now appears to be resiling from information given to a Select Committee of the House of Commons which Ministers are required to give in good faith.

Secondly, the Prime Minister failed to give me, as a Member of the House, the information which was available to the Select Committee, not on the grounds that he did not know that that information was available, but on the grounds that everybody knew that that information was available.

The statement made by the Prime Minister at the Scott inquiry today is not compatible with information given to a House of Commons Select Committee, nor is it compatible with information given to me as a Member of the House of Commons. Therefore, at least one of the three statements made by the Prime Minister cannot be true.

I therefore ask that you, Madam Speaker, require the Prime Minister to make a statement clarifying the matter for the House of Commons.

Madam Speaker: I have no doubt that, when Lord Justice Scott has made his report, there will be ample opportunities to debate the matter on the Floor of the House. In the meantime, the answers that Ministers give to more detailed points arising during the course of the inquiry are a matter for those Ministers.

I do not give procedural advice from the Chair, but I should make it clear that any charge that Members might have been deliberately misled can only be made in the proper form and not suggested in a point of order.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you aware that today, in the Jubilee Room in the Palace of Westminster, a meeting was addressed by members of Sinn Fein, an organisation that sponsors terrorism? I would like to express my deep outrage that such a meeting took place. It is——

Hon. Members: Is this a point of order?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is raising a point of order with me.

Lady Olga Maitland: I will come to it.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must come to it now. I am not interested in her emotions about this matter.

Lady Olga Maitland: Is it in order for such a meeting to take place in the Palace of Westminster, when hon. Members have been deeply offended by it and when so many hon. Members have been killed or maimed by the IRA? Would you give guidelines to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) that such meetings cannot be held until the IRA ceases its violence?

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw attention to the fact that this is the second time that an attempt has been made to hold a meeting to convey the particular information that was conveyed this morning, even though it was published more than a month ago in Belfast? On the first occasion, the Home Secretary issued an exclusion order against the invited speaker on the ground that that person was involved in terrorism. That view was shared by the President of the United States, who banned that same person on the ground that he was directing terrorism at a high level.

In view of the close connection between the meeting and the preparation, instigation and commission of acts of terrorism, is this not a matter of concern to the House?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should be raising a point of order that is of concern to me.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: I see that Mr. Corbyn is standing. As the House is aware, it is not my habit to take constant points of order on one issue. As I believe that the hon. Gentleman used his name to book the Committee Room, I must obviously hear his point of order. That will be the last point of order on that issue, because I am ready to respond.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to use this point of order to thank you for

allowing us to use that room and to thank the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) for attending the press conference to hear what members of Sinn Fein had to say. I hope that that meeting will hasten the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps I should draw to the attention of all hon. Members the fact that guidelines on the booking of Committee Rooms are available from the Serjeant at Arms' Office. Hon. Members are entitled to book Committee Rooms in connection with a parliamentary subject, providing the relevant rules and regulations are followed, as I understand they were in this case.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 12 December, you certified that the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill was a matter relating exclusively to Scotland. On Thursday, however, at column 341, I asked the Leader of the House whether that Bill would follow Scottish procedure, whereby the Bill's Second Reading, Standing Committee stage and Report could be taken in the Scottish Grand Committee. He said that he had some difficulty in pursuing that suggestion, because the usual channels of communication had broken down.

If the Leader of the House has a genuine difficulty, does that not change your relationship with Standing Orders 92 and 93, to ensure that matters which you have decided and which relate exclusively to Scotland can be decided by Scottish Members of Parliament?

In *The Sunday Times* yesterday, Government sources were quoted as saying how many Members of Parliament who will serve on the Standing Committee, and even gave the names of some Members. That is before a vote on Second Reading, and before the Committee of Selection has even met.

There is outrage in Scotland about the idea that Scottish local government can be gerrymandered by the votes of English Conservative Members of Parliament. Can you assist Scottish Members and offer us some protection?

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me some notice of his point of order. Actually, my relationship with Standing Orders 92 and 93 to which he refers is not changed. Standing Order 93 makes it clear that only a Minister of the Crown may move to refer a Bill to the Scottish Grand Committee on Second Reading.

May I help the hon. Gentleman further? If he has in mind further scrutiny once the Bill has been read a Second time, may I suggest that he discusses with the Public Bill Office during the course of today the alternatives that might be available to him, because, as he well knows, it is not the practice of the Chair to give procedural advice across the Floor of the Chamber.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a totally different aspect of the point of order raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), Madam Speaker, may I bring to your attention the problem of Members of this House attending the Scott inquiry? Whereas, when civil servants were being interviewed, I was received with total courtesy at Buckingham gate, the shadow Attorney-General, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), had to queue for an hour and a quarter this morning in very cold conditions on the grounds that a place could not be reserved for Members of the House who had given notice of their desire to attend.

Apparently, an agreement has been reached that selected members of the press will be allowed reserved seats. I do not complain about that, but, if members of the press have reserved seats, surely Members of the House with direct responsibilities in relation to the inquiry should also be afforded the courtesy of seats at Buckingham gate.

Madam Speaker: I know nothing about agreements for visitors' or press tickets to the Scott inquiry. I am sure that the House will support me in saying that I have sufficient responsibilities in relation to parliamentary duties in the House, without looking for reserved seats for Members, however important they may be, at an outside inquiry.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you can assist me with the procedures that are called into question by a press release issued today by the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who is in his place, which has been advised to me by an estimable local paper, the *Largs and Millport Weekly News*. The press release opens with the words:

"Speaking in the House of Commons debate on the reform of local government in Scotland".

That is presumption beyond belief, because you and I know that, although the hon. Member for Ayr has many talents, second sight is not one of them. Is not that a preemption of your rights, Madam Speaker?

I have no wish to prolong this point of order, so I shall not read the hon. Gentleman's press speech. I have no wish to have him sent away to write another, because I doubt whether his joined-up writing could handle it. The press release goes on to attack other hon. Members——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman need go no further. I think that I have got his point. Now, what does Mr. Gallie have to say?

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) did not have the courtesy to advise me that he was going to refer to me on this occasion. Had he had a copy of the press release, he would have seen that it was clearly embargoed until 10 pm tonight, at which time I could have confirmed whether I had been called to speak. It was my understanding that that was common practice, and that the hon. Gentleman had certainly used such a practice himself.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: No, I can deal with this. I have heard enough.

I deprecate the hon. Gentleman's action, as I would if it were any hon. Member, of any party. If the hon. Gentleman catches my eye tonight, he can be absolutely certain that I shall check what he has to say against delivery. Could we not end points of order on that note?

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Do you recall, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) did exactly the same but without the embargo?

Madam Speaker: I have just deprecated the possibility that any hon. Member of any party might do that. It certainly did not happen in my time as a Back Bencher, and I wish that we could get back to those good old days.

Orders of the Day

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), but no doubt its content will arise during the debate.

3.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Today's debate marks a major staging post in the long journey towards the reform of local government in Scotland. It is right that the journey should be a long one, for the reform of Scottish local government is a major undertaking, which will have far-reaching implications for the people of Scotland. That is why the Government have, over the past three years, carried out the most thorough preparation, research and consultation before laying the Bill before the House.

There have been two major consultation papers on the structure now proposed, followed by a White Paper. There have been further consultation papers, on internal management, tourism, water and sewerage, the children's reporter service, and costs, and the issues have been extensively debated on the Floor of the House and in the Scottish Grand Committee. Now we have the opportunity for further thorough debate as we take our reform proposals through Parliament and make them a reality. All that is as it should be.

Local government plays a unique and vital part in the political, democratic and administrative life of Scotland. As a provider—or, increasingly, as an organiser—of services, local government touches the lives of all of us, having responsibility for many key services, including education, social work, housing and many more on which the quality of people's lives depends.

In democratic terms, local government provides a local focus for people's wishes, needs and aspirations. It is also Scotland's largest employer, employing more than a quarter of a million people and it is responsible for current expenditure approaching £6·5 billion per annum, and capital expenditure of about £1·5 billion. That works out at about £1,800 of total expenditure for every man, woman and child in the country.

It is essential that an institution of this size, importance and cost should be structured in such a way as to allow it to carry out its functions with the maximum efficiency and effectiveness, and in such a way as to provide Scotland with a source of robust and relevant local democracy. That is why we are debating this Bill today.

Over the years, the role of local government has inevitably changed as the world around it has moved on. Periodically, it has also been necessary to restructure local government to ensure that it has remained in a position effectively to fulfil its role. Experience clearly shows, however, that the timing of any restructuring is vital. Synchronising the change with the changing external environment is essential if local government is not to fall behind the times and become seriously damaged as a result.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Has the Secretary of State considered whether the gerrymandering proposed in the Bill is worse than the accusations of gerrymandering in Westminster? Lady Porter is accused of gerrymandering only a single council, whereas the Secretary of State is proposing to gerrymander an entire country.

Can the Secretary of State honestly tell the House that he would have been happy if the leaders of any of the other political parties in Scotland had had the right or the desire to draw their own boundary lines on a local government map of Scotland? Would he have been happy with that process?

Mr. Lang: I totally reject the hon. Gentleman's charge, and I look forward to debating such matters further with him in Committee.

In 1975, the change came too late. The old local government system had reached a parlous state, and the result was that momentum was lost in key services for a number of years on either side of the reform process. There was a widespread recognition of the need for major surgery. It was not for nothing that the very first words of Lord Wheatley's report were:

"something is seriously wrong with local government in Scotland".

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: I would like to make a little progress first; then I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The evidence is now plainly there that, despite the Wheatley reform, something is still seriously wrong with local government in Scotland. From the time when the two-tier system was first conceived, its long-term validity was called into question. Reporting in 1969, the Wheatley commission, while ultimately recommending a two-tier system, acknowledged that

"an all-purpose system has obvious advantages. It is simple to understand and to operate . . . The problems . . . of ensuring that functions which go together can be properly co-ordinated with one another simply do not arise, because all services are under one authority".

Those are prophetic words. Reporting in January 1981, the Stodart committee of inquiry into local government in Scotland—on which the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) served—considered existing arrangements less than six years after the introduction of the two-tier system, and found a great deal of dissatisfaction with it, particularly among local authorities.

The extent of dissatisfaction among local authorities led Stodart to state in his report:

"We must take note of this early stage in our Report of the substantial body of opinion—not least among some local authorities—which maintains the belief that only the creation of all or at least most purpose authorities throughout the country will produce a wholly satisfactory system of local government."

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Is not the Secretary of State aware of the concern that some of the smaller local authorities that he proposes to set up will not be able to provide the full range of services in, for example, education and social work? A profusion of quangos and local boards will inevitably result from his proposal, which will be expensive and will not provide services efficiently. That is a heavy price to pay simply for the sake of creating a few Tory-controlled councils.

Mr. Lang: It is right that, if a small local authority may not be able to provide all services at its own hand, it should have access to a neighbouring authority that can assist it. The structure that we are contemplating should enable us to do that.

In his report, Lord Wheatley said, on precisely the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman:

"Such a large area"—

referring to Strathclyde—

"would offer no educational advantages; it would be administratively unwieldy; and it would raise the question whether, with one education authority covering almost half the population of Scotland, it was really worth while to have local education authorities at all."

Clearly, therefore, there was anxiety when the present regional structure was set up that education would be handled at too high a level and by authorities that were too large.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Secretary of State is talking about small authorities. Has he grasped the fact that the smallest authority that he is proposing, to be named East Lothian and Berwickshire, is not wanted by either the people of East Lothian or those of Berwickshire? Can we hope to hear of any concession on that, in view of the overwhelming feeling of the people of East Lothian and Berwickshire that they do not want that type of authority?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Bill contains a map that is largely unchanged from that in the White Paper, although there is a change affecting Prestonpans, with which the hon. Gentleman will be familiar. I look forward to debating those borders in Committee.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North) *rose*——

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I must make a little progress; then I shall happily give way again.

The issues referred to by both Lord Wheatley and later by Stodart have not gone away over the years, and that is little wonder, for the problems endemic within the present structure are profound. The division of responsibilities within the tiers of the current structure is arbitrary, in some cases it is bizarre, and in many sectors it is far from clear. Not only is the consumer of local services confused; the services that he or she consumes are not delivered as efficiently or as effectively as they should be.

Beneath its inflated rhetoric, the Labour party has often highlighted the shortcomings of the present two-tier system and the potential for a single-tier structure to remedy them. In its policy document, published in 1990, the Scottish Labour party said:

"The continuing widespread confusion about what tier carries out what functions undermines accountability. All-purpose councils facilitate the move to an integrated approach to service provision and also decentralisation through a local one-door approach . . ."

I absolutely agree with those sentiments.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. I wonder whether he can help me. Representatives of Cunninghame district council, including the chief executive Mr. Bernard Devine, have been quoted locally as saying that the Secretary of State has ruled out an all-Ayrshire option. I am glad to see that the Secretary of State is shaking his head.

Yet the Minister of State told a deputation that I took to see him from Cumnock and Doon Valley and Kyle and Carrick that the Government would consider all possible options—including the all-Ayrshire option—in Committee and has also said so publicly since. Will the Secretary of State put it on record that all options, including the all-Ayrshire option, can be considered by the Government and by hon. Members in Committee and on Report?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that all options for boundary changes can be considered in Committee—that is what that stage is about. I recall that the original recommendations of the Wheatley commission were for fewer than 50 local authorities, but we ended up with 65, and quite a different map from the one it suggested.

I am talking about the advantages of a single tier. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman emphasised his view in the House as recently as the debate on the Loyal Address, and that he is among those on both sides of the House who see merit in a single-tier structure.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Secretary of State's references to Lord Wheatley are particularly apposite. If he is so confident of the virtues of the scheme he is proposing, why has he not established an independent commission, like the Wheatley commission, to judge the merits of his proposals?

Similarly, if the right hon. Gentleman is pleased with the nature of consultation that has been afforded, why have the Government rejected the responses in East Lothian and north-east Fife, for example, where people have rejected the very proposals that he is seeking to persuade the House about because they do not regard them as an appropriate way to deal with the problems that he has identified?

Mr. Lang: As I have already explained, the Wheatley commission did not lead to the detail that ended up in the reform carried out in the early 1970s, which departed substantially from what that commission had recommended. Nor do I see any evidence of widespread support and enthusiasm for some of the commission's recommendations south of the border. In 1975, we upgraded the structure of our local authority system to an extent that reduced 426 authorities to 65, and we created a much more coherent structure than that which existed south of the border, so the work is largely done.

As far as the proposals for Fife, the Borders or any other part of Scotland are concerned, the hon. and learned Gentleman will have heard what I said to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lang: No, I must make a little more progress; then I shall no doubt end up by giving way again.

The commitment to a single tier of local government is generally agreed by all parties, and was included in their election manifestos. What is surprising is how quickly the Opposition parties have reneged on their election promises. However, the present system is flawed and is acknowledged to be so—even by Opposition Members—and those flaws are wide-ranging.

The system that we have today is unduly and unnecessarily expensive. On the mainland of Scotland, we

[Mr. Lang]

have a superstructure of 53 districts and nine regions. Over the years, with many changes to the pattern of service delivery, the role of many districts has become inadequate and the scale of the unnecessary expense incurred in maintaining two tiers of local government has become more apparent.

For example, since 1979, as many as a quarter of Scotland's council houses have been sold to their tenants, yet the number of staff employed by local authorities to provide housing services has actually increased in the same period by as much as two thirds, instead of reducing proportionately, We can no longer afford to burden Scotland with a system that produces such nonsense as that. Nor can we allow Scotland to continue to be burdened with a system of local government that is ineffective, unaccountable and shrouded in apathy.

With two councils for each area of Scotland, there is a weak democratic link between the councils and their communities. One of the malign effects of the two-tier structure has been to blur the identity of authorities in the eyes of the public. It has made councils less accountable and voters more apathetic—the turnout at local elections has been pathetic.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): If the Secretary of State were setting up a single-tier system within Scotland, there would be a great deal of agreement among hon. Members on all sides of the House. The Secretary of State is being extremely disingenuous, however, because he is withdrawing major services from local councils and local accountability and giving them to placemen.

Is it not simply dishonest for the Secretary of State to pretend that he is setting up a single-tier authority when he is taking water and sewerage away from local authorities, when he is taking the police away, when the reporters department is being taken away and when the further education system has been taken away already? That is not a single-tier system; it is a multi-layer mess.

Mr. Lang: I am afraid that it is the hon. Gentleman's understanding of the position that is a multi-layer mess, as he will discover if he comes on the Committee and takes part in the debates about what we propose.

Against the background that I have described, it would be wrong to delay a restructuring exercise when all the evidence from all sides points to the need for one. Lord Wheatley's commission—I will quote from it again—recognised the need when he said:

"evidence from all sides convinces us that the structure of local government cannot afford to remain static".

In 1975, reform had been put off for far too long. To allow that to happen again—by failing to take account of change and to anticipate change in the future—would be a serious dereliction of duty by Government. It would also render a major disservice to local government and those people who use its services. The Bill tackles the flaws that so obviously exist and puts local government on a more effective footing from which to carry out its various functions.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister recognise that one thing which has not changed since the last reform of local government is the size and extent of the Highland region, and the fact that local government cannot by any test be regarded as local if it covers half the land mass of Scotland? Does he recognise that it is regarded by business men, at least in the Caithness and Sutherland chamber of commerce and others, as being inimical to their economic interests to seek to govern at local level the half of Scotland that is based and centred upon Inverness?

Mr. Lang: the hon. Gentleman has a point of view which he expresses clearly, but some of his hon. Friends do not hold the same view. Under the decentralisation that we propose, all those services—the vast majority of local services in the Highlands came before from the Highland Region—will now come again from a Highland council, but they will be decentralised in a way which will lead to a much closer link administratively between the council and its local areas. The existing Highland regional council is already doing a great deal of work in preparation for that.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) *rose——*

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose——*

Mr. Lang: No; I must make further progress. I will give way later.

I do not propose today to use up the House's time in describing at length all the provisions of the Bill. With 169 clauses, it obviously includes a great deal of detail, which we will, I hope, debate thoroughly in Committee. I would, however, like to spend a few moments on the principles which underpin our proposals for local government and for water.

Taking local government first, I have already touched on the support which many commentators have given to single-tier local government over the years. However, I think that it is important to reiterate exactly the three key objectives of the single-tier structure proposed in the Bill.

First, we want local councils to be strong, and, in local government, strength comes from being accountable. The ability of the public to call their local authority to account —through the ballot box or otherwise—will be improved beyond recognition where all local government responsibilities rest with a single council in an area. More accountable local government means more powerful local government.

Secondly, we want the delivery of local services to be improved. The fact that one organisation will have responsibility for the full range of services will be a major step forward on service delivery. The benefits of having social work and housing brought under one roof are well known and much anticipated, but many other areas of policy, such as leisure and recreation and education, environmental health and trading standards, will benefit from a single-tier structure.

Thirdly, we want a less bureaucratic, more flexible and efficient structure of local government. The rationalisation of local government outlined in the Bill will soon start to yield savings—savings which cannot be ignored. That has been confirmed by every submission that we have received from a local authority on the matter, and Professor Percy, chairman of the independent organisation the Local Authority Accounts Commission, stated:

"In our view, the unitary authority structure favoured by the Government's White Paper on Local Government Reform provides a better way of delivering that service. We believe reform will be effective in the long term, and in the short term, once the legislation is through, all of us must get down to making it work."

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Secretary of State mentioned the importance of having a single lead authority in charge of the various functions that will be given to local authorities. He knows that he has just embarked on an ambitious care in the community policy. He has placed the social work departments of regional councils, such as the social work department of Tayside regional council, as the lead authorities in charge of that policy.

The proposed reform will create three different social work departments in the Tayside region. Which of those will be the lead authority in implementing care in the community? Instead of making the system clearer and more accountable, the Secretary of State is taking steps that will make it far less accountable. It will be far less clear who is in charge, who will implement the policy and who will be responsible if it does not work.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to a very important policy which we have devolved from central Government to local authorities—care in the community. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in his understanding of the position on social work, and in his conclusion. The benefit of having social work handled in one unitary authority is that it will be possible to interrelate action on the social work side with action on the housing side. One of the strongest criticisms of the bizarre relationship between the top tier and the bottom tier of the present system concerns the lack of co-ordination between housing policy and social work policy.

Mr. Kennedy: Following the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), will the Secretary of State clarify how any of the principles that he has just enunciated can be realised in the context of the highlands? The principles will be rendered null and void as a result of the size of the area.

Will he confirm that Touche Ross based its estimates on average council sizes of 60? That would be a reduction of two thirds in the number of councillors that the Highland region has at present. If the figure is increased to anything resembling the reckonings in the White Paper, there would be more than 130 councillors, which would be more than Strathclyde has at the moment. The Prime Minister described that regional council as a monstrosity. The right hon. Gentleman's proposal is a complete illogicality.

Mr. Lang: The Highland region will still have only a little more than 200,000 people in it. Of course it is a geographically large area, but everyone recognises that Sutherland, for example, with a population of 15,000 or 16,000, could not constitute a single authority in itself, although it might do geographically. I know that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends disagree on the detail of what the Highland region should look like. Our proposal will give the most efficient, the most accountable and the strongest local government that we can create for that very important part of Scotland.

Mr. Kirkwood: It is obvious from the interventions that the Secretary of State has already accepted that the most burning issue in the minds of most hon. Members is the boundary map at the end of the process—*[Interruption.]* What does the rest of his speech contain? I hope that he will take time to set out exactly how the Committee stage and the subsequent stages in the House of Lords will arrive at the final boundaries.

Is the Secretary of State aware, for example, that there is now a unitary alternative for south-east Scotland, the Lothians and the Borders? It has been proposed that West Lothian should be a free-standing unitary authority, and that Midlothian and East Lothian should be put together. That would leave Berwickshire in the Borders region, where it belongs. Will the Secretary of State tell the House on Second Reading exactly how he anticipates that these questions, which are vital for hon. Members, will be resolved during the passage of the Bill?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman has served on many Committees, and he knows the form. The boundaries are dealt with at an early stage of the Bill. I expect that a Back Bencher, perhaps the hon. Gentleman, will table amendments affecting precisely the areas on which he has just touched. That will enable the Committee to debate the matter and to reach a conclusion. Thereafter, there will be a chance to return to these matters on Report. The Bill then goes to the House of Lords and back to the Commons if necessary.

We have every opportunity. I look forward to debating these issues, because I acknowledge that the borders and boundaries are important. Scottish National party Members showed clearly during the hon. Gentleman's intervention that not everyone shares his view that those issues are the most important.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): If the Secretary of State believes that his Government are proposing the new, democratic way forward for councils in Scotland, why does he not acknowledge that the proposals for East Renfrewshire council have been utterly rejected by the people? In a democratic vote, 82 per cent. of the people in Ralfston rejected them, 91 per cent. voted against them in Dykebarr and 78 per cent. rejected them in Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor. Those figures are in an official document from Renfrewshire district council. If the Secretary of State is determined to have genuine democracy, should he not listen to the people?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to debate that matter further as the Bill progresses.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I look forward to that.

Mr. Lang: Yes, I look forward to it, too.

I recognise that there are concerns about change to a single-tier structure that are signalled in the Bill. I fully acknowledge that there will be a measure of disruption during the transitional period. That is not in itself a reason for not proceeding with the reform. Just because something involves change, it is not an excuse for shying away from it.

It is the Government's view, backed by many in local government, that the transition is a perfectly manageable process, and that, with early and committed action by local government, the disruption can be minimised. I have no doubt that, given the professionalism of many local government staff, the hurdles which will undoubtedly emerge can be successfully negotiated without undue disturbance to the delivery of services.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Who did the Secretary of State have in mind when he referred to the many in local government who back his proposals?

Mr. Lang: I am referring to many people in local government at official level and at elected level, to all the submissions that we have received from local government, to all the delegations that have been led by Members of both sides of the House who have been to see myself and my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning. The hon. Gentleman will discover, as the Bill progresses, that there is widespread support for single tier —an issue on which his party fought the election on a manifesto that contained such a commitment.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): May I urge my right hon. Friend not to name as requested by Opposition Members all the people who have communicated support for his excellent proposals? Please do not name those people, because many of us want to speak during the debate.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that quite a lot of the names are already available in the House of Commons Library. We have published our reports on the submissions that we have had in the response to the first consultation paper.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: I really must make some progress. This is an important debate, and I have a lot to say to the House.

A number of provisions have been included in the Bill specifically to aid the transition process. They include clauses that provide for the appointment of a staff commission—clause 12—which allow the establishment of one or one or more residuary bodies—clause 18—and of a property commission—clause 19. The clauses relating to staff and property transfers have all been drafted to allow local government the maximum flexibility in determining the most appropriate arrangements.

Dwelling for a moment on those provisions, we are fully aware that local government staff represent authorities' most valuable resource, and the Government are concerned to mininise the disruption that staff may face. The great majority of staff, of course, will simply transfer to the new authorities on their existing terms and conditions. We shall be considering carefully over the months, hopefully in discussion with local government and staff interests—if they are prepared to talk to us about the interests of their staff—the arrangements which will apply to those staff for whom there will not be an automatic right of transfer. The staff commission will also have a role to play once its members are appointed, and we will listen carefully to what they have to say.

Still on the question of facilitating the transition, clauses 55 and 56 provide respectively for the provision of information from the old authorities to the new authorities and for the establishment by existing authorities of joint working committees to prepare for the effective operation of the new authorities.

It is therefore ironic that, while the Government have taken considerable steps to assist local government in managing the transitional period, and will continue to do so, the very organisation which was established to assist and represent local government—the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities—has chosen to adopt the posture of the ostrich, bury its head in the sand and be as obstructive as possible. Its attitude is short-sighted, short-term and ultimately damaging, not only to local government, but to staff and those who most depend on its services.

I should like to take the opportunity of today's debate to call on COSLA to decide at its meeting on Friday to call off the policy of non co-operation, in the interests of good local government and the people of Scotland. I know that it is difficult for it to admit how seriously it has miscalculated, and that it must regret its short-sighted posturing and the way in which it has split its members and paralysed its own organisation.

Its policy has failed, but it is time to look forward, not back. I for one shall not seek to make any political capital from—*[Interruption.]*—no political capital at all from COSLA's climbdown, whenever it comes. I hope that Opposition Members will urge it, as I shall, to get it over and done with, and to do it now.

Inevitably, some concerns have been expressed, and I do not dismiss them, but, again, the Government's task is to distinguish them from the often ill-thought-out and generalised protectionism that argues only that the present system is perfect and that any change must by definition be detrimental. I find such arguments deeply unconvincing. They are not arguments to which the forward thinkers in local government subscribe. They frequently seem bound up with the self-preservation of those who articulate them and find little support among other authorities that are thinking seriously about how to deliver efficient and effective services after reorganisation.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Minister began by saying that he believed in a local focus and local democracy. Why, therefore, is he creating three giant water boards that are neither local nor democratic? As a Cabinet Minister, he voted in favour of a £7 billion green dowry to English water authorities. Will a similar green dowry be given to Scottish water boards, or does he believe only in putting public money in private pockets?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will remember that some adjustment was made to the finances of the Scottish Office when the changes were made in England. I shall deal with the water industry shortly.

I was mentioning authorities that are looking imaginatively at alternative means of service delivery and are investigating the possibility of co-operation among authorities and between authorities and the private sector. The Bill contains much to encourage authorities to adopt new approaches to service delivery in a range of areas.

Of particular importance is clause 57, which clarifies the legislation in relation to the ability of local authorities to trade with and provide services on behalf of each other. As the Scottish Labour party has said:

"All-purpose authorities assist the development of local government as an enabling co-ordinator at the centre of a network of providing agencies . . . Local authorities should be able to develop their enabling role, frequently acting as the commissioning agency rather than the direct provider of services".

Again, I wholeheartedly welcome its conversion to our way of thinking.

Part II provides for the setting up of the three new public water and sewerage authorities and the customer protection body heralded in the White Paper. The first 10 clauses of part II and schedules 7, 8 and 9 establish these new bodies and set out their duties, powers and constitutions.

The new structure that will be put in place for the delivery of those vital services will achieve two crucial objectives. It will make maximum use of existing resources through economies of scale, and it will deliver necessary new resources on the best terms possible.

The backdrop to restructuring was described in detail in the consultation paper. The requirements to maintain and renew existing infrastructure and to build new plant to cope with quality obligations are well known and widely accepted and they carry a projected price tag of some £5 billion over the next 10 to 15 years. The challenge outlined in the consultation paper was how to sustain this scale of capital programme without an intolerable cost falling on Scottish customers.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The Secretary of State spoke earlier of the importance of accountability through the ballot box. At present, members of water authorities in Scotland are directly accountable through the ballot box. How many of them will be under the proposals in this rotten legislation?

Mr. Lang: Water authorities will be accountable to me as Secretary of State and, through me, to Parliament. If we were not to make this change and there were to be 28 water authorities, with widely diverging costs for water and sewerage, people would take a pretty poor view of their local authority's handling of their interests if they had to pay almost twice as much for their water.

I believe that the proposals in the Bill meet the challenge that we have set. They acknowledge the strength of feeling expressed in the consultation that services should remain in public hands and, at the same time, promote partnership with the private sector for the ultimate benefit of the customer.

Under the Government's private finance initiative, I look to those new public authorities actively to form partnerships with the private sector to provide the new treatment works and other investment that is required. This will happen without the public purse taking the strain. The authorities themselves, however, will remain public authorities directly answerable to the Secretary of State, and through me to the House.

I call attention in particular to the provisions establishing the customers council. This will be a powerful voice on behalf of the consumer and will exercise a particular role in the setting of charges as well as monitoring service standards. The council will ensure that full expression is given to the principles of the citizens charter in the operation of the restructured services. These proposals are designed to deliver the most efficient and most cost-effective water and sewerage services possible.

Restructuring was inevitable as a consequence of local government reform, and it has afforded us the opportunity to align water and sewerage services to the demands of the future. The status quo was never a realistic option. Twelve authorities currently deliver services, but multiplying this number to 28 makes no economic sense. We have produced sensible measures in response to circumstances, and we shall vigorously defend them in Committee.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Secretary of State said that the new boards will be accountable through him to the House. Will he assure the House that, when hon. Members table questions to him, he will answer those specific questions in this House and not duck out and pass them back to bodies that are not directly accountable? Will he answer direct questions put to him directly in this House?

Mr. Lang: We shall answer questions in the same way that we answer them in relation to other comparable bodies. We shall remain accountable in respect of the water authorities as we do with the other bodies.

The Bill represents a comprehensive and concerted attempt to address the need for local government reform. However, the Opposition are so busy facing Janus-like in both directions that they seem unwilling to face up to any of the real issues. I hope that those on the Opposition Front Bench will today clarify where they stand.

In the general election, the Opposition supported reform and talked of "powerful, new single-tier authorities." Yet in last November's debate on the Gracious Speech, they claimed that reform was "completely unwanted, totally unnecessary." Which do they really believe?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in the hope that he might answer that question.

Dr. Godman: I will answer that question if the Secretary of State answers a question that I put to him honestly and directly. Because of the Bill's complexity and its implications for every citizen in Scotland, should not the Secretary of State refer it to a Special Standing Committee by way of Standing Order No. 91?

By that means, now that the Bill has been published, at least those people who are deeply concerned about the Bill and its implications would have the opportunity to express their concerns, which have been expressed to me over and over again in Inverclyde. Will the Secretary of State refer the Bill to a Special Standing Committee, which would allow interested parties to be cross-examined by hon. Members?

Mr. Lang: No, we will not, because we have already had nearly three years of consultation on the reform of local government in Scotland. We have had more consultation papers, more submissions, more meetings with local authorities and delegations and others, and more debate in this House on these measures than on any that I can remember in my entire time in Parliament. The people of Scotland now want us to reach a decision.

From representations that we have received from many Opposition Members, I know their views and how keen many of them are to move on to implement single-tier authorities. However, I want to know more about the Labour party's position.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lang: No, I will not give way at the moment.

On the one hand, the Opposition call for "powerful, new single-tier authorities", while on the other they claim that they are "completely unwanted, totally unnecessary." They claim that our reforms would strip powers from local authorities. However, the only substantial service that we are transferring, to other public authorities, is that of water and sewerage.

As I have pointed out, we recently transferred the very important community care service to local authorities. Yet Labour seems to be prepared to contemplate reforming local authorities only if it also sets up a Scottish Parliament

[Mr. Lang]

—and where would such a Parliament draw its powers but from local government? In the shadow of a Scottish Parliament, local government would be a very sadly diminished institution, whether of one tier or two.

Then there are the costs of reform. We have made our position clear. There will be initial costs which we calculate at less than £50 million net over the first three years and for which we are providing additional resources. Thereafter, net savings will grow and will continue year after year, reaching as much as £1 billion within 15 years. As the main costs are for redundancies, the higher the initial costs turn out to be the higher must be the subsequent savings.

Of course, as it is decisions by the new authorities that will decide the precise figures, we cannot be exact about them at this stage. However, nor can anyone else. But it is interesting how different perspectives lead to different interpretations of the figures.

Where authorities—especially Labour-controlled authorities—are making a case for their own retention under the new structure, our figures are suddenly presented as pessimistic—over-estimating costs and under-estimating savings. Only once the element of self-interest is removed, where the motivation is to discredit the reform process, are our figures portrayed as optimistic. All that leads me to believe that our figures are about right.

The hon. Member for Hamilton and his number-crunching friend the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) are all over the place on costs. On 8 November, the Scottish Labour party published a briefing paper which said that local government reorganisation would cost £200 million. Three weeks later, in *The Herald*, the hon. Member for Hamilton said that local government reform would cost at least £500 million. That is a rate of inflation which even the previous Labour Government did not surpass. It would also make nonsense of anything that the Labour party had to say about the costs of local government reform.

There is a curiosity at the heart of the costs debate. In the Labour party manifesto, which provided for the establishment of single-tier councils, there were no reservations about the costs of reform. Nor have we at any stage subsequently heard any mention of the cost factor in the Opposition's proposals, whether those proposals are just to restructure local government or to set up a Scottish Parliament as well. Yet, oddly, the Government's proposals are, once again to quote the hon. Member for Hamilton, "extremely costly".

I would be very interested to know what it is that is likely to differentiate the costs of the Government's proposals from those of the Labour party. The only significant difference that I can think of is that, under our proposals, the taxpayer will not be obliged to bear the costs of the establishment and maintenance of a Scottish Parliament. In all other respects, I would welcome an explanation from the hon. Member for Hamilton how a policy which, in his hands, is a manifesto commitment, suddenly, when implemented by the Government, becomes "extremely expensive".

There are, therefore, inherent and fundamental weaknesses in the Opposition's case, which they must address if they are to present a credible case to the people of Scotland. On the one hand, they argue that reform is too costly, while on the other they are themselves committed to a concept of single-tier local government and, in addition, a Scottish Parliament.

They cannot argue that the status quo is an option, if they hold to their earlier manifesto pledge to create "powerful, single-tier authorities". They cannot hold to their manifesto pledge if they claim, as they do, that the reform is "completely unwanted" and "totally unnecessary". I expect that we shall listen in vain today for some straight talking on that matter from the hon. Member for Hamilton.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I refer the Secretary of State to the most important phrase that he has used so far. On costs, he said that the matter becomes clear only when "the element of self-interest" is removed. Does he not understand that, on such an important issue for the people of Scotland—the tier of government which is nearest to them, which is probably more sympathetic and which is less bureaucratic than any other—it is precisely the self-interest of the Tory party in conducting the investigation and consultation that is at issue?

Does he not understand that, when a party refuses not only an independent commission, like the Wheatley commission, but even a semblance of independence under a Standing Committee, the people of Scotland have every reason to doubt the objectivity of the exercise that has been carried out? Would it not be better to follow the strictures that the Secretary of State imposed on others, and remove his own self-interest, that of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and that of his party? He might then have a shred of legitimacy in his proposals.

Mr. Lang: Since the Opposition fought the last election promising single-tier local government and they now regard it as expensive, unwarranted and totally unnecessary, it is the objectivity of the Labour party that is called into question.

Against the unprincipled and ill-thought-out position of the Labour party, one thing stands out: the Government have acknowledged the problem with the present local government structure. We have defined the problem and we have had the courage to tackle it. The proposals represent a comprehensive and cohesive attempt to get to the root of the structural problems which are currently inhibiting local government.

I fully expect the Bill to be thoroughly debated, and rightly so. I can assure Opposition Members that we will listen carefully to all the arguments that are presented as it passes through all its stages, but I will do so alert to the weaknesses of the Opposition's case and their failure to present a credible alternative.

We want to get back to basics in local government. While opposition parties offer only double-talk on single-tier, we want to get on with this much-needed reform. We want local authorities that are local. We want local authorities that have authority. We want local councillors who are at last able to perform the complete function of local councillors. We want local authorities and councillors who can ensure the coherent and efficient provision of all local services in their area. In that way, we shall help to restore a true sense of local community and local identity and give a new impetus to the growth of strong local democracy.

The Bill will achieve those objectives, and I commend it to the House.

4.29 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Over the weekend, I began to wonder exactly how much trouble the Prime Minister was in with his "back to basics" policy. We heard the Secretary of State for Scotland repeat the phrase "back to basics" this afternoon. Yesterday, when I read the Sunday newspaper that said that only the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Health supported the Prime Minister in his "back to basics" campaign, I realised exactly how deep a hole the Prime Minister is in.

This is a bad Bill. It is bad for Scotland, bad for democracy and bad for local government. It is even bad for the Government, who are apparently in their death throes. The Bill does nothing for the people of Scotland. It will do much harm to them and to their lives. Once it has done that, the people will pay for it with poorer services and the disruption and confusion of local government. They will then pay again through their pockets. The Bill will be an expensive fiasco.

This reorganisation will be paid for by higher taxes. At the last election, the Government said that they would lower taxes. Higher taxes than we expected will be imposed by those who promised lower taxes but who instead give us higher taxes with every month that passes.

This is a wholly unwanted and unnecessary reorganisation, and it will be costly.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: As the hon. Gentleman seems to be trying to climb the ladder of progress in a party that is declining, I will give way.

Mr. Kynoch: If this reorganisation is unwanted and unnecessary, can the hon. Gentleman explain why, on "Scottish Lobby" on 11 December 1993 he said:

"The current structure could benefit from a review—a major review"?

What is it that he now thinks is unnecessary in the way of a review?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman—I hope that this will help his career—precisely makes the point. We want a review. A review is necessary. If a review concludes that changes are needed in local government in Scotland, that is something that the House should properly consider, not this gerrymandering mess dreamed up by a few individuals in the Scottish Office. No independent review has been undertaken. No royal commission has been ordered which would allow the people of Scotland to give their views and to have them considered.

This reorganisation will be a distraction. It will drive a wedge between the people and those who govern them. It will reduce accountability and increase the rule by that spreading unelected, unresponsive Tory phenomenon—the crony-stuffed quango. It will dramatically centralise power in St. Andrew's house and increase the dead weight of bureaucracy. It is an attack on democracy. Ministers who started by proclaiming it now ignore it. They started by boasting about it, but they will scarcely defend it in public now.

It is just like the poll tax. Not long ago, the Secretary of State defended and proclaimed the poll tax, which came out of the same stable of crazy ideas. A so-called reform of local government was supposed to be the efficient, cost-effective answer to that continuing rebuff to Conservative pride in Scotland, the elected Labour council, but it is now the neglected child of the Government's legislative programme; it has been locked away in a dark room and is now a source of acute embarrassment. Rightfully and justly, the Government are ashamed of this legislation.

The Government cannot walk away from the consequence of their continual self-serving meddling with the institutions of democracy in Scotland. Twist them as they will—bend, break and remould them as they will try to do—at the end of it all is the ballot box, and the Government cannot and will not escape the message which will come from that.

On 5 May this year, there will be ballot boxes all across Scotland and people will have the choice: they will give their verdict on this shoddy, politically corrupt, anti-democratic, wasteful and irrelevant piece of legislation, which they will assuredly reject, just as when they get the chance they will reject this rotten, sleazy and shambolic Administration as well.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): On 7 September last year, *The Herald* carried a report in the name of Jack McConnell, the general secretary of the Labour party in Scotland. The report said that the Labour party would be launching a national petition against the proposals the following week, which would take us up to 14 September. When was that petition handed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State?

Mr. George Robertson: I have no doubt that the petition on local government will be presented to the Secretary of State. I was collecting signatures for it on Saturday afternoon. The petition will be large and its message substantial. The Secretary of State knows that. He has already received petitions, letters and a chorus of disapproval for what he is doing to local government in Scotland.

This is some week to be considering the Bill, as it is only four days since the word gerrymandering hit the headlines across the nation. "Unlawful, disgraceful, improper" said one headline in the *Evening Standard.* Those were the words used by the Westminster district auditor about a policy to sell Westminster council houses to buyers who were likely to vote Tory. What was illegal, improper and disgraceful was the spending of thousands, indeed millions, of pounds to get officers to prepare plans for what, in the words of the district auditor, was

"the promotion of electoral advantage".

That is what the Westminster council Tories stand accused of and, if found guilty, that is what they will be surcharged £21 million for.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Westminster is in England.

Mr. Robertson: The Minister with responsibility for local government in Scotland has suddenly discovered some brand new knowledge of geography which seemed to be absent when it came to dealing with the map of Scottish local government.

Of course, there is another ex-member of Westminster council in the Government—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the man who invented the poll tax and who has now departed to an English Department, as well he might.

[Mr. Robertson]

The district auditor for Westminster, John Magill, works for Touche Ross—an organisation that the Secretary of State might recognise. The district auditor condemned the council when he found that

"the electoral advantage of the majority party was the driving force behind the policy".

If Dame Shirly Porter ever comes back to these shores and needs some comfort before she shells out her large share of that £21 million surcharge—the amount that she and her pals squandered as they pochled votes in the Westminster city council area—let her read the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill and eat her heart out. Here it is: all that she did and more, enshrined in legislation before the House of Commons.

The District Auditor said:

"the council was engaged in gerrymandering which I am minded to find is a disgraceful and improper purpose."

Those words should be repeated, because the Secretary of State for Scotland should be not allowed to forget their full and lasting importance. Today he rejected the accusation that the Bill involved gerrymandering. He said in the House on 14 July:

"That is not gerrymandering—it is a healthy strengthening of local democracy in all its diversity."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1993; Vol. 228, c. 1000.]

Lady Porter herself could not have put it better.

The Secretary of State for Scotland and the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), should not take my word for it with regard to accusations of gerrymandering. Let them listen to the words that I quoted in the debate in November. They are the words of Councillor Brian Meek, expert columnist and authoritative sports journalist but one of Scotland's top Tories. He is a friend of the Secretary of State for Scotland and of the Defence Secretary. He is part of Scotland's Tory establishment. His words and his views must be of some consequence in Scotland.

Councillor Meek is not a Westminster city councillor. I do not think that he ever was, although his words of praise for Westminster city council in today's *Herald* may yet come back to haunt him. Two days before the Secretary of State for Scotland denounced the concept or the very thought that he might be gerrymandering, District Councillor Brian Meek of Edinburgh district council told *Herald* readers:

"So let us get on to the gerrymandering argument. Did Mr. Lang and his Ministers seek to give their party the best possible chance under the new set-up? Of course they did. Why shouldn't they?"

Why shouldn't they give an advantage to themselves —the best chance? There it is. Frank, brutal, to the point, no messing. Councillor Brian Meek of Edinburgh district council got it right. Perhaps he keeps on getting it right. Why shouldn't they? The answer to that involves the words "unlawful", "disgraceful" and "improper" in one order or another. In any Government with any shame, decency or honour left, those words would be ringing around the Cabinet room.

Does any gentle soul—for instance, the innocents among the Conservative Back Benchers about to be condemned to serving on the Standing Committee that will consider the Bill—still care to believe that the Secretary of State for Scotland is right? [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I have no doubt that they will read *Hansard* before they serve on the Standing Committee. Or perhaps they have to commit their offence before they are sentenced on Wednesday at the Committee of Selection.

Quite a selection of people's names come immediately to mind as possibilities to serve on the Standing Committee. If they read my speech in *Hansard* and if they believe the Secretary of State for Scotland and not me, let them look at Ayrshire. Let them marvel at the unique cartography that carved Conservative Kyle and Carrick out of that ancient county. Let them gaze with astonishment at the proposed East Renfrewshire council, the gyrations of which go round the Renfrewshire Tory houses and middle class enclaves close to tiny Eastwood.

In schedule 1 of the Bill, the description of each council takes a mere four or five lines. The description of East Renfrewshire takes up 49 lines—49 stricken lines in which houses, farm roads, cottages, burns and even fields are all identified in statute. It does not require the skills of Governor Huey Long of Louisiana to smell a bright blue rat in that formation.

So let any of the innocent Conservative Members of Parliament trembling at Westminster council's castigation look at the sheer imagination of the proposed Clackmannan and Falkirk council. Two distinct communities divided by the River Forth and connected only by a bridge are to be carved out artificially and unwillingly from the kingdom of Fife.

Let the Secretary of State, wriggling away as he is from the charge of gerrymandering, explain the separation of Conservative Helensburgh from—*[Interruption.]* I can tell the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Private Secretary what page it is on. It is on page 117—*[Interruption.]* I see that the PPS has now been briefed and is reading the page. He should probably telephone the occupants of Nos. 52 to 50 Ben Wyvis drive and check whether they intend to vote the right way so that the appropriate amendment can be moved in Committee, if necessary. No doubt the Secretary of State would look forward to debating that in Committee.

Let Conservative Members consider the separation of Conservative Helensburgh from Dumbarton or the ludicrous and perverse Balerno corridor, which links West Lothian to Midlothian and East Lothian. Let the Under-Secretary of State explain the removal of Berwickshire from the Borders. Let him say how that nonsense can be described, as the Secretary of State did, as creating areas where there is "an established identity."

Westhill into Aberdeen; Monifieth and Invergowrie out of Dundee; Stirling and its knife-edge Toryness preserved like some South African homeland—it is the most crudely and shamelessly gerrymandered map of local government that Britain has seen this century. Here in all its nakedness is the real reason for the Bill, for this unwanted butchery of Scottish local government. It is a cynical promotion of electoral advantage, to use the words of the Westminster district auditor.

The Scotsman puts it well in its new year editorial. It said that 1993's nadir

"came with the deliverance of a shamelessly manipulated local authority map that spoke eloquently of an administration grown too comfortable with the insolence of office."

"Unlawful, improper, disgraceful": let those words haunt those who would put gerrymandering into the law of Scotland.

I have dwelt for some time on the clear partisan motivation behind the Bill because I believe that it represents an outrage and an offence to our elementary

democratic standards. Yet the faults of the legislation are not confined to the partisan manipulation of the local political map of Scotland. I would make a further point. It is a serious one filled with consequences for the House. The gerrymandering ambitions of the Government are not confined to local boundaries.

The parliamentary Boundary Commission is redrawing the parliamentary boundaries. It has to ignore the proposed new local authority building blocks. However, the next redistribution will have to deal with the new map. To seek to manipulate the political geography of Scottish local government is offensive enough. But it is easy to see that the party of Dame Shirley Porter and Lady Thatcher has a much more sinister long-term objective to sort out the parliamentary boundaries of Scotland as a whole. That kind of chicanery will be seen even by the faithful in Scotland as unforgivable and unsuccessful.

As for cost, on which the Secretary of State for Scotland is so defensive, we are told that the justification for the Bill is that the reorganisation of local government will save money. A brand new set of statistics has been delivered to the House this afternoon to prove that crazy point. As we know, the Government have no clue about the cost of what they are doing. Frankly, they care even less. They do so at a point in time when in a few weeks they will ask the people of Scotland, who have extra-large heating bills, to pay VAT on those bills to sort out the financial mess in the nation's Treasury—a mess that the Government created.

The Government first produced the Touche Ross report, which showed that we would all be financially better off as a consequence of the reorganisation. It was discredited and abandoned within days. Then came new figures, which showed one-off transitional costs of between £120 million and £186 million, but alleged savings of between £22 million and £66 million annually. The Minister with responsibility for local government, the hon. Member for Eastwood, even went so far as to say:

"What is abundantly clear however is that the proposed reform will pay for itself within about five years and thereafter actually save money."

The Secretary of State told us across the Dispatch Box of the House of Commons only five days after that article appeared that he was prepared to accept a figure of £200 million for transitional costs. As the total climbs and climbs, it is clear that the Secretary of State, the Under-Secretary of State and all the rest of them do not have a clue about the cost of what they are doing.

Indeed, the Secretary of State tells us with open and unexpected candour that it is all going to be down to local authorities to make the saving that he is forecasting and which he is to tell them that they must make—as though he can now wash his hands of an exercise that is fundamental to his case, but which is profoundly embarrassing were it to be examined in depth.

The issue of who will pay is much too more important to be left to the Government's propaganda machine, which only a month ago told us of the Secretary of State's public spending triumph over the Treasury, but which then had to go into full-scale reverse when Sir Russell Hillhouse's memorandum told us the truth of that triumph.

In November, I showed quite soberly and accurately how the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the most authoritative and reliable source of financial information in local government, had proved that transitional costs could easily be as high as £500 million. There has been no convincing reply to CIPFA's case, which was made in February of last year. The chairman of the Accounts Commission, Professor Percy, whom the Secretary of State had the gall to quote earlier, had this to say in the annual report published in September:

"The Commission believes that there is a need for a dispassionate and professional look at the priorities and resourcing requirements of the new authorities."

That is true, but the fact is that no dispassionate or professional look has been given to the whole exercise for one reason alone: Government fears about the outcome of any such investigation.

I have carefully examined all the evidence, not the guesses or the optimistic gambles, but the hard evidence of the promises and the realities behind the Government's obsessional experiments with local government—the abolition of the metropolitan counties in England, the GLC and ILEA. I have examined each one. It is an interesting exercise because, in every case, Ministers claimed that there would be huge savings, fewer people employed and lower wage bills as part of the new set-up. But in every single case, transitional costs were wildly higher than promised. It all costs money, and in no case did it save it. More people were employed than before, and wage bills were appreciably higher in all cases.

That is the solid evidence to set against the guessses, hopes and completely unconvincing forecasts of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Let me cite just one example, but nevertheless an interesting and illustrative one. Of ILEA, which was abolished in 1990, Norman Tebbit—now Lord Tebbit—said:

"ILEA ... that overgrown, overpriced, overpolitical, underperforming monster will soon be gone, forgotten and unlamented."

But after education had been put back from one single all-London authority to 13 London boroughs, what happened? In particular, the number of senior officials—administrators earning more than £20,000 a year—rose from ILEA's total of 352 to a new total of 590 in the highest paid administrative category.

Of course that is the reality. Those are the facts. That is what happens in local government. For example, consider what the Layfield report said about the previous reorganisation in Scotland and what Sir John Banham now warns about reorganisation and the review that is taking place in England and Wales. Those are realities rather than fiction. Sir John Banham warns:

"The reorganisation is complex. It is messy and picks apart practices developed successfully over almost 20 years."

There is no way that some effortless and seamless process can be put in place to avoid the transitional costs, which were found unavoidable in every other reorganisation of local government.

The Government claimed that there would be huge savings on property, which will accrue from the sale of surplus property. But taxpayers in Scotland should be aware of how bogus that prospectus really is. Of course there will be surplus property if the regions are abolished. India street in Glasgow, Tayside house in Dundee, Viewforth in Stirling, and more, will all lose their tenants. Who on earth will buy those properties? Who will rent them? In Stirling, the vacancy in Viewforth will add 60 per cent. to vacant office space. That will be accompanied by a building bonanza in other areas as the new authorities have to build in their own locations to deal with the new functions that they will take on.

One of the saddest aspects of the whole exercise is the way in which local government services have taken second

[Mr. Robertson]

place to the ideology of reorganisation. In the White Paper, education—probably the most important local authority service of all—is dealt with in a mere 15 lines. We have not heard a single word from the Secretary of State for Scotland about education and the implications for it. Social work is disposed of in a mere 12 lines.

No explanation has been given about how education services are to be supplied when the wide range of services provided by the regions are dismantled. No information has been given to parents of children in special education facilities, about where they are to go in three years' time —only the abolition of the statutory requirement to have an education committee and a director of education. What sort of significant signal is that to the people of Scotland, from a Government who are more interested in money than in the need to maintain and improve educational standards and provision?

Mr. Kynoch: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Secretary of State's proposals are going to save money, because he seems to have just said that money is taking precedence over education? If that is so, he is at least accepting that we will save some money through the proposals.

Mr. Robertson: The Secretary of State for Scotland certainly claims that they will save money, but I hope that I have demonstrated and proved that that will not be the case. If the hon. Gentleman is going to climb the ladder of opportunity in the Government—there should soon be plenty of vacancies available for him to climb into—he should make better points than that if he is going to interrupt.

We get no guidance from the White Paper. We have had little guidance from Ministers, even about social work and the myriad services now threatened by the atomisation of social work authorities. Where are the words of reassurance for the voluntary sector? Why are they now left in limbo? Why is their future and transitional financing not worthy of a single comment or reassurance from the Government? There is something shoddy about the whole exercise, from the inadequacy and dishonesty of the consultative process, through the thinness of the White Paper and to the sheer lack of thinking and guidance which has followed its publication.

As a consequence of that, and to allow people in Scotland to present their views to their parliamentarians, I will seek to move at the end of the debate that, if the Bill is given a Second Reading, it is committed to a Special Standing Committee of the House so that people can make their views known—for example, about concessionary travel and concessionary travel arrangements. In Strathclyde alone, 340,000 old people and 78,000 handicapped people now face a threatened service. What about information on the problems of school catchment areas? What about the future of the trading standards service, or the regional chemist? How will they survive in this era of multiple councils?

No information has been given. There have been no background studies, no detailed planning, no conceptual frameworks. There has been nothing but the doctrinaire dash for a new gerrymandered structure, subject to no independent review. All of that, as the Accounts Commission says, is to be introduced on a ludicrously short time scale. All the time, the Government, like some demented parrot, repeat the message about the need for single-tier authorities.

Other parties recognise the benefits that might come from some single-tier councils, but never as suggested in the Bill in its ill-thought-out, gerrymandered, back-of-the-Eastwood-envelope way. A Scottish Parliament, with powers over Scottish local government, is needed more now than it ever has been to look at what Scotland's local democratic institutions should be and should do. Never before has the case for a devolved parliament been so strikingly made as by this half-baked reorganisation proposal.

The next Government, committed as they will be, to a strong Scottish Parliament, responsible for Scottish affairs, but robustly operating within the United Kingdom, will expect that parliament to look urgently at the new set-up proposed in the Bill, if it manages to get through this Parliament.

The Bill does not propose a single-tier system, except on the map. Boards, joint arrangements and quangos will litter the landscape of Scottish local government. Instructions from the Secretary of State jump out of every page of the Bill, ranging from

"With the approval of the Secretary of State"

and

"the Secretary of State may direct"

to

"as may be determined by the Secretary of State for Scotland."

Just choose any page of the Bill to find such examples. The clammy hand of St. Andrew's house is everywhere, rendering meaningless the very idea of local democracy and accountability on which the Secretary of State has had the cheek to pronounce.

Why do the Government not stop pretending and admit that political control will not even stop at quangos, but will now deliberately reach deep into the last remaining balance to the centralising obsession of the Government—the locally elected councils of Scotland? This is the era of the quango, and the Bill is the quango charter.

The proposed three new water quangos are a better alternative to the Government's undisguised ambition to privatise Scotland's water, but none the less they still represent a foolish and unnecessary move away from genuine accountability. One opinion on the proposed set-up for water states:

"The present water authorities are accountable to consumers and others through the local electoral process. Restructuring will remove that accountability, which must therefore be substituted by adequate statutory safeguards for consumers and others."

Are they the words of the Labour party, some disgruntled community group or members of a regional council? No. They are the words of the Scottish Landowners Federation, which has written to hon. Members about the proposal. Perhaps its opinion is surprising to some, or perhaps not, because some people in Scotland deeply believe that the creation of super-quangos is wrong for the water supply industry and Scotland. They are willing to speak out, whatever their traditional loyalties may have been.

The federation even noted:

"The Consumers Council, which is intended to look after the interests of consumers, will be ineffective and out of touch with local conditions unless amendments are made."

The one amendment that is needed is simple and it would be effective: leave water alone.

If we needed an example of what rule by Tory quango can mean, we need look no further than the continuing cover-ups in the saga of Greater Glasgow health board. A man appointed as general manager, with the full backing of the Secretary of State and Ministers, a Tory to the hilt, was sacked after the health board was told that the Secretary of State had lost confidence in him. That dismissed man was then appointed to an unadvertised, specially created new job, on a salary of £80,000, on three conditions of which we are now aware—no talking, no suing and no cashing of a cheque for more than £40,000.

The Tory chairman of the board was then hung out to dry, to take the blame. We then found that even the top civil servant at the Scottish Office has been the subject of leaks and smears from unofficial, unattributable briefings. All the time the Secretary of State and the Minister of State apparently knew nothing, were told nothing and are blameless.

Mr. Lang: In the past few weeks, the hon. Gentleman has been free and easy with his smears and innuendos on this matter. I understand that he has written to the Prime Minister and to Sir Robin Butler. I hope that when he gets their replies he will be as willing to seek a platform as public as this one on which to apologise for his behaviour.

Mr. Robertson: I will, of course, apologise, but I do not believe that there is anything to apologise for. I just wish that Ministers would tell the people of Scotland the truth about this affair.

In December, during Scottish questions, the Secretary of State responded to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and said:

"I am satisfied that Mr. Fyfe was told repeatedly that he could not and should not seek to terminate Mr. Peterken's employment and make an offer of a financial settlement to him.—[*Official Report*, 8 December, 1993; Vol. 234, c. 304.]

On 1 December, however, Lord Fraser of Carmyllie told the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs—I was present—that on 8 July he approved an approach by the national health service executive in Scotland to the Treasury relating to a package to sever Mr. Peterken's employment with Greater Glasgow health board, which would have amounted to £185,444.

That was submitted with the knowledge and, in Lord Fraser's words, "the support" of his Department and him. The Secretary of State says that he has been assured that Mr. Fyfe was told that he could not make that submission, but in the Select Committee Lord Fraser seemed to contradict him flatly. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] We would all like to know the answers to those questions. Is Lord Fraser telling the truth? Is the Secretary of State telling the truth? The House and I will note, and, I dare say, a wider audience outside will also note, that the Secretary of State chooses not to answer those questions. The significance of that will be noted.

Why can Ministers of the Crown not take responsibility for what they knew was happening, or carry the can for what they should have known was happening, in their Department? Frankly, there seems to be no honour left in being a Minister of the Crown in the Government.

Mr. Dalyell: The Secretary of State seems to suggest that he knows what Sir Robin Butler's answer will be. My hon. Friend knows that I, too, wrote to Sir Robin Butler, who characteristically replies very promptly. On this occasion, however, there has been no reply from the Secretary to the Cabinet. In those circumstances we are entitled to ask some searching questions, as my hon. Friend has done, about the role of the civil service in this matter.

Mr. Robertson: That omission disturbs me as well, because I have received no acknowledgement of a letter that the Secretary of State says he knows was received by Sir Robin Butler. I wrote to Sir Robin as head of the home civil service and I am therefore surprised that the Secretary of State—as a Cabinet Minister and a politician—should imply that he seems to know how Sir Robin will reply to me. Perhaps that further deepens the mystery that continues to surround events at Greater Glasgow health board.

This is a wretched Bill, which is of no value to anyone in Scotland, except the handful of people who see a future for the Conservatives north of the border. It follows a long line of follies perpetrated by the ideologues of Scottish conservatism. English Members and perhaps even those who represent Wales should be ware, because those same peddlers sold them the poll tax. The sales pitch was hauntingly similar to that used to sell this monstrosity.

The Government said that the poll tax would be cost-effective and fair. They sold it on the grounds of its efficiency and its power to do good for local democracy. It turned out to be an obscenity. The Opposition said just that when they floated the idea, when they introduced it and when it was transferred, after one dramatically unsuccessful year in Scotland, to England and Wales. Now everyone on the Conservative Benches knows that what we said about the poll tax was right and true, and possibly even underestimated its effects.

I warn Tory Members who see this as just another innocuous, if over-large, Bill to abolish Labour regions in Scotland to think again. A tide of anger will rise in Scotland as people grasp the enormity of the costly damage that the Bill will inflict on services, jobs, taxation and democracy. The poll tax should have warned and wakened up the Conservative party to the madcap Scottish agenda, which rarely stops at the English border.

We shall use the Bill's progress through the House to fight a measure that is profoundly bad for Scotland and for democracy. We shall strike the first blow in the Lobbies tonight, but the real body blow will be in the ballot boxes of 1994.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next Member to speak, let me say that it is clear that a number of Members are anxious to contribute to the debate. If everyone makes a reasonably short speech, it should be possible to allow everyone who has so far indicated that he or she wishes to speak, to contribute.

5.10 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I welcome the Bill. Listening to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has been most entertaining. It was quite something to see such inconsistency throughout his speech. He said that the proposals were intended purely to save money but that they were costly proposals. I hope that he will explain to his electorate and mine why he is scaremongering as usual when we are trying to achieve a more cost-effective and efficient form of local government in Scotland.

[Mr. George Kynoch]

The Bill is large and detailed. I thought that it contained 167 clauses but am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State corrected me in his speech, saying that it contains 169 clauses, covering a vast array of local government matters. During the summer since the publication of the White Paper, the proposals and what they mean for my area have been discussed at length in my constituency. The Bill's general principles have been widely accepted. Although the general public in my part of the world recognise the significant benefits under the existing council structure, they seek streamlining and rationalisation of local government, and improvement in it, and good value for money in local services.

The duplication that occurs between the two tiers in the existing structure, particularly in planning, is not only confusing but aggravating to many constituents. I note at my constituency surgeries that the region often goes one way on planning and the district goes another. It is important that they go in the same direction and have a sense of purpose. The Bill clarifies and simplifies. It provides lines of responsibility within local government and a greater opportunity to act strategically.

I welcome the recognition of the clear difference between cities and rural areas. For far too long, part of the aggravation between districts and regions has occurred because cities' interests differ greatly from those of rural areas. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to introduce individual city authorities and I hope that those will come as soon as possible.

Reinforcing what my right hon. Friend said, I find it strange that we face such vehement opposition. He has already referred to the Labour party's pre-election policy document. Labour Members say that there is widespread confusion, that the functions carried out by the various tiers of local government undermine accountability and that all-purpose councils are needed. So why do they oppose the Bill? What are they scared of?

Why must their proposals for a single-tier authority be linked with an even more costly Scottish Assembly? In proposing a single-tier authority and a Scottish Assembly, they fail to mention to the electorate, who are extremely interested in such matters. It came to light during the election campaign that they accepted that a Scottish Assembly was likely to cost the Scottish electorate at least 3p in the pound extra in taxation. The Labour party seems intent on walking away from that fact. That is a differential between north and south of the border.

The Labour party is doing the Scottish general public no service by its opposition and by urging the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities not to co-operate. Is COSLA not co-operating because it fears for jobs within local authorities? Let us face it, the Bill is about rationalisation, streamlining and providing more efficient services. Sadly, that means that certain jobs will go, as functions will be better achieved with fewer people. COSLA should direct its efforts towards the people who employ it rather than the people whom it employs. Scottish taxpayers are interested in seeing more efficient and less costly local government.

The Liberal Democrats smile happily when I discuss Labour opposition. I wonder whether they will smile when I read their 1992 Scottish manifesto—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to hear that they have read it. Had they done so, they might not have opposed the Bill, because it clearly said:

"We will: reform and strengthen local government, reducing it to a single tier. We will introduce a single-tier of local government, to deliver most of the services currently provided by districts and regions."

[HON. MEMBERS: "More, more."] I shall give Liberal Democrat Members more. The manifesto went on:

"This will end the confusion about who is accountable for what and bring local government effectively within the reach of the local citizens".

Yet the Liberal Democrats oppose the Bill. Their manifesto clearly proposed changing to a single-tier local authority and doing all the right things but, when the Government propose a Bill, they oppose it for the sake of opposition.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Gentleman completely misses the point. He takes the view that local government is all about enabling service contract delivery and compulsory competitive tendering and reducing the role of councillors to compliance contract observation. The Scottish Liberal Democrat manifesto encapsulates the idea that local democracy and local government are an essential element in the democratic process. That is the difference between the Tory party and the Opposition.

Mr. Kynoch: I want to see good local services but the aspects that the hon. Gentleman mentioned do nothing to degrade local government service delivery.

Scottish National party members also smile when I discuss Labour party opposition. Mr. George Leslie, former local government convenor of the SNP, said in *The Scotsman* on 1 October 1992:

"The SNP believe that the single-tier structure will be the most effective."

As far as I am aware, all the parties appear to want single-tier local government. So what are we arguing about? We should be agreeing on single-tier local authorities.

Mr. Graham: We have heard the hon. Gentleman's views on the Labour party, the SNP and the Liberal Democrats. Why did not the Government appoint a royal commission on Scottish local government so that we could see what people felt? We could probably have trusted that judgment and would not have had this gerrymandering by the Government.

Mr. Kynoch: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and should be interested to know whether, were it ever elected to power, the Labour party would hold a royal commission before setting up a Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) talk about a commission to ascertain the requirements of the Scottish people, but does my hon. Friend agree that the Scottish Labour party is particularly unable to identify what the Scottish people want, which is, above all, single-tier local government and the abolition of Strathclyde?

Mr. Kynoch: I certainly believe that the vast majority of people in Scotland want to see the end of Strathclyde as soon as is physically possible.

On the issue of transition, I understand my right hon. Friend's logic in not wanting regional councillors to have to serve for six years. However, I must admit that I would prefer the 1994 elections to be postponed——

Mr. Kirkwood: I bet you would.

Mr. Kynoch: ——but not for the reason that the Opposition presume.

I should prefer them to be postponed because we need a meaningful transition, and to ask a regional councillor to serve for only two years would not be satisfactory. A councillor who has already served a four-year term might not want to serve the full six years but it is unreasonable to ask a new councillor to serve for only two years. I should have preferred it had my right hon. Friend been able to find a way to obtain sufficient agreement to pass quickly legislation that would enable the council elections to be postponed until 1996.

Further to the issue of transition, reference has already been made to the use of assets and I hope that optimum use will be made of them. I also hope that many buildings occupied by councils may be used in the new structure.

I am aware that the previous local government reorganisation involved an increase in costs, mainly due to a significant increase in salaries. I am therefore pleased that that issue is being dealt with and that employees will get a fair deal out of the transition. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recommended a staff commission, which will look after employees' interests, and the transfer of contracts to the new authorities should ensure that there will be some continuity. The Bill also provides that he can establish a body to examine excessive salary increases as it is exceedingly important to ensure uniformity throughout Scotland.

I wonder whether the Bill goes far enough and whether the controls are sufficient. I refer my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for local government in Scotland to Monklands district council. I was very concerned to read of the alleged goings-on in Monklands. An article in *The Scotsman* of 17 December 1992 stated:

"Councillors are accused of using their position to ensure friends and relatives are shortlisted for jobs at every level within the council. A system of pink and green applications is alleged to have enabled recruiting officers to favour certain applications".

The Guardian of 5 January 1993 also reported:

"At least 22 close relatives of Labour Scottish councillors have secured jobs within the Council".

Has my right hon. Friend been approached by either of the Members of Parliament representing Monklands with suggestions that the issue should be covered in the Bill to ensure that there are adequate controls and that priority will not be given to any particular group of people when staff are recruited for the new councils? The Labour party held its own inquiry into Monklands and *The Herald* of 5 March 1993 reports that Mrs. Ann McGuire, the chairman of the Labour party's Scottish executive, admitted, on the "jobs for the boys" allegation, that

"the Council could be open to criticism at the level of involvement that the councillors have in the selection procedures at the lower echelons of council officials".

I do not expect my right hon. Friend to respond immediately, but I hope that, during our debates on the Bill, he will seriously consider the provision of adequate controls to ensure that such goings-on do not occur in the establishment of the new council structures.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I believe that the hon. Gentleman is a qualified lawyer, so we are entitled to expect him to speak with greater clarity than that. What exactly is he saying is wrong at Monklands district council? If he is saying that there is something wrong with the selection procedures, and if a senior officer of the Labour party is saying that steps will be taken to put it right, why is the hon. Gentleman demanding legislation? I do not understand his point; perhaps it is the cheap point that was made by the Secretary of State for the Environment, who, when challenged about Westminster council, said that it was a matter for the local authority, not the Crown. I think that the Secretary of State will give exactly the same reply this afternoon.

Mr. Kynoch: I hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying but the Opposition are again trying a whitewash. I am concerned to ensure that there is no favouritism——

Mr. Hogg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kynoch: No, I will not. I have already given way and shall not do so again.

Mr. Hogg *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman who is speaking is not giving way.

Mr. Hogg: It is because he has not got a point to make.

Mr. Kynoch: I must also correct the hon. Gentleman. I am not sure whether I am flattered to be called a lawyer. In fact, I came from business and was a mechanical engineer by profession, not a lawyer. I have finished with that issue but I should like confirmation that it will be considered as the Bill passes through its various stages.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kynoch: No. I shall now deal with the Bill's provisions for decentralisation.

Decentralisation is clearly of particular importance for rural authorities and I speak as someone representing a rural constituency. I understand my right hon. Friend's arguments for having a large rural authority surrounding a city in order to provide a counterbalance to ensure that the authority is large enough to provide local services in a proper and cost-effective way. I also greatly welcome his recognition that one needs decentralisation for the proper delivery of local services. I hope that, under decentralisation, he will still be able to use as much as possible of the existing local government structure.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsiblity for local government in Scotland is quoted as saying that he recognises the benefit of community councils and their contribution to consultation in the new council structure. Community councils have served a useful function locally as advisory panels for local government and I trust that they will continue to play an important role under the new structure when we shall have larger rural authorities.

I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Hamilton had to say about water. He appeared to be worried about cost and the delivery of service but also said that water services should be left as they are. If by that he means that we should leave water services with the nine existing authorities, I fail to understand him because, as I understand the Bill, those authorities will cease to exist and will therefore not be able to manage any water authority. If, however, he believes that water services should be turned over to the 28 proposed authorities, that is a different matter. However, 28 authorities would be far too many to ensure the uniformity that my right hon. Friend mentioned.

Clearly, there will have to be significant capital expenditure in the water industry in the next 10 to 15 years. I can see that nowhere more than in my constituency

[Mr. Kynoch]

where, due to the success of oil and the development of the north-east, Aberdeen local services—for example, sewage treatment plants—are bursting at the seams and desperately need renewing to cope with developments in the area. I hope that the funds will be more readily available through the use of private finance as a result of the structures that my right hon. Friend has proposed. I welcome the provisions in clause 80 to introduce capital from the private sector. The Bill means a partnership between public organisation and private finance and should be of immense benefit to consumers.

I would be wrong if I did not mention rural areas and the representations that I have received from the Scottish Landowners Federation, which is concerned about the welfare of its members—many of whom are my constituents—who live and work in rural communities. It wants to ensure that they are not hard done by because of the cost of implementing water services in the countryside. Obviously, I welcome the setting up of a customers council, which will protect the interests of consumers. I hope that representatives on the council will recognise the needs of those who live in rural communities and the countryside.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the debate from the Back Benches you sensibly and rightly asked hon. Members to be brief. The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) has been talking for 20 minutes and has a lot of paper left in his hand. Do you have no power to ask him to draw his remarks to a halt?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The short answer is no.

Mr. Kynoch: I am trying to talk as concisely as I can about a comprehensive Bill that has important implications for my constituents and the people of Scotland. If the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is not interested in dealing with serious matters, that is up to him.

I hope that other aspects of water will be dealt with in Committee, in particular the legal framework for installing new water mains, which is also of interest to my constituents. I recognise that controls are necessary and that the controls built into the Bill are clearly better than the previous ones, but I hope that there will be detailed consideration of the matter in Committee.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Am I not right in saying that such detailed matters are for Committee? We are discussing the principle of the Bill. Surely you have the power to draw that to the attention of the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside. He is going to be on the Committee anyway, so surely he can raise such matters then and talk only about the principles of the Bill now.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is perfectly true that we are dealing with the principles of the Bill. Normally one allows reasonable latitude for hon. Members to make particular points, but I remind the House that it is true that we are dealing with the principles.

Mr. Kynoch: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was endeavouring to keep to the principles of the water provisions in the Bill rather than the detail, which will obviously be discussed at great length in Committee.

During the summer, boundaries were the major topic of conversation in my constituency. This is a significant Bill, which will have much more import for the people of Scotland and to ensure that it works well, it is important to get the fine details right. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State knows only too well that I have approached him and my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for local government concerning two boundaries within my existing constituency and part of that of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

Under the parliamentary boundary reform, it is proposed that that area will come within the constituency that I represent. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has said that such matters will be debated in full in Committee. I hope that he will listen to rational arguments and that we can get those matters rectified. As suggested by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in previous debates on the subject, I shall ensure that amendments are tabled to enable proper discussion of those subjects.

Regardless of what Opposition Members say about cost —their arguments seem to be totally inconsistent as they go for single-tier authorities, but do not tell us what the cost would be—I believe that the Bill is good for the people of Scotland and for local government in Scotland. I hope that we can get it through as quickly as physically possible.

5.34 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute so early to the debate. I hope that the temporary Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) will forgive me if I do not follow all his arguments, although I agree with him on one matter. He said that he did not want elections for the region to be held in 1994, and I can well understand that. If I were an hon. Member serving on the Conservative Benches, I would not want elections for anything in 1994, 1995, 1996 or at any time this side of the turn of the century.

I can well understand why he does not want elections, but he will have to face them. There will be elections for the region and I am sure that, when the people of Scotland are asked how they view the Government's conduct, they will not hesitate to give the reply that they have given so consistently over the years.

In common with all my colleagues in the official Opposition and the other Opposition parties, I am less than impressed by the Government's proposals in the Bill. Nothing that I heard from the Secretary of State this afternoon lessened my fears for the future of Scotland's local authorities. It seems that the aim of local government should be to provide efficient services on a cost-effective basis within a democratic framework, but none of those objectives is dealt with or met in the Bill.

The question that remains to be asked is why we are having the reorganisations at all. The answer is clear. The Conservatives have failed to win councils or parliamentary seats in Scotland and they propose blatantly to fix things. The charge that that is gerrymandering is entirely valid. I think that all hon. Members would accept that redrawing boundaries for Scottish local government is difficult. It is not easy to marry the concentrations of population and the geography, but there is not a shred of evidence that those

considerations have ever been dealt with by the Tory Ministers who drafted the plans. It is all too evident that the proposals' aims are political and owe nothing to the provision of effective, cost-effective or democratic local government.

That fact is best illustrated by referring to my constituency. It is proposed that Cumbernauld and Kilsyth should be included in the new North Lanarkshire authority, but the area has not been a part of Lanarkshire at any time in its history. Cumbernauld was in Dumbartonshire detached—it was not part of main Dumbartonshire.

Before borough status and the last reorganisation in the mid-1970s, services were provided by Dumbarton county council. After the formation of Strathclyde regional council and the district council of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, services other than district services were provided by the Dumbarton division of the regional council—I suppose that one could describe that as the county council continuing.

More recently, social work provision moved to Monklands and health services were provided through the Lanarkshire health board. However, my constituents would have preferred their health provision to come from the Greater Glasgow health board. That is said with no disrespect to Monklands general hospital, or any other Lanarkshire hospital, or to the health provisions of the Lanarkshire health board, but is simply a reflection of where people come from.

They come from the city of Glasgow, and Kilsyth has a long historical attachment to Glasgow's hospital service. Lanarkshire and the towns of Motherwell, Coatbridge and Airdrie have never been associated with the provision of local government services for my constituency. Moreover, those locations are not easily reached by public transport from Cumbernauld or Kilsyth. It goes without saying that my constituents do not use——

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not want his constituency to be linked with Monklands?

Mr. Hogg: No, I am certainly not saying that. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my case, I will make positive arguments for its being part of Dumbartonshire. I pointed out that historically we are part of Dumbartonshire. *[Interruption.]* The proposal is not to put Cumbernauld and Kilsyth in with Monklands; it is to create a North Lanarkshire authority.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the House knows my views about seated interventions.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman finds it difficult to jump up and down—I think that that is the trouble.

The obvious new authority for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth would be the council that was identified in the White Paper. That was the point to which I referred earlier. I think that the hon. Member hails from Dumbartonshire.

Mr. Robertson: Motherwell.

Mr. Hogg: We had better get that right, just for the record. The hon. Gentleman represents Aberdeen, South and may not be altogether familiar with Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and its location, but the obvious new authority for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth would be the council that was identified in the White Paper as East Dumbartonshire. That used to be the name of the constituency that I represented here a long time ago—the constituency that I originally represented in Parliament. In that authority we would continue to be part of the geographical and administrative area to which we have always related.

The community has been excluded from East Dumbartonshire because it would distort the Government's aim to produce a Tory-dominated council. To that end, they have decided to create East Dumbartonshire and exclude not only my constituency but part of Strathkelvin which is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and that part of the council area in Strathkelvin which is represented on the regional council by the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Councillor Charles Gray. Strong representations have been made to my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West for that area to be included with Strathkelvin when it goes to the new East Dumbartonshire.

The area of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, currently the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council area, would be better placed in that authority and it would be better if that authority were given its correct name of Lennox. That is the view of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council. It is the view of the people of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth as revealed in a parliamentary answer that was given to me recently. There is overwhelming public support for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth being part of the new East Dumbartonshire authority, and no consent whatever from the public for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth to be part of North Lanarkshire.

I will now discuss the services of local government. I think that the Government's proposals pose a serious threat to the continuation of the excellent services that we have enjoyed from Scottish local government. I can honestly say —I think that it goes for most of my colleagues—that we rarely hear complaints about Strathclyde regional council and the provision of its services. It is a first class, well managed, well run local authority. That is equally true of the district councils that have the difficult task of administering, in the main, the housing function.

Throughout the 15 years that I have served in Parliament and Strathclyde regional council and the district councils have been in existence, I have not encountered serious complaints about the administration of the authorities. On very few occasions have I had to fall out with those authorities in any major way. That has not been my experience and I am confident that my colleagues would support me in that.

I believe that the Government's proposals seriously threaten many of the major services of local government. I shall refer only to education—the service which is most threatened by the Bill.

The Government's education policy in Scotland has failed. It has not secured public support. If it had, we would have opted-out schools, but we do not, because parents did not consent to that. They have not consented to the eccentric and somewhat radical ideas that have gained currency elsewhere in the United Kingdom, because they know what is good and what works. They know that education authorities such as Strathclyde regional council have not failed them and that they have dealt well with the difficulties foisted on them by the underfunding that has been such a feature of the present Government.

[Mr. Hogg]

I believe that the Government will do what my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) hinted at. Scotland will be abused in much the same way as London has been abused, in educational terms.

Mr. Dalyell: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hogg: I believe that the post-Inner London education authority situation, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton, will be the experience of Scottish parents if we allow the Bill to be passed. I am certain that in Scotland or among the Scottish media it will not be popular to draw parallels with London, but the experience in London has not been good and the proposals that are before us have much in common with what has happened here in the metropolis. I am certain that the people of Scotland do not wish that to happen to them and that they are right to reject the proposals.

Much research has been carried out for me into what has happened with ILEA and I will make that available to my hon. Friends who will serve on the Committee. I hope that they will be able to use that material to expose what will happen if we move from the democratic control of elected councillors serving as an elected education authority to the type of diluted quango proposed by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

Mr. Stewart *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I do not think that he has read his own Bill. If he reads it—which I recommend that he do, because he might be frightened at some of the things that he discovers—he will discover what the Government propose for education, which is a dilution of democratic control. It is a dilution of parent power, and it is quite deliberate.

The Under-Secretary is doing it because the other policy, for which school boards were designed and opting out was designed, has failed and been rejected. No one agrees with him on education policy and that is why the proposals are before us today. It is one of the reasons why we are having a reorganisation of local government which no one in Scotland asked for and no one in Scottish local government argued for, but which the Minister thought was necessary to bolster a situation in which his policies had been rejected. That is why this is happening.

We shall lose control over major services such as education and social work. There will be a diminution of council——

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: Of course.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but I am genuinely puzzled by what he is saying. It is clear from the Bill that education and social work remain the responsibilities of the new authority.

Mr. Hogg: I am not surprised that the Minister is puzzled. Puzzlement seems to be his permanent condition. Is he really saying, however, that very small local authorities will be education authorities, with all the complex services that such authorities operate, and that they will be able to make the specialist provision that we enjoy in the Lothian region and the Strathclyde region? Is he really saying that the tiny minds of Eastwood, who would be operating the tiny authority of Eastwood, will really be able to do that? Is that what the hon. Gentleman is arguing?

Mr. Stewart: The education authority with the best record in terms of the number of pupils going on to higher and further education is Western Isles.

Mr. Hogg: I am not sure that that point illustrates very much. It obviously pleases the Minister, who is sitting looking awfully pleased with himself for having made that point. I am not sure that the point is worth making. Western Isles cannot be compared with great industrial conurbations such as Glasgow, in which education is administered by Strathclyde regional council.

To draw an analogy between an education authority with the complexities of Glasgow and Western Isles is fatuous. I am surprised that anyone who takes responsibility for Government policy in this area should make such a foolish point. The Government's proposals enjoy no respect among the people of Scotland. No support for these policies is expressed anywhere.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: Yes, because the hon. Gentleman has a certain entertainment value.

Mr. Gallie: Is the hon. Gentleman's mail bag as packed as mine is with representations from district councils throughout Scotland urging support for their case for becoming single-tier local authorities? If he is receiving such representations, will he withdraw his comments?

Mr. Hogg: No. I cannot say that I am receiving such mail. By the Government's admission, the overwhelming majority of the more than 4,000 letters that the Secretary of State and I have had from my constituency oppose the Government's proposals for local government reform, oppose the proposal that Cumbernauld and Kilsyth should be part of North Lanarkshire and support the proposal that we should be part of a new Lennox authority. On that note, I end my speech. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie).

5.51 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): This is the third occasion on which we have debated the reform of local government in Scotland on the Floor of the House. Despite the three debates, one statement in the House and one debate in the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh, the Opposition still seek to deny their past commitment to single-tier authorities. They continue to opt out of the real debate and they still fail to grasp the issues and the arguments involved. We saw that today when the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) had to pad out his speech by ranting about Westminster city council and by rambling on about the Inner London education authority and the Greater Glasgow health board. None of that had any relevance to the Bill.

The Opposition's approach is interesting. When we debate cost, for example, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) formulates his attack in a sophisticated way. He thinks of a number, adds a nought and then multiples it by a factor of anything between one and 31, depending on which day of the month it happens to be. If that does not get him a headline, he adds another nought. He goes on until someone, somewhere—anyone, anywhere

—picks up his press release and gives him a headline. He then smirks with satisfaction, not realising that out there, no one—not even his own party's council groups—believes him any more.

As we have heard before, Dundee district council, which is Labour-controlled, predicts savings of £1·8 million. Dunfermline district council, which is Labour-controlled, predicts savings of more than £8 million from the proposed reforms.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Any hon. Member could produce a precedent of a single education authority that has been turned into a dozen education authorities and could then show that the number of officials above a certain level has increased by a factor of about 75 per cent. Why is that irrelevant to the present debate?

Mr. Robertson: I shall answer that question if the hon. Gentleman stands by his manifesto commitment to return to single-tier authorities. Is he trying to say that the way in which we propose to achieve single-tier authorities will be more expensive than the way that he proposed? Throughout this debate and our debate last summer, the Opposition have sought to deny their previous commitment to this policy. The hon. Gentleman has just displayed that.

When we debate boundaries, the hon. Member for Hamilton and his party are all over the place. On the previous occasion on which we debated the matter on the Floor of the House, he told us that he believed that commuter communities—those were his words—surrounding cities should be in the same unitary authority as their city and he used Dundee as an example. He now screws up his eyes. If he looks at column 210 of the *Official Report* for 22 November 1993, he will see it all there.

That is not what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) is saying about Aberdeen and it is certainly not what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) is saying about Glasgow. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hamilton, in agreeing to this diversity of approach, is quietly accepting what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been saying since last summer —that to be genuinely local and properly sensitive, there can be no one solution that is correct for all parts of Scotland. Uniformity of principle does not demand uniformity of approach.

Mr. George Robertson: The hon. Gentleman and I share a surname. Surely the hon. Gentleman can share the same standard. If he quotes me, he should quote me accurately. In relation to commuter communities, I said:

"In Tayside, despite the changes announced by the Secretary of State today, Dundee city has still lost some of its major commuter communities in Monifieth and in Invergowrie. That leaves the city to pay the hefty bills for services provided to those people who are now taken out of the city boundaries."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 210.]

That point related specifically to Dundee, which I mentioned in my speech today. Where is the general principle that the hon. Gentleman is now beginning to develop as a policy?

Mr. Robertson: Surely the hon. Gentleman is saying —I shall gladly give way to him again—that communities should be with their city. Why is that to be relevant to Dundee, but not to Aberdeen? That is the point that I am making. You are all over the place. You are saying one thing for one city and quite another for another to try to suit your argument——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that remarks are addressed to the Chair.

Mr. Robertson: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It is in Labour's opposition to the Bill in general that we see its complete disarray. The grand campaign of non-co-operation by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, about which my right hon. Friend talked, was first on, then off, then on again with refinements, then off, and then on again with refinements. It is now expected to be abandoned by the end of the week. We must not despair.

The hon. Member for Hamilton tells us that, he still has an ace to play. He tells us that to breathe new life into the campaign against the Bill, he plans to motivate a vast army of angry Conservative Back Benchers from English constituencies who, we are told, believe it or not, are fearful of their seats because of the reform of Scottish local government. According to the hon. Gentleman's line, they will, together with Opposition parties, amend, wreck and finally defeat the Bill.

Looking around me today, I have to say that it would have been nice if there had been some more English colleagues here to listen and perhaps to take part. I see no vast, angry army, whom the hon. Member for Hamilton hopes to employ. My hon. Friends show by their absence from this debate that they are far more prepared to take the leadership of my right hon. Friend than they are to take the words of the hon. Member for Hamilton.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman has noted the absence of his English colleagues. Would he say that that is a qualification for them to then serve in Committee?

Mr. Robertson: I am saying that English colleagues who are not here are behaving as we do when purely English business is being discussed. We tend to do other things and then return to the Chamber.

I return to the point about Aberdeen and north-east Scotland. On publication of my right hon. Friend's consultative document and the subsequent White Papter, the responses from Aberdeen and from the north-east poured in, from all the district councils, the regional council, the Conservative council groups, individuals and other interested bodies.

When listening to Opposition Front-Bench Members, as they fulminate and demonstrate against my right hon. Friend's proposals, one must ask whether the hon. Member for Hamilton is the shadow Secretary of State for all of Scotland or just for the part of Scotland from which he comes and in which his party is especially strong—Strathclyde and Midlothian.

The hon. Member for Hamilton must realise that, if he aspires to the great office of Secretary of State, he must be prepared to back all of Scotland and not simply that part of our country with which he is most comfortable. His attitude seems to be, and his speech confirmed it, that he will fight hard for Strathclyde and Lothian and damn the rest. It is notable that he had little to say about anything north of Edinburgh.

The response to what my right hon. Friend is proposing for Aberdeen is best summed up by a quotation from one of the submissions:

[Mr. Robertson]

"In short, local government in Aberdeen can be improved by re-establishing the city as a unitary authority. This would promote a more efficient, accountable, economical and responsive local administration and service delivery."

That letter was not from me, but from the Labour group of the city of Aberdeen district council which was unanimously adopted by the council's Labour group, Conservative group, Liberal group and two Scottish National party councillors.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who is not in his place, has also gone on the record as saying:

"There will certainly be a great satisfaction at the restoration of a single-tier authority for the city of Aberdeen."

Perhaps the feeling in Aberdeen was best summed up by the *Press and Journal*, which carried this headline the morning after the publication of the White Paper: "Aberdeen Achieves Goal".

Outside the city, an Aberdeenshire council is proposed, which, while large enough to act as a counterbalance for the new city authority, is also of a size which will allow it to be genuinely local and to be accessible and accountable to those who depend on it for their services. My right hon. Friend has again responded to many of the fears and concerns of the smaller district councils in the Grampian region, which were rightly concerned with the principle of accountability and the question of sensitivity in dealing with local matters.

For example, Kincardine and Deeside district council's response stated:

"Specifically, a combined Gordon/Banff and Buchan/ Kincardine and Deeside unit would be acceptable"

and said that such an authority

"would not reflect local loyalties and allegiances. (There is little in common between the residents of say, St. Cyrus, and Huntly or Peterhead)."

My right hon. Friend's proposals address those concerns. The larger authorities, in terms of land area, must be instructed to come forward with detailed plans for decentralisation and dispersal throughout the authority area, which will further help to alleviate many of the fears.

There has been concern over my right hon. Friend's plans to include the suburb of Westhill in the new Aberdeen authority. Much nonsense has been talked over its similarity with other places such as Banchory, Ellon and Inverurie. Those who have made such statements obviously do not know the geography of the area. The extent of the present district council boundary, measured as the crow flies from Aberdeen's town house, the accepted centre of the city, is 9·7 miles north-west at Hatton of Fintray, 9·75 miles west at Leuchar Moss and 9·5 miles south-west at Moss-side, while the most westerly point of the community of Westhill lies some 8 miles from the town house, comfortably in the radius of the present district council boundary. In road terms from the town house, Dyce is 7·1 miles away and is already inside the city boundary and Peterculter is 7·3 miles and is already inside the city boundary, whereas Westhill is only 7·2 miles away —nearer to the town house than Peterculter.

The city of Aberdeen district council's Labour group acknowledged those facts when it said in its response:

"Portlethen and Westhill function to a significant extent as dormitory suburbs of Aberdeen. In social and economic terms they are very much part of the overall activity patterns of the city. Their location, close to the existing boundary distinguishes them from other settlements in the Aberdeen area (ie Ellon, Banchory, Stonehaven, Inverurie) where the effect of factors such as distance enable those communities to be more self-sustaining and identifiable in their own right."

In all the debates since the publication of the White Paper, I have heard no one deny that the people of Westhill look to the city of Aberdeen and none deny that their focus is the city.

It is to the city that the people of Westhill go in their thousands to work each day. The Westhill people go to Aberdeen to catch a long-distance bus or train, for their weekly shopping, their entertainment, to eat out and for their leisure and recreation. To get to Aberdeen, they travel on the upgraded A944, which has been part-dualled to cope with the volume of traffic.

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I find our tour of Aberdeen interesting, but I thought that you ruled earlier that this is the Second Reading of a Bill which covers a bigger part of Scotland than Aberdeen. I hope that you will ask the hon. Gentleman to tell us more of his views on the rest of Scotland after what he said about my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson).

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is perfectly true that we are debating the general principles of the Bill, but during such a debate, there is no reason why hon. Members should not use illustrative examples if they so wish. It must be for the Chair to decide whether the balance is right. I am sure that all hon. Members will bear that in mind.

Mr. Robertson: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg).

Mr. Norman Hogg: The hon. Gentleman will know that, unlike him, I am a real Aberdonian; born and bred in the city and the son of a distinguished Lord Provost. I am sure that he would agree that my qualifications for asking him about Aberdeen and the surrounding area are not to be challenged. I am interested in what he says about all those areas. Would not that be a case for Eastwood being part of Glasgow?

Mr. Robertson: I knew that somewhere, somebody sitting on the Opposition Benches would fall into that trap. Westhill is a tenth of the size of Eastwood. There is no parallel whatever. A portrait of the hon. Gentleman's father hangs with distinction in Aberdeen town house, which is soon to be the home of an all-purpose city of Aberdeen authority, about which I am sure he will be delighted.

The A944 has been part-dualled to cope with the volume of traffic from Westhill to the city centre. Inverurie, on the other hand, can be reached only by an A class road into Aberdeen or by travelling on a number of tortuous B and C class roads. It is also worth noting that on 10 January, the Bluebird bus service increased its off-peak service between Westhill and the city centre in response to customer demand.

The case for the inclusion of Westhill into the city has been supported by Councillor Geoff Hadley, the former independent convenor of the Grampian regional council and no friend of the Government. In the *Press and Journal* on 9 September, he said:

"During the 25 years since Aberdeen County Council fell in with the developers . . . Westhill has grown and been variously described as a garden suburb, dormitory town and satellite town —all terms which imply a population shunted between home and work locations.

But this is not simply about commuting. I would guess that perhaps 90 per cent. of Westhill residents' activities associated

with work, cultural affairs, social events, sports, shopping and so on relate to the Aberdeen city focus. Few will look to Inverurie or other towns in Gordon District for promoting their lifestyle.

Given this, is there not a certain illogicality in the declared reluctance of Westhill residents to become part of Aberdeen?

If local government is to be wholly local, Westhill being no further from the city centre than Dyce or Peterculter lends weight to a logical—if reluctant—acquiesence to the Government's proposals for a merger."

Mr. Kynoch: I do not think that this is the place to debate such matters—that would be in Committee—but will my hon. Friend tell the House, for the benefit of those who do not know where Westhill is, the distance between Westhill and the nearest housing in Aberdeen city and what lies between there and Westhill?

Mr. Robertson: A more useful parallel for my hon. Friend to draw is that the commuter suburb of Peterculter, in his constituency, is 7·3 miles from the city centre and that Westhill, not in his constituency, is 7·2 miles from the city centre.

At present, the existing Grampian region gives the people of Westhill some say in the affairs of Aberdeen on a number of, although not all, important issues. In April 1996, all that will change. If Westhill remains outside the city, residents will be left as the poor relations with no democratic input into a city which plays such a large role in their everyday lives. They deserve representation in the city.

Today does not mark the end of the debate on local government reform, but it marks an end of the beginning. My right hon. Friend's proposals offer a new era in the affairs of local government in Scotland—strong, accountable and powerful unitary authorities—yet, at the same time, those councils will, by their very nature, be sensitive to local needs and responsive to local requirements.

That is a stark contrast to what is on offer from the Opposition: an Edinburgh assembly plundering the power of local councils, to grab it and to take it to Edinburgh. It would have denuded town halls in Scotland of their power and centralised it at Calton Hill, thus taking decision making away from the people, rather than empowering the people through one councillor and one council. Two visions of Scotland's future are on offer. I am happy and proud to support the vision of my right hon. Friend, which the people of Scotland will endorse.

6.9 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It will have been noted how the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), in his infinite wisdom, patronisingly told the people of Westhill what was best for them, despite the fact that, in a house-to-house survey 98 per cent. of them said that they want to remain part of a rural authority. That attitude should come as no surprise from a member of a party whose Government are proposing a Bill to dictate, to patronise and to tell us what is best.

This is the biggest Scottish Bill since 1979, but it is one of the most disreputable Bills that I have seen since becoming a Member. Rather than being a well-designed vehicle to bring about a smooth reform of local government, we have a hybrid between a bulldozer and a parliamentary omnibus.

The Bill contains six different measures that could have merited separate legislation—reform of local government; a fundamentally changed structure for water and sewerage services; important detailed provisions on local government finance; important changes in the organisation of the function of the reporter to the children's panel, which has scarcely had a mention so far; significant changes to the legislation on road tolls; and important detailed provisions on the reform of tourism—an important part of the Scottish economy which, because of the nature of the Bill, will scarcely receive the adequate consideration that it requires.

Each of those issues could be appropriately dealt with by a Scottish Parliament. The Bill, combined with the Government's proposals to smuggle in sweeping reforms of the police and prison administration under the cloak of English legislation and their failure to find time to legislate for proposals in the White Paper, "Scotland's Children", shows how ill served Scotland's legislative interests are by the current arrangements of the House.

If they were here, Conservative Members for English seats would not countenance a full domestic agenda for one Session being cobbled together in one Bill, and if that would not be good enough for them why should Scotland's legislation be treated in such a second-rate manner?

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 was in Committee from early January until May. This Bill requires just as much time and I trust that the Government will make a commitment this evening to secure it.

The Bill is further tarnished by the procedures that have led to the proposed changes in local government structure, which are taking place only 20 years after a Conservative Government undertook the last reform. On that occasion, reform took place against a background of a royal commission and broad consensus. Today, there has been no overall view of local government and of its role and functions and no independent proposals on boundaries. Uncertainty exists among local authority employees about their future conditions of employment and whether they will have jobs—it would be welcome if the Minister could confirm that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply to staff who are faced with dislocation as a result of the reforms. Above all, there is no consensus. That is no basis for the stable reform of local government.

Perhaps the most disreputable aspect of the Bill is the profoundly anti-democratic thrust of its provisions. Should its provisions pass into law, the Government's talk of reviving the dynamism of local democracy will be seen for the fraud that we know it to be. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury expresses concern about the cynicism that he claims is now attaching itself to our national institutions, but he should not be surprised. His name appears on the Bill as a supporter.

What can be a more cynical gerrymander than the provisions that describe the new East Renfrewshire local authority? One wonders whether the Chief Secretary has looked at them. For example, schedule I mentions

"the southern curtilages of No 43 Ben Lui Drive, Nos 52 to 50 Ben Wyvis Drive and northwards along the western curtilages of Nos 20 to 16 of the said Ben Wyvis Drive".

I want to know what has happened to Nos 22 to 48 Ben Wyvis drive. I am pleased to see the Chief Secretary standing at the Bar of the House. He should pay careful attention to schedule I if he wants to know why the population are rightly cynical of the Government's proposals.

Much has been made in the debate, and will be made in Committee, of boundaries. My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), my hon.

[Mr. James Wallace]

Friends who represent highland constituencies and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) have expressed deep concern about the proposals that affect their areas and appear to take no account of local opinion. The same applies to residents of Westhill, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

Such matters are critical to people who want to identify with their local community—and one hopes that even at this stage the Government will recognise the importance of that—but it will hardly matter where boundaries fall if local government has been stripped of its ability to govern. The Government have already introduced 150 measures to take such power from local communities and put it in the hands of central Government and the Bill goes a long way to completing that neutering process.

More than 180 provisions in the Bill extend the power of the Secretary of State to interfere in the decision making of locally elected councils. The phrase

"The Secretary of State may by order"

or words to similar effect, appear more than 70 times in the Bill and more often than not are subject to negative procedures. In addition, the Secretary of State can issue guidelines or directions in a further 47 instances to change, to block or to compel council decisions and in a further 65 instances the Bill is littered with open-ended phrases like

"as the Secretary of State thinks fit"

or "as he considers appropriate". Such powers tear the heart out of local democracy and are wholly inimical to what the Liberal Democratic party stands for.

The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) quoted from the Scottish Liberal Democrat manifesto for the last election. I am pleased that he did. I regret only that more voters in Kincardine and Deeside did not vote for our proposals. My party believes in reforming and strengthening local government, but this Government are interested only in reforming and substantially weakening it.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that the argument against a Scottish Parliament advanced by the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) is undermined by my hon. Friend's point about the number of times that the Secretary of State proposes to intervene and direct local authorities? The purpose of a Scottish Parliament would not be to take power from local authorities but to make the Secretary of State and the Scottish Office accountable to the people of Scotland, about which the Conservative party does not care because it cannot win the support of the people of Scotland.

Mr. Wallace: My hon. Friend sums it up concisely. He will share our party's belief that local government should allow local people the power and opportunity to shape and influence their local communities with minimal interference from outside, from a Scottish Parliament or from the Secretary of State, and to be subject only to proper regard for the law and human rights and, ultimately, to the accountability of the ballot box.

What sticks in my craw as I read the Bill is the Government's arrogant underlying assumption that only a Tory Secretary of State will ever exercise the Bill's powers. That belief might stretch credibility today, but before Conservative Members vote for the Bill I hope that they will contemplate the possibility of a Labour Secretary of State having the kind of powers that are contained in the Bill.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, when a Labour Secretary of State proposed to reorganise local government, he set up a royal commission and put on it Miss Betty Harvie Anderson, a Tory Member of Parliament, and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)? That was the proper, democratic way to reorganise local government. I hope that he will give credit to a Labour Secretary of State for doing that.

Mr. Wallace: Indeed. The hon. Gentleman makes a factual point for which I readily give credit. That path should have been pursued in this instance.

Perhaps Conservative Members will read page 17 of the Bill and the proposed new section 62B to be added to the 1973 Act. What in that section would stop a Secretary of State of a different party considering that the local government functions of west central Scotland should be discharged jointly by a joint board comprising Dumbarton and Clydebank, East Dumbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and City of Glasgow councils? The whole of Strathclyde region could be recreated. Indeed, any other region could be recreated as a result of the powers which the Bill gives to a Secretary of State. There is provision for statutory consultation, but that is unlikely to save the day if the standards of consultation operated by the present Scottish Office team were to be adopted. I hope that Conservative Members will think carefully about that before they vote to give such unfettered power to the Secretary of State.

Is it the Minister's intention or that of the Secretary of State to appoint persons other than elected councillors to the joint boards? How does the Minister expect the party balance to be established on those boards? While joint boards are less acceptable than directly elected authorities, they are nevertheless preferable to quangos. As might be expected from a Department which has an insatiable appetite for quangos, the Bill creates its fair share of them. The Scottish Office should learn lessons from quangos.

Having listened to the exchanges between the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), I believe that the House should be concerned by the clear and apparent discrepancies between the answers given to the Select Committee by Lord Fraser and the answer given by the Secretary of State in the House. I am also concerned about the fact that the Secretary of State appeared to know the contents of a letter from the head of the home civil service to the hon. Member for Hamilton. Perhaps the House should be informed of the protocol when an hon. Member writes to the head of the home civil service. Is he being tampered with and expeced to bow to political pressure? As that famous phrase in a magazine states, "I think we should be told." Very important constitutional points arise on that matter.

The Bill has its fair share of quangos. Not only is the supply of water and sewerage services to be removed from elected and accountable control, but the consumers watchdog is to become a committee of the Secretary of State's appointees. Those appointees will be paid to be members of that committee and will receive expenses. In addition, they may receive compensation if a term of office expires early. They may receive pensions, allowances and

gratuities. I believe that democracy would render the delivery of those services more accountable and that the ballot box is probably a cheaper watchdog than cumulative paid jobs for the boys and girls as proposed in the Bill.

I have several specific questions about water and sewerage services. Is the accrued capital debt of the regional and islands water authorities to be written off and a green dowry given to the new water authorities as was the case when the English water services were restructured? Surely our domestic consumers should receive the same kind of benefits. Indeed, our business consumers should also receive those benefits. How can they compete equally with English competitors which have had the benefit of water supplied by companies whose debts have been written off?

While clause 54 places restrictions on the ability of existing authorities to enter into contracts that exceed £1 million—and if they go beyond 31 March 1996 the limit will be £100,000—unless approved by the successor body, where does that leave the status of undertakings given by a number of water authorities to the Secretary of State two or three years ago with regard to an extensive programme of capital investment required to meet European Community requirements?

While there is dismay across Scotland about the responsibility and accountability for those services being taken from elected people, there is deep scepticism in the islands areas about the reforms of water and sewerage. Problems relating to the delivery of those services are complex and there is little confidence that a remote bureaucracy will be able to understand them.

When Orkney's water was previously supplied by the North of Scotland water board, there was an underestimate by a factor of five of the daily consumption of water by cows. That could make a huge difference to the supply and engineering of water services. We have no guarantee that similar mistakes will not be made again. Different charges that can be made in different circumstances are of particular concern. What safeguards are to be offered, not just to the islands areas, but to remoter rural parts, that they will not be charged heftily by authorities which have the power to charge differentially?

While the islands authorities do not change—apart from the fact that the title "islands" becomes a geographical description rather than a council description—it was much easier when we had a generic term to describe those authorities to adapt legislation and devise solutions to meet different circumstances. I accept that on some occasions the Government did that with regard to FE colleges and the provision of housing for teachers in remoter areas.

The ability to make distinctions to meet particular circumstances may be lost when those authorities are like every other council. The Montgomery committee endorsed the success of the islands areas and urged the Government to "consolidate, develop and extend" their powers. The Bill takes them in the opposite direction. If the islands authorities make specific points during the progress of this legislation, I hope that they will receive sympathetic attention from the Minister and his officials.

The islands authorities persuaded me to support single-tier authorities and the policy of my party involves single-tier authorities, as has already been said in the debate. We are generally disposed towards such authorities, but not to authorities that are motivated purely by partisan and political reasons. We see such authorities within the context of a Scottish Parliament. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon said, those authorities will not suck powers away from local government. They will take the powers of this Parliament to deal with Scotland's domestic affairs and place them where they can be properly, adequately and democratically accountable.

We want that decentralisation of power from the House to a Scottish Parliament. We do not want to support a Bill which continues the trend of centralisation. Nor do we wish to support local authorities that will continue to be elected by a corrupt electoral system which weakens the accountability of the councillor to the people he represents. For those reasons my right hon. and hon. Friends cannot support a Bill which will lead to the emasculation of local democracy in Scotland.

6.26 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I begin by apologising unreservedly for apparently breaking parliamentary procedures with regard to a press release. I will make sure that that does not happen again. Should I become aware that any other Member so transgresses, it will be drawn to the attention of the Chair. As a relatively new Member, I thought that I had grasped parliamentary procedure. Obviously, that was not quite the case.

Having said that, I did take my seat on the right side of the House when I first became a Member—unlike the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) who, I understand, did not quite manage to do so. However, having heard the hon. Gentleman's disorientated remarks, I understand how that occurred.

The Bill is one of the most important and long-awaited legislative measures for Scotland. People in Ayrshire have never been happy with the Strathclyde scenario. Strathclyde was a local authority misnomer: there was very little local about it.

The target set by all the candidates in the 1992 election in my constituency was to get rid of Strathclyde and to move towards single-tier authorities. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his Front-Bench colleagues have driven towards that target.

Having heard the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), I hope that his colleagues, who will vote against Second Reading from loyalty tonight, will consider local interests and local involvement in Standing Committee. I hope that they will work in Committee to make the Bill an excellent one for people throughout Scotland.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will listen to the views that will be expressed in Committee, which may logically justify amendments. Over recent weeks, I have had many contacts with local authorities from north, south, east and west. I have had contacts with Gordon, Renfrew, Argyll, the Lothians, Dunfermline, Cunninghame, Kyle and Carrick, Kilmarnock and Loudoun. They all supported single-tier local government for Scotland. That contradicts the views expressed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in particular.

We should drive home the message that, if people with responsibility or even influence in COSLA opt for non-co-operation, the people they will damage most are council tax payers—the people who will elect whatever local authorities are established in future—and COSLA's actions will be long remembered. When the poll tax—the community charge—was introduced, people in local

[Mr. Phil Gallie]

authorities encouraged non-compliance with the laws of the land. That attitude has rebounded in a most horrific way on many hon. Members' constituents.

I hope that there will be a constructive debate in Committee. Part I, schedule 1, will be considered very early in Committee. I can certainly see much—*[Interruption.]* Nobody has sought to correct anything that I have said today. I regard that as total agreement with all I say.

As for Ayrshire, I am perfectly happy with the current proposals. To an extent, they coincide with the views expressed by all Ayrshire Members at the time of consultation. I wanted a separate south Ayrshire—a Kyle and Carrick. That was recognised in the Secretary of State's proposals. In the main, it appeared that other hon. Members from Ayrshire wanted an all-Ayrshire authority. The Secretary of State has democratically recognised those representations and, as closely as possible, has met the combined views of all Ayrshire Members. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) knows very little about Ayrshire.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gallie: I shall give way very shortly.

I consider that I am the only Ayrshire Member who speaks for local interests in Ayrshire. On that basis, I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to modify his plans and create a third local authority, as opposed to the planned two, in Ayrshire. Already, the wishes of Kyle and Carrick have been recognised, with the intended creation of south Ayrshire. I shall offer no change to part I on that point.

There is no reason why recognition should not be given to the wishes of the people of Cunninghame and their elected representatives to allow a free-standing Cunninghame under the banner of a north Ayrshire authority. That would allow the wishes, as I understand them, of Kilmarnock and Loudoun councillors to have an east Ayrshire or a central Ayrshire authority set up, linked with Cumnock and Doon Valley.

Cumnock and Doon Valley councillors preferred an all-Ayrshire authority, but I understand that my proposal is their second preference. Given the lack of support for their idea, they would no doubt be relatively happy with my proposal.

Mr. Foulkes: I am getting a bit confused. The hon. Gentleman says that one authority or two authorities are just the same, but he is now in favour of three authorities, whereas originally he was in favour of two, which was the same as one. I must say that I find that very confusing.

However, I will not accept the hon. Gentleman misrepresenting what other people think. It is absolutely clear—I spoke today to the convenor of Cumnock and Doon Valley, the leader of the district council—that my council supports an all-Ayrshire authority—first, second and third choice. Will the hon. Gentleman make it absolutely clear that that is the case? He has misrepresented the council. Will he accept that that is the second, third or fourth that he has made tonight?

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman's confusion is not new. I consistently find him in a state of confusion in respect of every issue. If he had listened carefully, he would have heard me acknowledge fully that the first preference of Cumnock and Doon Valley councillors is for an all-Ayrshire authority. That cuts across other Opposition Members' requirement that a Strathclyde authority be maintained.

I acknowledge that Cumnock and Doon Valley would like an all-Ayrshire authority, but, quite honestly, even the confused Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will recognise that he cannot have second, third and fourth preferences that are all the same—it is not logical. However, that does not surprise me.

I ask all Ayrshire Members to back Ayrshire local authorities. Perhaps Opposition Members will support the amendment that I intend to move in Committee, given the opportunity. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) would listen, he would know that I referred to "the amendment that I intend to move in Committee, given the opportunity" I am not trying to second-guess anyone. It would be helpful if Opposition Members would open their ears and listen a bit more.

Let us consider some of the representations that have been made. I am sure that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) will join me in backing the representatives of Argyll district council, who certainly want to go along with the Secretary of State's proposals. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) seemed to suggest that the citizens of Helensburgh do not desire to join Argyll. He should listen more to public opinion in Helensburgh. People in Helensburgh very much identify with Argyll. It would do the House well to pick up that point.

Mr. McFall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gallie: I now make a plea for the people of Luss. The community council, which has made strong representations, wishes to be linked with Argyll, and asks for that matter to be taken on board. I commend the measures, which extend the involvement of community councillors. They have played a tremendous role in recent years. I hope that community councillors will extend their involvement in the years ahead.

Mr. McFall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gallie: I give way to the hon. Gentleman, as I have been talking about issues which affect his constituents.

Mr. McFall: The hon. Gentleman talks about confusion. I have never heard the hon. Gentleman comment on the issue affecting Helensburgh. If he went to Helensburgh and listened to the people there, he would find that the implications of the local government reorganisation in respect of education, social work and transport greatly concern them.

Only today, *The Herald* pointed out that the unsubsidised return fare from Helensburgh to Glasgow is £9, but, because of the passenger transport authority, the subsidised fare is £4·50. When the burghers of Helensburgh realise that £4·50 is being subsidised by Strathclyde every time they go to Glasgow, they will think again. If anything, the local government reorganisation is about services and the quality of services. That message will get through to Helensburgh and Luss.

Mr. Gallie *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. As many hon. Members hope to catch my eye, lengthy interventions will not assist.

Mr. Gallie: I must agree that quality of service is all-important. However, I must point out to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) that the passenger transport executive will continue under the remit of the Bill, and it will continue to assist his constituents in Helensburgh. When I look at schedule 1 to the Bill, I see some illogicality in the west/mid Lothian situation. I recognise the strong feelings that have come through from Dunfermline.

I will not necessarily get involved in the details of the Bill, but I shall certainly listen with keen interest to the views expressed in Committee by Labour Members. Bearing in mind that this is a local government Bill, I shall certainly listen to the local input from places such as Dunfermline, Cunninghame and Gordon.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*——

Mr. Gallie: I see that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) wishes to intervene. *[Interruption.]* Obviously, the hon. Gentleman does not want to intervene. I shall cover a few general issues. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is changing his mind again. One minute he wants Strathclyde; the next minute he wants Cunninghame; then he wants an all-Ayrshire authority; then he wants to intervene; and then he does not want to intervene. If he wants to get up, he should carry on.

Mr. Wilson: It is a great pity that the hon. Gentleman's press release of that well-rehearsed paragraph will not be accompanied by actions. I will not get involved in his ravings about constituents other than his own. The people in Cunninghame can sort out their problems without his attempt to influence matters or to make party political capital out of them, so I shall leave that aside.

I shall pursue the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) about the Strathclyde passenger transport executive. Recently, the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) said that the problem with the Ayr-Glasgow service, which is certainly the busiest commuter route outside London, is that not many people use it. He now tells us that the Strathclyde passenger transport executive will continue as before. Obviously, he has studied the workings of passenger transport executives in England, where a precepting system fails to operate because the PTEs depend on contributions from individual local authorities.

Can the hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that the proposed passenger transport executive will have access to the same level of funding as the Strathclyde passenger transport executive has at present? If he cannot give that assurance, he cannot give an assurance to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. A few moments ago, I said that many hon. Members were hoping to catch my eye, and suggested that long interventions do not help. Obviously, that fell on deaf ears. I hope that future interventions will be brief.

Mr. Wilson: Without an assurance that the proposed passenger transport executive will have access to the same level of funding, the hon. Member for Ayr cannot give constituents any assurances about investment, rolling stock or anything to do with the Strathclyde passenger transport executive.

Mr. Gallie: Obviously, I shall listen with interest to what Ministers say on this issue in Committee. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I am not prepared to make promises that I am certainly not in a position to fulfil.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gallie: Yes. I have to say that, if I constantly give way to hon. Members, that will extend the length of my speech.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He made an important statement before the previous intervention. I understood him to say that he wants to be a member of the Committee, and we welcome that. He also said that he is willing to listen to representations.

Bearing in mind that the Standing committee may have a Government majority of one or perhaps two members, is the hon. Gentleman prepared to take representations from local groups and county councils in areas such as Berwickshire which think that they are getting a rough deal from the Bill, seriously consider them, and follow with his vote if appropriate amendments are made?

Mr. Gallie: As I have said all along, I intend to listen carefully to the debate. I shall attempt to persuade Ministers along the lines of my feelings, and at the end of the day I will take a combined judgment with my colleagues about the way in which the Bill should proceed. *[Interruption.]* There is nothing odd about that. I have given an undertaking to listen to representations. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is well aware of the procedures of the House. I shall apply pressure in any way that I can to influence Ministers along the lines of my beliefs.

My interest in the matter is to ensure that people in Ayrshire get their just desserts. That is my intention, and it will be my overriding priority. I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. I have given him an undertaking that I will represent the views of the people.

When I examine the wider aspects of the Bill, some matters concern me a little. I am happy that the police authorities in Scotland will be maintained at their present size. I am a little concerned about funding, especially as we have seen the constant underfunding of the police service in Strathclyde recently. I should like to hear something from my right hon. Friend about funding arrangements for the police.

I fully agree with the single-tier option for social work. The link between social work and housing is important, and at present there is a massive gap. I believe that social workers and those in housing management find it difficult to bridge that gap under the current arrangements. I look forward to the future when the Bill comes to fruition and the gap is no longer there.

I commend clause 78, which provides that councillors who fall behind in their payment of council tax should declare that and cease voting in council affairs. The matter was raised during debate on the non-payment of the community charge. I welcome that provision in the Bill. Perhaps we should extend the provision to Members of Parliament; we should not simply pick on councillors.

[Mr. Gallie]

I welcome clause 38, which relates to the designation of trunk roads. I should like to think that the Secretary of State will take a liberal view on this matter in the future and bear in mind the need to give trunk road status to the A77/M77 into the centre of Glasgow. I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey).

Another important aspect of the Bill is domestic rate capping. The right of the Secretary of State to determine the levels of non-domestic rating poundage is important for the business community. Domestic capping is also an essential element. I should like to think that local authorities will act responsibly in the future. Capping may well be a useful facility in the early days of the council, when there could be a move towards inflating expenditure in the hope that the Government will take the blame for restructuring the local authorities.

I am puzzled by some of the comments made by Labour Members about the cost of the reforms. When we are reducing the number of local authorities from 62 to perhaps 30 or 35—no one knows the final number, because we are still debating the matter—there seem to be areas where savings can be made. I am not the only person who feels that way; local authorities in Dunfermline, Cunninghame, Kyle and Carrick, Argyll and all over Scotland feel the same way. They have presented their case, which shows savings. That supports the arguments of the Secretary of State.

It is worth noting that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) said at one time that the measure would cost £400 million to £500 million. That figure has been moderated to about £200 million, which is broadly in line with the Secretary of State's statements, which suggest that the costs will be about £120 million to £196 million. At last the hon. Gentleman has a figure with some reality about it and that, if nothing else, is to be commended.

I am looking forward with some relish to April 1995, when the electorate will be able to give their commendation to the Bill by going to the polls to elect councillors to become involved in the new local authorities.

Mr. Graham: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the possibility of some flexibility. Therefore, will the people who took part in the survey in the constituency of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) get the chance to remain within Renfrew district council?

Mr. Gallie: I said a few moments earlier that it is my understanding that my hon. Friend the Minister will listen to genuine constructive comments in Committee. That did not really need to be said, as I recognise that my hon. Friend takes great regard of what people say to him. It could be that the points raised by the hon. Gentleman will be considered; whether they are justifiable or not is not for me to say. The points should be raised, and I am quite sure that they will be taken into consideration.

I have not spoken about water, sewerage or a number of other issues. The proposals for water and sewerage are in line with the presentation that I made in response to the Secretary of State's consultation paper. I have no difficulty in living with the three public authorities, and I am glad that the Scottish Office listened and recognised the strength of feeling throughout Scotland on the privatisation of water. Scotland did not want it, and the Secretary of State has recognised that. I believe that the public authorities provide a reasonable way ahead and I commend the Bill, but it needs a wee bit of amending here and there.

6.52 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I wish to spend a few minutes on the position of my constituency before moving as rapidly as possible to that of Strathclyde regional council, on which my view is entirely opposite to that of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie).

Some people refer to the wonderful days of one-tier local government in Scotland but in fact before 1975 only the four cities had one-tier local government while the rest was a mixture of district and county councils and boroughs. There was no golden age of one-tier local authorities in Scotland. In 1973, the Wheatley Commission put the bulk of my constituency—Cambuslang, Halfway and Rutherglen—into Glasgow district council. I understand that a decision for a separate council for those areas was lost by just one vote, so in a sense there is a historical injustice because those areas campaigned for a council at that time.

I oppose the Bill and I make no bones about that. Realistically, and like every other hon. Member, I have a constituency interest to look after. My having a view on whether the Bill receives its Second Reading is no worse than, for instance, Glasgow district council having a view on what should happen if the Bill receives Second Reading.

I acknowledge that the Minister with responsibility for local government has recognised that there is a community position in Cambuslang, Halfway and Rutherglen which is different from those areas being a part of a big city council. I am grateful for that, and it would be unfair not to place that on the record. The disadvantages of one-tier local government without a Scottish assembly or Parliament would apply in the same way to a local council for Cambuslang, Halfway and Rutherglen as to any other council in Scotland, and my campaigning for such a council does not mean that I am ignoring the difficulties. In population terms, the addition of other former Lanarkshire areas to Cambuslang, Halfway and Rutherglen would bring the area up to the population size of Eastwood or Stirling, but that is a matter for a later stage.

It is a measure of the desperation of the people in the former Lanarkshire part of my constituency to stop the erosion of their community spirit that they would be prepared to take on a one-tier council. The White Paper stated that King's Park and Toryglen should go into south Lanarkshire, along with Cambuslang, Halfway and Rutherglen. I opposed that, and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) rightly opposed the inclusion of King's Park in that council.

I opposed the inclusion of Toryglen as it has always been a part of the city of Glasgow and I regarded it as my duty as a Member of Parliament to make sure that the people of Toryglen should not be included in a council in which they had no interest. Others might pontificate and make gestures, but I did my job as a Member of Parliament. I am sure that the Minister will recognise that I was partly responsible for his change of mind about King's Park.

A referendum was carried out by Glasgow district council in the areas concerned. If one added the votes from King's Park and Toryglen, the area would have voted

against its inclusion in south Lanarkshire. When the former Glasgow areas were counted separately from the former Lanarkshire areas, the result was 53 per cent. for inclusion in south Lanarkshire and 47 per cent. against. I asked Glasgow district council not to put the question in such a raw fashion, but to give the people the choice of voting for a local council. In my opinion, the majority would have voted for a local council. If they could not get that, I believe that they would have preferred the status quo of Glasgow district council.

Unfortunately, a Tory and a Labour councillor attacked the council's spending on Cambuslang and Rutherglen. That resulted, in my opinion, in a negative vote for the south Lanarkshire proposal. There is no doubt that Glasgow district council shot itself in the foot. Unfortunately, we are now landed with a situation where the Government can rightly say that the people in my constituency voted for inclusion in south Lanarkshire but I would argue that they voted for that only because they were not offered a better choice.

There is a separate identity in Cambuslang and Rutherglen. While people there are certainly no better than Glasgow people—because people are people—they have a different identity and I make no bones about that. We must look at the gerrymandering aspect of what the Government have done, because it is certainly gerrymandering: the Government want to make sure that the Tory enclaves are kept so as to allow Tory councillors to win elections. The Government have totally avoided the issue of costs in the debate. The Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities analysed the Touche Ross costs and clearly exposed them as false.

The joint boards are undemocratic, which brings me to the thrust of what I wish to say. A while ago, the Prime Minister referred to Strathclyde regional council as a monstrosity. That caused deep offence, not just among political people but among the people of Strathclyde and especially among people who gain from the services provided by the council. I am proud to have been a Strathclyde regional councillor to have contributed in a small way to the council's record in delivering services. I agree that it is not the small local borough so beloved of people in Scotland, but it delivers services to residents and that is what matters.

Another aspect that the Government have not addressed in any of their propaganda is Strathclyde regional council's record of achievement in Europe. Many people take the view that Europe sits there with plenty of our money but that we do not get a fair share back. If everyone followed the example of Strathclyde region and got some of our money back from Europe, we would be a great deal better off.

Strathclyde region has secured £260 million from the European development fund. In addition, it has obtained £90 million in grants from the European social fund. That provided 67,000 training places and helped Strathclyde firms to take on an additional 28,000 employees. If that type of positive approach to Europe were taken by every other council in Britain, never mind Scotland, the financial, economic and employment base of the country would be far better. If Strathclyde goes, the people of Britain and Scotland will lose the progressive, innovative policies of that regional council.

Notwithstanding the comments of the hon. Member for Ayr, one issue that has not been addressed is the concessionary travel scheme for pensioners. More than 400,000 concessionary travel cards are provided for elderly and disabled people, giving them subsidised travel across the region. Before 1975 there was no record of two councils under the old system reaching agreement on a travel scheme. That illustrates what happens if there are too many councils spread about when it comes to implementing and organising a travel scheme. The travel scheme is a first-class example of Strathclyde's reputation for delivering services to people.

Under the Government's proposals, the various services for which Strathclyde council is now accountable will be hived off to unelected boards, including Strathclyde joint police authority, the Mid-Western and South-Western fire authorities, the west of Scotland water authority, the Scottish water and sewerage customers council and so on. Democracy and accountability will be removed in a series of services. There is no doubt in my mind that the Secretary of State will make sure that Tory placemen and placewomen will make up those boards.

With the reduction in size of authorities, especially Strathclyde, there will be a loss of strategic overview of service provision. The closer we get to the elimination of Strathclyde regional council from Scotland's local authority life, the more some of us react in horror. I make no apology for speaking about my area. When I envisage my area without the influence of strathclyde regional council, I see a nightmare.

What has taken place is a disgrace. The Government have no mandate for what they are doing. There has been no royal commission. In a democracy it is wrong for any political party to set political boundaries. The point was rightly made earlier that local government reorganisation will in turn impose political boundaries on the parliamentary constituencies. The Bill has all the hallmarks of a rotten borough Government who have been in power too long, are too complacent and believe that they will be re-elected time and time again. The public will react.

I do not take the view that we have lost and that the Bill will sail through Committee and the House. There will be united opposition against the Bill in Committee. If the Government think that the Bill will have an easy passage, they have another think coming. We shall fight it tooth and nail to save not only Strathclyde but the whole of democratic Scottish local government and to put an end to the dictatorship of St. Andrew's house under the Tories.

7.3 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Like the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), I look forward to the day when there is a public reaction to what the Government are doing. The sooner it comes, the better.

Today is hansel Monday—the day in the old Scots calendar on which employers gave their employees a gift, a good meal and a day off. Sadly, today the Secretary of State for Scotland—our colonial governor—has not heard of hansel Monday. He bears no gifts. He is starving our local authorities of funding and powers, and is trying to write off real local authority accountability within our communities.

The Secretary of State should try to link tradition with modern-day needs and dump the Bill. The sooner he does so, the better. My objections to the Government's proposals are deep, and are founded on the principle that democratic government should be the norm, not the

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

exception, in Scotland. The Government are inflicting the Bill on Scotland with minimal consultation and even less support. The Bill will be bulldozed through the House and Committee, using the votes of English Tory Members who have no electoral mandate in Scotland or any particular knowledge of Scotland.

The empty Benches behind the Secretary of State—empty even of Scottish Tories, apart from one—show how little the English Members who will appear in the House at 10 o'clock and force the measure through know or care about Scotland. Those self-same English Tories will be packed on to the Committee to bulldoze the measure through against the wishes of the Scottish people. That is not what democracy should be about, however the Bill is dressed up.

The House of Commons claims to be a United Kingdom Parliament. The Under-Secretary has often said it. He has often said that every hon. Member has a right to speak on any issue. But the Bill is oppressive and clearly unfair to Scotland. It does no credit to the Westminster system when democracy is crushed by the Executive, who use a whipped Parliament to force through measures which do not reflect the wishes of the Scottish people.

However the Bill is dressed up, it is an attack on democracy. The Scottish electorate rejected the Conservatives and their proposals. The majority English population were never even asked about the proposals. Yet English Tory Members will be herded through Parliament, and the legislation will be passed using the Government English majority.

The proposals on water command the support of no more than a tiny minority of Conservatives in Scotland —a tiny minority of a tiny minority. Yet the Bill is about to be whipped through Parliament with minimal change. Scotland is already being run by far too many non-elected quangos hand-picked by the Government. If the measure is passed, Scotland will have proportionally the fewest elected representatives in the whole of Europe. That is what the Government are doing to us.

The Bill not only erodes our elected local government system by reducing the number of freely elected councillors, but seeks to replace those elected councillors with a handful of nominees hand-picked behind closed doors by the Secretary of State. The Bill also gives the Secretary of State a massive new batch of delegated powers. The most frequently used phrases in this pathetic Bill are "the Secretary of State will make an order", "the Secretary of State may make regulations", "the Secretary of State shall" and so on. The Bill is not a decentralising measure. It empowers the Secretary of State, not local authorities.

Mr. Norman Hogg: The hon. Gentleman makes a strong and powerful case, with which I certainly agree. Where does his party stand on the formation of new authorities and small authorities? He said that power will be handed over to the Secretary of State. That will be facilitated by the formation of single-tier authorities in existing districts. Does his party oppose giving single districts multi-purpose status?

Mr. Welsh: I wonder what the trap is that the hon. Gentleman seeks to lay. The question should be solved by looking at the communities of Scotland. The last Labour Administration solved the problem by creating the Wheatley commission, which undertook surveys and checked what the population wanted. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Rowntree Trust report, which tells us that actual size is not important. Therefore, we can fairly look at communities. That is where I take issue with the Government. Their Bill is based not on communities but on a gerrymandered map.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman tells me what the Rowntree Trust thinks, but it would be a great help if he could tell us what the Scottish National party thinks. Is it or is it not in favour of single-tier local authorities founded on existing districts?

Mr. Welsh: I will give the hon. Gentleman an example. Angus district authority should be such an authority. I can name others, if the hon. Gentleman wishes.

Mr. Hogg: Yes.

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Gentleman plays the Tory game in his own way. The authorities should be based on— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asks questions and then does not listen to the answer. If the Bill was based on communities, the problems would be sorted out.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: What about Moray?

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Gentleman makes the point. Fine, that is no problem.

The Bill does not empower local authorities. It takes power away from them and from the House. There is a mass of European secondary legislation and general secondary legislation sloshing through this place which is not properly scrutinised by anyone who has been elected to the House. Yet the Bill will add massively to that number, because it gives the Government and the Secretary of State massive powers to regulate. It will not be properly scrutinised. I do not call that democratic.

The Tory minority Government in Scotland are introducing a new word to the political dictionary— "langocracy", which means Government by and through the Secretary of State. In the langocracy system, the Secretary of State rules everything. What he does not control directly will be run by non-elected, hand-picked quangos of his choice. In Lang's land, if one does not get the vote of the people, ignore them: take over their assets, appoint one's own people to run things and use one's own inbuilt English majority to bulldoze it through. That is langocracy. That is how Scotland is now governed. It has nothing to do with democracy. The Secretary of State is acting as a governor-general.

The Bill is littered with extra legislative powers for the Secretary of State, with the Greater Glasgow health board situation now being writ large throughout the country. The points made earlier about that, with the House not being able to get at the truth, are a lesson well worth learning and a matter of which the population of Scotland should be well warned if the Bill is implemented.

The Bill is not an enabling measure for local government. It is disabling. Nor is it a decentralising measure. It gives the Secretary of State massive new powers, and means that central Government will take decisions about daily services in Scotland, which should be the preserve of locally elected councillors. The window dressing of decentralisation schemes shows the power that is being taken away. What use is a council office to a town,

which probably had one anyway, when the councillors who are elected by it, are reduced in numbers and powers? That would simply be more window-dressing from central Government, who are notorious for their secrecy and lack of true consultation.

Even the decentralisation schemes are subject to centralised scrutiny by the Secretary of State. I find it objectionable that the Government intend to take billions of pounds of water assets—public assets—in our water and sewerage industries and grab them for the use of unelected, unaccountable quangos, which are only the first stage to eventual privatisation, in which private pockets will benefit.

But then again, that Tory Government invites quango nominees to private fund-raising dinners and pretend that that is perfectly normal and that the invitees are disinterested, non-political spectators. That situation reeks of the goings-on at Westminster, to which the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) alluded earlier.

The water industry's capital assets were not created by central Government. The figures of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities show that central Government contributed only 0·03 per cent. to them. They are public assets, paid for over generations by local taxpayers, who now find democratic control removed and replaced by a Greater Glasgow health board system over which they have no say and absolutely no control.

I want the Minister to tell us how democracy will be advanced by those quangos. Will public accountability be increased? How can there be greater scrutiny when Scotland's billions of pounds of water assets will be controlled by two, perhaps three, football teams, all hand-picked and nominated by the Secretary of State for Scotland? Their meetings will be held behind closed doors. What is democratic about that? It goes against all the words he used, and shows the basic hyprocrisy of the Government and the hypocrisy contained in the Bill.

According to the Bill, local government does not even need to have an education committee. That becomes understandable if the Government are planning enabling councils and not service-providing councils. That perhaps gives the Government's ultimate game away, because the Tories obviously hope for massive school opt-outs, and the break-up of Scotland's national system of education.

That figures, because the Secretary of State has never been taught in a Scottish school or university. Most of his pals pack their kids off to private schools as soon as they can. I do not think that Cambridge Footlights happened in Scotland, apart from the Edinburgh festival.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Apologise.

Mr. Welsh: What was the other public school in England? I need hardly apologise for that.

If that is the Government's attitude, and if their end product is not to put an education committee in the Bill, I thoroughly disagree with that, given Scotland's traditional importance attached to education.

The boundaries are clearly pochled to suit Conservative party political convenience. I could have used the word "gerrymandered", but "pochled" sounds more appropriate. There has been little or no attempt to match boundaries to communities—far less, real consultation. The motive is plainly gerrymandering. In a two-party electoral system, the Tories now find themselves the third—often the fourth—party. Their response is change the rules to change the results. With revelations about Westminster council, gerrymandering, like telephone canvassing, seems to have become a tried and tested Tory technique.

My objection is that the Bill is based on hypocrisy. The Government state that Strathclyde region is too big, too bureaucratic and remote, and that therefore it must be demolished. Yet they do the opposite when it comes to creating three monster unelected boards to run water services. On their own argument, if Strathclyde region is "too big and remote", why are they creating the giant Western area water board and running it with 11 hand-picked appointees?

The old Soviet Union would have been quite proud of that centralist dictatorship, which no doubt the Conservative Kremlinists are now introducing. When the Soviet Union has abandoned such a system, it is an irony that it has now been foisted on Scotland by English Tories forcing the Bill through Parliament. While England gets a Commission and thought-through boundaries, Scotland gets a rush job. The last time the Tories visited that on us was when we had the fiasco of the poll tax.

No matter what happens in the Bill, when the Government bulldoze it through, Scottish local government will continue, because of the expertise of the officials and councillors who run it. It will be despite—not because—of this ill-thought-out and disgusting Bill, which I hope the House will oppose.

7.16 pm

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): I must declare an interest in the debate and in the Bill. The interest is of someone who passionately believes in the ethos of Scottish local government, and who is appalled by these proposals. The Bill is the latest in a long line of legislative sledgehammers that the Government have sought to use on Scottish local government.

There are a great many reasons why the House should not be debating the matter today. Indeed, the Secretary of State should have had the good sense to stop trying to push through the proposed legislation some months ago, when it became obvious that, even among Scottish Tories, there was no consensus on the reform.

Despite the worst efforts of Ministers to rubbish Scottish local government, it is clear that there is no justification whatever for reforming it at this time, barely two decades after the Wheatley commission debated the matter at length and produced a blueprint which had the broad support of all Scotland's political parties.

Despite the black propaganda campaign pursued by the Scottish Office, the Scottish people have refused to allow themselves to be conned into believing the Tory party, which has spent the past 14 years destroying Scottish local government and which has minimal representation on Scottish councils. They do not believe that the Government can be trusted with the future of Scottish local government. The Bill clearly demonstrates, as have other events not a million miles from this place, the political prejudices of a Government determined to pursue a party political interest before the interests of the people as a whole.

My hon. Friends have referred to the Government's hidden agenda on a whole range of legislative issues. Through the Bill, the Government have changed their attitude fundamentally. They have decided to adopt the not-so-hidden agenda and to parade their political bias to

[Mr. Brian Donohoe]

create Tory rotten boroughs across Scotland. The Bill cynically carves out Tory safe havens in Perth and Kinross, Stirling, Eastwood and, of course, in Ayr. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has said, Ayr has now become known in Ayrshire as Gallielee.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman has spoken about the different size and range of authorities throughout Scotland. Has he seen the document entitled "The Future of Local Government in Scotland", produced by the Labour party? It states:

"As the first criterion of any reform, there is no one solution for all parts of Scotland."

Mr. Donohoe: I would not argue with that. I am arguing about gerrymandering to create unfair electoral areas, particularly in Ayrshire. When Gallielee was created, it literally meant the promised land to one Conservative Member, until the deliberations of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission, got in the way. Perhaps because of that, I understand that even the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) is now opposed to the Secretary of State's proposals for as they affect Ayrshire. That clearly suggests that there is no obvious consensus on the Government Benches on this matter.

Gallielee will, none the less, be followed by Fairbairnlee, Forsythlee and Stewartlee, because the local government boundaries outlined in the Bill show how the new structures have been gerrymandered. It has been done to maximise the number of Tory-controlled authorities and try to minimise the number of Labour-controlled ones.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Donohoe: I am sure that such political criteria are not those on which Lord Wheatley would have based his reforms. They are unique to Tory Administrations.

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not the custom of the House for an hon. Member to give way to another hon. Member should he name him in his speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) to decide whether he should give way.

Mr. Donohoe: Party political prejudice should never be allowed to dictate the structure of local government, because political bias is no basis for good local government.

The Government's central argument in favour of the Bill is that money will be saved and the extent of bureaucracy will be minimised. That was outlined in a report conveniently produced for the Scottish Office by the management consultants, Touche Ross. The report's arguments have been taken apart by costings produced by many organisations in Scotland, which have demonstrated how subjective and irrelevant that report is.

No detailed assessments of the claimed savings were offered in the report. Let us compare those supposed savings with those that Strathclyde regional council currently makes from economies of scale. It spends approximately £60 million each year on fuel. Because of its size, and only because of that, it can negotiate with British Gas, Scottish Power—I am sure that the hon. Member for Ayr would be able to tell us about that—British Coal or whoever to make savings of 18 per cent. on fuel costs. Next year, that will result in a saving of £11 million.

The council has bulk purchasing power because of its size. Because of that, it saves approximately £20 million per annum when purchasing other products and services. That means that it makes a total saving of £30 million each year. Compare that with the new authorities, as proposed in the Bill, which will find themselves paying between 10 and 20 per cent. extra for products and services. That will add £50 million each year to the costs of those new authorities. I should like to know from the Secretary of State whether those costs were included in the Touche Ross report. Are they part of his justification to initiate the reform of local government?

According to the Bill's financial memorandum, savings of between £22 million and £66 million per annum will be gained from a structure of 28 unitary authorities. Even if that is to be believed, no mention is made of the continuing costs I have mentioned, which will cancel out, at a stroke, the Government's supposed savings.

In stark terms, the proposed reorganisation can lead only to more cuts in council services. That effect on vital services to the community will be devastating. On top of those cuts, proposed cuts of £330 million have been made in council spending for the years 1994-97. That will decimate Scottish local government, it will cause further hardship and it will pile further misery on the public who rely on good-quality services.

We have already seen the disgraceful decision of the Scottish Office to press ahead, three years early, with the wind-up of the Irvine development corporation. That is a direct consequence of the Government's reform of Scottish local government. It is clear that that decision was motivated purely by the Scottish Office's need to generate income from the sale of Irvine new town's assets in order to try to offset the costs of local government reform.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the Irvine development corporation; he should reflect on the efforts of Cunninghame district council, a number of years ago, when it was Labour-controlled. It attempted to persuade the then Secretary of State to give it the powers of that corporation. Surely, under the Bill, those powers are on offer to the local authority?

Mr. Donohoe: That is my reading of the decision. Irvine new town area and Cunninghame will be deprived of £17 million as a result of the winding up of the development corporation, so the opposite of what the hon. Gentleman has suggested will happen.

When the Secretary of State launched the White Paper, he did not even mention the decision to wind up the Irvine development corporation. The launch was followed by a sham consultation, which ignored the views of thousands of new town tenants. They will now be forced into choosing a new landlord, with all that that means for their tenancy rights and rent levels. People are already bearing the brunt of the Secretary of State's reforms.

The Bill also proposes, almost as a sideline, major reforms to Scotland's water and sewerage services. The transfer of those services to new boards means that their public accountability will be further eroded and that their operation will come under the influence of the Scottish Office. It is sad that that reform is apparently included as

one of the etceteras referred to in the Bill's title. Everyone relies on those essential services for their daily existence. They have billions of pounds of assets, and they employ tens of thousands of people, but they are not worthy of separate legislation.

It seems that Ministers are simply more interested in trying to bury the issue of water and sewerage services in order to limit any further damage to the Government. It is clear that the Government's plans for the water and sewerage system is one step on the road to their eventual privatisation, according to the model used in England and Wales. Again, that reform does not command public support in Scotland, and it is irrelevant to the needs of the Scottish people.

As someone who has first-hand experience, as a Member of Parliament for Ayrshire, of the blundering bureaucracy caused by the Government's national health service reforms, as implemented by Bill Fyfe through the Ayrshire and Arran health board, and of Ayrshire Enterprise's roundabout improvement programmes, which begin to look more and more irrelevant to the economic well-being of Ayrshire, I know that the last thing that Scotland needs is more boards and more Government appointees, on the model proposed by the Scottish Office.

Government by boards and quangos is never a substitute for directly elected and directly accountable local councils. If the Secretary of State is keen to cut red tape and to abolish bureaucracy, he should turn his attention to the NHS trusts and the local enterprise companies which he set up, rather than concentrating on local government, which has proved its worth in terms of delivering good public services.

It is clear that there is no justification for the reforms outlined in the Bill. There will be no savings or public support for the reform of local government and, even if those two factors were met, there is no case for reforming local government on the basis of a party political agenda that seeks to gerrymander new council boundaries for the Tory party's political gain.

Local government is too important an issue for one party to manipulate for its own ends. The Secretary of State should note that and withdraw the Bill, before the House wastes any more time debating legislation that would be better known as the 'Local Misgovernment etc. (Scotland) Bill'.

7.30 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) is right to say that the Bill's title is a bit of a misnomer. If the Government had a shred of honesty left, they would describe the Bill as the Demolition of Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, because that is the hidden agenda behind it.

The Government do not believe in local democracy or genuine local government because they see those as a threat to their power base, so they are out to destroy what little local democracy remains in Scotland. Their ideal council would probably meet for an hour once a year to dish out contracts to Tory cronies in the private sector and then retire for a liquid lunch.

I do not support in every respect the existing system of local government. It is not perfect, and I am not alone among Opposition Members in expressing a preference for a single-tier system of councils, directly elected by and accountable to the people. But that is not what the Bill proposes. It proposes not a one-tier system but a weakened two-tier and, in some areas, three-tier system consisting of, first, greatly weakened councils; secondly, joint authorities that will administer many of the important functions in many areas; and, thirdly, in all areas, non-elected quangos to administer the important services of water, sewerage and drainage.

Some of the councils will not be big enough in terms of population and revenue base to provide efficiently for some of the important services, such as education, social work, the police and the fire brigade. I note that the chief executive of Central regional council, Douglas Sinclair, referred to that at a weekend conference. One of the councils to which he obviously referred was Stirling, the third smallest council proposed for mainland Scotland. If the Secretary of State is really determined to split Central region into two, surely it would be more logical in terms of population balance, community ties and transport communications for Clackmannan to be linked with Stirling rather than Falkirk.

There are no prizes for guessing why the Government rejected that option. It would probably lead to two Labour-controlled councils in that area and the Government are determined to do everything in their power to retain a Tory enclave in the Stirling area.

If the Government reject the claims of gerrymandering, whether it be in central or other parts of Scotland, why were they so afraid to refer the whole matter to an independent commission? This is the first time in living memory that such a major restructuring of local government is proposed by central Government with no input from an independent body. In the absence of a Scottish Parliament, the severe democratic deficit that already exists in Scotland will be deepened by the Bill.

I warn the Secretary of State that the way in which the Government propose to force the Bill through Parliament will bring the Government into further disrepute and further expose that democratic deficit in Scotland. It will also reinforce the growing view among the Scottish people that the way that we are governed is an undemocratic farce.

Reference has been made to what will happen at the end of Second Reading at 10 o'clock tonight. Look at how empty the Government Benches are now. At 10 o'clock, hon. Members will be drafted in on a three-line Whip——

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Canavan: No; I shall not give way because I am making a point.

If the vote were left to hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies, we would win by an overwhelming majority, but the Government Whip will simply crack the three-line Whip and in will come hordes of Tory Members representing constituencies south of the border who have not listened to an iota of the debate. They do not understand the legislation and their constituents will not be affected by it, yet they can use the system to outnumber us in the vote. Government Whips will also draft hon. Members representing constituencies south of the border on to the Committee, which will deprive Labour Members representing Scottish constituencies of an opportunity to represent the interests of our constituents on that Committee.

That farcical procedure reinforces the case for a Scottish Parliament but, sadly, the Government do not believe in

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democracy for Scotland, whether at parliamentary or at local level. The Government's model parliamentary structure is to retain a unitary, over-centralised Westminster Parliament. Until recently, their model local council was Westminster city council, along the road. Look at its track record. It sold off graveyards for a few pence and then misused £21 million of public money to sell homes and buy votes.

Other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, compared the activities of the Secretary of State for Scotland and those of Lady Porter. My hon. Friend was being a wee bit unfair to Lady Porter, because she misappropriated £21 million of public money to gerrymander the city of Westminster whereas the Secretary of State for Scotland is hellbent on misappropriating almost £200 million of public money to gerrymander the whole of Scotland. The Secretary of State is, in fact, a bigger villain than Lady Porter and, if there were any justice in this country, action would be taken against him to recover any public moneys misappropriated in the way that he intends.

Recent events have caused the stench of corruption to emanate from the Government. The Bill is part and parcel of that corruption which is a symptom of terminal decline. However, the Government's days are numbered and, if they do not listen now to the views of the elected representatives of the people of Scotland, they will have to do so when those views are expressed in the ballot box. Later this year, the people of Scotland will give the Government a double whammy at the local elections and the Euro-elections, which will be the forerunner to the knockout punch. The sooner that comes, the better for the interests of the people of Scotland and all the other victims of this discredited, corrupt and totalitarian Government.

7.40 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): I have sat here all day waiting to speak and I am very disappointed about the way in which the debate has been conducted. Some hon. Members spoke for 15 or 20 minutes and then intervened on other speakers, although many hon. Members were still waiting to be called. What I have to say will not take long because a great deal of time has already been wasted.

I have had the experience of serving on an all-purpose authority and on Strathclyde regional council. I served Glasgow city for a long time and I know what can happen when Governments intervene. The Secretary of State for Scotland kept mentioning Wheatley and other hon. Members have referred to the disgraceful stance adopted by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and its policy of non-co-operation. I do not blame COSLA, but hope that it will continue to oppose the Government's proposals. The Secretary of State quotes Wheatley, Stoddart and other commission reports but he does not believe in commissions. COSLA echoes the sentiments of every local authority in Scotland—no one wanted reorganisation.

Strathclyde is a very large regional council. I know what that means because I represented the corporation of Glasgow for three years. Strathclyde has a population of 1·5 million and the area of about 66 acres that I represented had 125 public houses and 75 betting shops. Yes, we needed a commission to examine such planning. The Wheatley commission was set up in 1966 but did not report until three years later, in 1969. Other commissions and committees, such as those headed by Baines, Maude and Paterson, also examined management structures.

How can you expect Strathclyde region or Glasgow district council to respect the Government's proposals? Let us consider what those bodies had to deal with: pupil-teacher ratios, a declining population—*[Interruption.]* Look at that gang sniggering, especially the bespectacled fellow—the Government Whip—the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). He does not know what hardship is all about, but we saw the poverty and the Rachmanism in Glasgow where your Tory comrade neglected properties. Millions of pounds had to be spent to clear up the mess, and that is what will happen again.

The Government say that one of the reasons for reforming local government is the size of the Strathclyde region—but it is also Labour-controlled. The Government have no control in Scotland. The handful of Tory Members present will be able to vote and to uproot and disrupt council members throughout Scotland. Those people have dedicated years to trying to provide better services. For example, social workers in Strathclyde changed the adoption rules and made it possible for youngsters to live with families, access for the disabled has improved in general and homes for the handicapped have been opened. The pupil-teacher ratio, which the council inherited, has been improved in slum areas such as parts of Glasgow.

I am worried about Glasgow because its population has fallen to 663,000 and the Government want to reduce it further. By rigging the boundaries, they hope to reduce it by a further 47,000. The Secretary of State talked about consultation but the people of King's Park and Toryglen voted 90:10 against becoming part of South Lanarkshire.

If the Secretary of State is serious about reforming local government in Scotland, he must examine why the Wheatley commission was established. Do we want to go back to the 1920s when the Government were telling local authorities to go bankrupt? Any reform must be viable, cost-effective and able to deliver services.

If Glasgow is to survive, there must be a social-economic balance. We cannot provide education and all the other services from a population of 663,000. We must take into account the privileged areas such as Bearsden, Newton Mearns, Bishopbriggs and Milngavie. People from those areas probably travel into the city two or three days a week to work but they do not pay anything towards the city. If the city is to survive, the Secretary of State needs to widen boundary.

Touche Ross was chosen to investigate the cost, but the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy disagreed with one aspect of its findings. CIPFA said that the on-going savings would be £49 million whereas Touche Ross estimated that they would be £120 million. Strathclyde believes that the savings would be minus 17 per cent., and it should know what the services cost.

The Government have yet another figure, so something must be wrong somewhere. Government say that the transitional costs could possibly be £120 million to £196 million but, taking into account the on-going savings over a five-year period, they arrive at a figure of £310 million to £330 million. How can we discuss the reform of local

government when there are four or five different figures? The variation in the figures is one reason, Secretary of State, why you need to abandon the proposals.

There is a ham-and-eggs situation and the Government will fail. You will keep people up all night, disrupt every local authority in Scotland and throw people out of jobs, all because you have not taken enough time or given the issue the necessary thought. We are not necessarily against reform, but you should at least have shown the regional and district councils the courtesy of evaluating exactly the work that they had done.

However, you went in with a sweeping brush and swept aside people who had dedicated themselves to serving the council for 18 years. All of a sudden, their jobs have gone. Of course they are worried. COSLA is also worried and is right to do what it can. No hon. Member believes, Secretary of State, that you intend to keep the water——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene, but the hon. Gentleman keeps using the word "you". The Chair is not responsible for any of the policies.

Mr. Wray: Secretary of State, no hon. Member will agree that the Government do not intend to take water services out of public control. How much money will be invested? About £5 billion will need to be spent on sewerage and water throughout Scotland. What is total investment now? I read in a paper that about £2·5 billion had been put up front; we are talking about £5 billion or so. What price will the taxpayers, ratepayers and electors of Scotland pay for that generous amount to be handed in to get the percentage from the boards that will run water services? We see it as privatisation of the water industry by the back door.

Secretary of State, you should look twice and consider the state of the water industry in England, the corruption in that industry and where money was invested in that industry. It was not invested in water and sewerage; it was invested everywhere else. The only people who paid for water privatisation were the electors. I hope that, when you pass the Bill, you will ensure that it is honest and fair to the electors of Scotland.

7.51 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) is not in his seat. I tried to intervene earlier when he made an outrageous attack on council members from Monklands. We have heard enough accusations in this place from hon. Members who do not come up with any proof of their allegations; they will make them in here, but will not open their mouths outwith this place. I am sorry that the hon. Member is not here to hear my rebuttal. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is here."] I apologise. I did not see the hon. Gentleman sneaking in from the side.

The hon. Gentleman referred to certain practices, on which I cannot comment. He talked about patronage. He should consider the fact that Conservative Members who were defeated at the last election have been looked after by being given Government jobs and the chairmanships of boards and quangos. The wives of present and retired Conservative Members are appointed to trust boards and health boards. That seems to contradict what he was concerned about earlier.

Mr. Kynoch: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said, he would have realised that I quoted allegations that were reported in several newspapers. Also, I talked about a Labour party inquiry and its findings. Does he disagree with the Labour party's findings, which accepted that there were goings on that were not reputable?

Mr. Hood: The hon. Member now says that he was only quoting allegations. He obviously does not know much about them. I am not in a position to comment—I do not know much about them either. If he is concerned about patronage, however, he should consider the patronage that has been dished out by his party and he should not criticise others unfairly.

I see that the Secretary of State is smiling. I had a smile on my face myself when, at the end of his speech, he referred to "back to basics". He reminded me of a good lawyer speaking to a bum brief: the local government reforms are unwanted and unnecessary.

What is good about the Bill is its title: Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. I would support anything that aimed to improve local government, local democracy and local services. We could have a good debate on how to achieve that, but that is not what the Government intend.

Historically, local government has always protected communities against the excesses of central Government. Perhaps that is why, when this Government were first elected in 1979 under Mrs. Thatcher, they were obsessively opposed to local government. They wanted to have their way, to dictate to local government and to prevent it from providing and setting services for local communities. Historically, Labour authorities have always been able to provide those services. It is difficult today for Labour or other authorities to protect communities from the policies of this Government. Not satisfied with that, the Government are making a further attack on local government and local democracy.

Conservative Members have said that this is a decentralising Bill. Far from it; it is very much a centralising Bill. The Government are obsessed with centralising power. We should consider the position in western Europe—and in eastern Europe, where all the moves towards democracy involve decentralising power down to the people and communities. From day one in 1979, the Government have been centralising power in the hands of a few individuals. Power is not being centralised in Parliament; to say that we are Parliament and that we run the show is a load or nonsense.

There was hypocrisy on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. Some hon. Members—I shall not refer to them as the Prime Minister did, when he questioned their parenthood—were against the loss of sovereignty in this place. They said that power must not be centralised in Brussels, or in Europe, and that we needed decentralisation. They talked about subsidiarity, down to the nth degree of where democracy is. What was meant was down to Downing street and its policy unit: they would not let people have a say outwith that.

As my hon. Friends have said, we are not against change, but we want change for the better. No legitimate change will improve local government unless its first step is to form a Scottish Parliament. That would decentralise power. Surely the way to protect democracy is to pass decisions down to the nth degree. I am proud of the policy of my party, because one of its first acts in Government will be to deliver decentralisation to the United Kingdom, not just to Scotland and Wales. That is what we mean by

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people's power. One of the farces on television used to talk about power to the people. That is what democracy is about.

With whom will the power to provide services reside in Scotland? Will it be with the councils and councillors? Certainly not. Will it be with communities and council tax payers? Will they be able to hold people accountable to them? Certainly not. Will it be with unelected, unaccountable Tory-placed quangos? Yes.

We talk about unitary authorities and single-tier authorities. We are not talking about single-tier government. We are talking about replacing the present second tier—the regions, which are elected bodies—with unelected quangos. We are talking about the power that the Secretary of State cannot get through the ballot box in Scotland, so he is taking it through Westminster and vesting it in St. Andrew's house. The powers of the regions will be taken by a governing party which has only nine or 10 seats out of 72 in Scotland. That is not democracy or decentralisation and that is not what we want in our democracy.

Plenty has been said about Strathclyde and not merely here tonight. I remember when the Prime Minister went to Scotland and made a speech pledging support for the exchange rate mechanism—we were kicked out seven days later. In the same speech he said that the Government would get rid of Strathclyde. What has Strathclyde done to be so hated by the Government? My grandfather was a trade union official and he used to tell me, "Son, when the bosses attack you, you're obviously doing your job." Strathclyde council should be damn proud of the fact that this Tory Government are attacking it. It certainly means that it is doing something to upset the Government, so it must be doing its job—preserving services and defending the interests of its electors and of our constituents and communities.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Government's motive for attacking regional councils—Strathclyde in particular—is the same motive that drove them to get rid of the Greater London council and the metropolitan councils: that they were all Labour-controlled. The truth is that what they cannot win through the ballot box they intend to get through their policies. It is nothing short of dictatorship.

The education provisions of the Bill worry me greatly. I have a 14-year-old child, who is getting a damn good education out of Strathclyde regional council—an excellent education—as do tens of thousands of other children. What about education for the under-fives? The Prime Minister has been converted to that cause and says that it is now Government policy.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Back to basics.

Mr. Hood: Yes, we might even get back to the basics on education.

Strathclyde spends £42 million on educating 25,000 children under five. That is not something that it should be condemned for—it should be praised. Who will provide community education? The Bill contains no mention of that. Small authorities, whether in Eastwood or elsewhere, cannot make the economics of scale. What about the 45,000 pupils with special needs? I am seriously concerned about the effects of the Bill on education. The Government's real motive for the Bill is that they are again being driven by dogma. The new local authorities will have to force schools to opt out because they cannot afford to provide an adequate education system. They will be forced to abdicate responsibility and accountability for our kids' education.

I am also worried about social work. Hon. Members often mention the housing aspects of social work and the two must be linked, but it is not merely about housing. When we talk about social work we are talking about livelihoods, about protecting people and about life itself. One cannot leave social work to the fancy rhetoric of buying services. Social work is about trying to help the very needy, those with social problems, socially deprived families and offenders when they come out of prison. The Bill will not help.

What about voluntary organisations? My constituency covers more than 500 square miles and thousands of my constituents are involved with voluntary organisations, such as citizens advice bureaux, but they need financial support from the community. Members of Parliament and councils are not always there to do the work that is done by that much-needed service, but there is no mention of that in the Bill. Our voluntary organisations will be run on a hope and a prayer and my guess is that they will be severely damaged.

Mrs. Ewing: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I was born and bred in his constituency and still have contacts there. He is talking about community care and looking after the elderly. Is he aware that Cornhill house will be closed next year and that no additional members will therefore be accepted into that community? The alternatives are Beattock or Lamancha in Lothian. That is totally inappropriate for the families and the people of the area who are deeply concerned about their elderly parents.

Mr. Hood: Absolutely. I am well aware of that problem and I am making representations on the subject. It is not helped by the financial constraints that have been placed on local authorities. The care in the community provisions cause us great concern. The Government have dumped that policy on local government and now they are saying, "It's your baby." They are walking away and washing their hands of it as they have done all too often.

Public transport policy is also worrying. I mentioned the size of my constituency. As it covers more than 500 square miles, roads and transport feature strongly among the services needed by such a community. The statistics are provided in an excellent brief from Strathclyde regional council. As is probably always the case, negative news gets better coverage than positive news. Strathclyde has an excellent record on transport and roads. I am sure that hon. Members often write to the council to complain about this, that and the other, but its record on some things is excellent, especially on transport. Who will provide travelcards and help with bus fares in the constituency?

I was a local councillor in Newark—now it is Newark and Sherwood—in the east Midlands, where I was a member of a hung council. The power went to and fro. We were in opposition, then we would be in government for six weeks, but would have to resign and let the Tories take over again and so on. I remember negotiating with four independent farmers—who usually voted Tory. They put us in power to set up a travelcard scheme under which we paid half the fare. The scheme had a tremendous impact and was a great service to the community. It did not merely

provide a worthwhile service for the elderly and disabled but had a large impact on employment. We have heard from the Government about some of the consequences for employment. They are running away from reality if they do not realise that the Bill will have majjor consequences for employment. There are 400,000 travelcard holders, which means 400,000 people using local transport. If the scheme goes, many jobs with that excellent service will go, too.

The council also has—I speak again as a rural member of Parliament—an excellent dial-a-bus service. When one cannot walk a hundred yards but one can get a bus down into the local town to do a wee bit of shopping and have a wee bit of a day out, it means a lot. One can travel by that bus from Biggar, where the mother of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) lives. She probably tells her daughter that she votes for the Scottish National party, but I daresay that she will vote Labour and not tell her about that. It is a great service to a community. All those services are put at risk by the nonsense and gerrymandering of the Bill.

Then there are the great problems of rail transport. Carstairs is in my constituency. Sadly, the railway has been run down over the years. We keep arguing and writing to the Minister. I see that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), is in his place. He has had loads of letters from me and my constituents about preserving the excellent service to Carstairs.

We also need to extend rail services into the rural community because we have to provide sustenance for rural communities, not just for travelling for leisure, but to improve the opportunities for travelling to and from work. I fear that if the excellent rail services that are provided by Strathclyde regional council go, as they may well do, in whatever form they come back it will not be up to the present standards. That would have a devastating effect on our community.

I have taken the opportunity to mention but a few of my objections to the Bill. I will resume my seat by saying that it is a bad Bill from a gerrymandering, bad Government.

8.11 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Having been a councillor for 16 years on Midlothian county council and, after the Wheatley report, a regional councillor in the Lothians, I was aware of the prior organisational problems of local authorities. I object, however, to the Secretary of State for Scotland stating that the consultation was equivalent to the Wheatley inquiry. It is an insult to Lord Wheatley and it is not factually and historically correct. Had there been a Wheatley-type inquiry, many of the anomalies in the Bill would have been eradicated because common sense would have prevailed. Hon Members should not blame Wheatley for what happened to local authorities after his inquiry because much of the Wheatley report was ignored and it was changed in the House before it was implemented.

The reorganisation of local government in Scotland and especially in my region, the Lothians, is not top of the priority list of people who are in need and it is certainly not top of the priority list of Scotland. There is a great desire for a greater say in the autonomy of Scotland and for a Parliament in Scotland. Conservative Members have repeatedly said that the Labour party had in its manifesto that we were in favour of a one-tier authority, after the placement of a Parliament in Edinburgh or in Scotland as a whole, because there would be debate, discussion and inquiries and everyone could be consulted about the type of local authority that would suit their region. The excuse has been made that a one-tier, all-purpose authority simplifies the role oflocal government to the people. It may do so in theory, but I do not think that that is what has motivated the Government.

The Bill is a bit of a farce and it is stripping the responsibilities away from the local authorities.They will lose the police, fire, water and drainage services, in some areas they will have to have joint education authorities and they must come together for strategic planning. We are back to the bad old days when they used to hire the McEwan hall for strategic planning. I went there with the local authorities in the Lothians area. If there were strategic planning matters there was a whole delegation from burghs and God knows where. We had to have a whole host of people.

The chairmen of the quangos will be appointed by the Secretary of State, which certainly does not add to local autonomy or democracy. When I heard the Government saying, "We shall make them accountable to the ratepayers," with rate capping and all the Government's other activities, financial or otherwise, I remembered when we stood by our rates and were voted either in or out of office because of the rates. People were well aware that they either got services or they got no services and low rates. They could pick whatever person they wanted if that was the policy—and many of them did.

The interference with the autonomy of local government is unbelievable. It is centralisation gone mad. If hon. Members do not believe me, I refer to a letter in *The Scotsman* on Friday, not from any radical left-wing group but from the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, the president of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents and the general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation. They say that the Government are undermining democracy in the police service because a chairman will be appointed by the Secretary of State to talk about, interfere and, yes, take instructions on what type of policing is carried out. In other words, there will be a centralised situation. The letter states categorically that they are very unhappy and that the Government should rethink all aspects of that plan.

Mrs. Ewing: From a sedentary position I mentioned the fact that the Secretary of State appeared to attack that today in *The Scotsman*. That seems wrong, given that there has been no consultation about that piece of legislation.

Mr. Clarke: Who else can the Government annoy? They have annoyed the Prison Officers Association lately. Now it is the police. I wonder who else will be alienated by the Government. There is no one left. I do not know of anyone who has not been alienated by them in some respects.

The geographical hybrids suggested by the Secretary of State pertaining to my region, Midlothian—West Lothian and East Lothian or part of East Lothian and the amalgamation of that part is impractical and, in our opinion, unnecessary. This corridor of eight or nine miles —I call it the Rifkind-Lang enclave—is nothing to do with Bosnia but to do with a Tory enclave separating us geographically from Midlothian and the Pentland hills and it is nonsense. Everyone knows that West Lothian has a partly developed new town with a population of 49,000

[Mr. Clarke]

people, and that the biggest town in Midlothian is Penicuik which is three times smaller. Where do we base our headquarters? Where would be the geographical lead, bearing in mind that the nonsense of people having more access to local government would be turned on its head if the plans were to go ahead?

In the past, Midlothian county council had its headquarters in Edinburgh. That will not be helpful to the people in terms of fostering local identity in the community. I suggest that it is a non-runner. West Lothian has a population of 146,000 people and is a reasonable size. If one takes Mid and East Lothian—the whole of East Lothian—into account, one has a population of 165,000 people, which is also a reasonable size. The policy could work only if we put Berwickshire back into the Borders, where it belongs and where it wishes to stay. I hope that the Secretary of State and others will take cognisance of the feeling generated in that part of Scotland.

It is proposed that there should be an East Lothian and Midlothian trust health board, which will extend across the area about which I am talking. The present education area is acceptable and does not need to extend into the Borders. Our mutual borders connect anyway.

One of my worries, which I am sure is shared by everyone, is the cost of the changes, and the burden on the taxpayers and especially on the ratepayers. If we do not get the formula right for the people, they will bear an unnecessary burden for many years. If we do not get it right, we shall lose services. It is said that some can go to another authority, or that authorities can amalgamate. Can they? What price will be paid? How jointly will decisions be made? How much coercion will there have to be? How much priority will the people who have to go cap in hand receive?

One example of the nonsense talked here today was the proposal for the amalgamation of West Lothian and Midlothian, and for the amalgamation of part of East Lothian with Berwickshire. The Secretary of State must listen to common sense, and I hope that he will. He kept saying that various matters would be dealt with in Committee. I hope that the Committee will not be a secret service Committee and that matters will not be dealt with clandestinely. I hope that the Committee will be given time, and that every aspect covering every area in Scotland will be given the same priority.

The people of Scotland look to us to salvage something that makes sense out of the Bill. Scoring points off one another will achieve nothing. However, one or two anomalies have cropped up. What will happen in areas in which the local authority is the largest employer? Are local authority employees still barred from taking office? Will the vast proportion of the population in rural areas be barred from taking office because they are employed by the local authority?

When do we intend to start paying councillors a salary? When do we intend to stop the nonsense of giving them so-called "expenses"? We treat them like messenger boys. Councillors are responsible individuals. If the Government can give fees to people on quangos who have not been elected, they can give proper salaries to councillors—and I mean proper salaries. People who would otherwise consider standing for office may not do so because they cannot afford it, because they see that there is no career for them and because their pension rights will not be protected.

Are our councillors to be old-age pensioners or Tory wifies who happen to be married—*[Interruption.]* I use the word "wifies" because I am referring to women who are married to rich gentlemen who are too busy to take office themselves. Are those the councillors we want? Are we to have councils that meet on a part-time basis in the evening —pseudo-community councils with no proper responsibilities? Is that what we are aiming for? No. We want responsible, dedicated men and women. We have such people now and many have made severe financial sacrifices to do their jobs. It is no laughing matter. It is a serious business. Those issues should be considered along with the reorganisation. If it is a proper reorganisation, they will be considered. I wish the Committee all the success that it deserves and I hope that we shall not face the prospect of, as some of my hon. Friends have said, a gerrymandered, blinkered and ideologically bigoted reform.

8.23 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I support the Government's proposals for reorganising local government in Scotland, because local government is important, whether it is in Scotland, in England or in Wales. Local government costs about £80 billion per annum. We must ensure that we are getting value for money and that we have efficient structures in local government, whether in Scotland, in England or in Wales.

Many of us are concerned about bad authorities, wherever they are. We all rise to make points in the House when we hear about bad authorities. I know that many people in the Monklands area will be pleased to see the demise of that local council under the Government's proposals. The council's practices are thorougly undesirable and should be condemned by all hon. Members.

Mr. Wray: Does the hon. Gentleman feel the same way about the misdirection of £21 million in Westminster, which is being investigated now, as he does about Monklands?

Mr. Shaw: I can honestly say to the hon. Gentleman that, if anything were proven in Westminster, I, along with everyone else, would condemn the situation. However, nothing has been proven at present; there is a series of allegations.

The position in Monklands has been written about and accepted widely. The provost's son, daughter and son-in-law are employed by the council. The brother-in-law, son and son-in-law of the leader of the council are employed by the council. The former provost, who was the election agent for the Leader of the Opposition, has his brother employed by the council. Another councillor has his daughter and sister-in-law employed by the council. Another councillor has his wife and nephew employed by the council.

Another councillor has his cousin, his brother-in-law and his sister-in-law employed by the council. Another councillor has his wife, his daughter and, it is believed, six other relatives employed by the council. I have not mentioned another four councillors, each of whom has a relative employed by the council. In total, about 25 close relatives of councillors are employed by Monklands council.

That employment was more than a coincidence; it did not happen by accident. There was a system of pink and green forms. The general citizenry of the area got pink forms, whereas the families of councillors got green forms. As a result, they were efficiently employed, more quickly than anyone else.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Shameful.

Mr. Shaw: It was a disgraceful practice. My hon. Friend says it was shameful. It was such a bad practice that even the Labour party, when pressed by many of the local ward committees, instigated an inquiry and a report. The Labour party, in what was seen by many to be a substantial whitewash, could not help but say that the procedures operated by the council left councillors open to criticism.

There has been far more than just openness to criticism. Everyone says that it is disgraceful and shameful for so many councillors to have been able to get jobs for so many of the close members of their families. People feel, therefore, that local government reorganisation in that area of Scotland will be of immense benefit if it does away with the practice of nepotism in employment.

There is also concern about the planning regulations in the Monklands area. Some 14 rules in the local plan were breached by a developer. This was no ordinary developer; it happened to be the leader of the council. He breached 14 rules in his own council's local plan—an amazing state of affairs. Many other developers cannot understand why their planning applications are turned down while the planning applications of the leader of the council are approved with such speed and such ease, even when they breach 14 rules in the local plan.

People in the Monklands area are also anxious that local government reorganisation should prevent financial abuse. They were worried when the council leader had a property acquired by the council at a very good price. They were worried when that councillor went on to invest the proceeds in a business that resulted in a Scottish Development Agency loan and in the Government having to write off £44,000.

They were worried about a councillor being in a position of such power and about how council structures could result in that position of power, enabling a nursing home to be developed and enabling a £2 million project to be developed. The taxpayer, the council tax payer and the ratepayer lose at every stage of the development of that £2 million project.

Mysteriously, companies lose money and go into liquidation and we find that the council loses money on the way as a result. These are strange affairs, which I hope will yet yield a proper investigation and a police inquiry.

We also find that there has been a £20 million bias to Coatbridge away from Airdrie in the expenditure of recent years in Monklands district council. Therefore, the proposed new council, hopefully, will have less political bias in the area, and, in consequence, the citizenry of Monklands, West and Monklands, East hope that they will have a better authority to manage them than they have at the moment.

We are also concerned with the structures of local government and the way in which it can have an unreasonable, unrealistic and nonsensical control over officers. Every local authority elected official needs a certain control over its officers.

There is concern about how, in the Monklands area, the council leader managed to walk away with a £1,000 cheque, which he paid into a personal bank account, when the cheque was issued by the council to a local builder. It is staggering that such an incident could occur and for the council officers to say that it was their fault, when the leader of the council picked up the cheque himself and paid it into his own bank account.

Why are the council officers taking the blame for something that is nothing to do with them and when it should be the responsibility of the council leader? Again, we must question whether a proper inquiry and investigation of such matters are taking place.

We must also be concerned about the degree to which councillors such as those in Monklands can engage in loss-making projects. The heritage centre and various other projects in the Monklands area are losing the council vast amounts of money. The projects have not been properly discussed at council meetings. Those discussions have taken place behind closed doors. The local Labour councillors do not encourage discussion of those loss-making activities, despite the fact that most of the top-ranking Labour councillors are involved with the boards of directors concerned. The affairs of those companies are carried on in secrecy, well away from the council.

The citizenry of Monklands get to hear about the losses only when they are reported in the local newspaper, which at one stage, pushed by the Labour leader, the council was thinking of suing. In the end, through its columns, the newspaper persuaded the citizenry of the area to object to it, and consequently persuaded the Labour group to withdraw its approval of the Labour leader's litigation funded by the council. That was appalling, and no way in which to run a council or a local authority in Scotland or elsewhere.

My final concern about the way in which the local authority in the Monklands is run under present regime concerns housing repairs. It was well established that certain houses in the area were having repairs carried out. The repairs were allegedly completed and a grant was claimed from the Government on the basis that work was allegedly done. However, the work was not done, it had not been completed and improper pressure was put on certain people to sign that the work had been done. There needs to be a thorough investigation into that matter before Monklands council passes into a new authority.

There is no question but that the people of the Monklands area want to see a new council, and that they will be pleased with the changes that the Government are proposing. They want to see the Bill enacted, and I hope that it will not be delayed in Committee.

My constituents in Dover, and the people of Scotland, need to see radical change in local government in England, Wales and Scotland, so that we can get better value for money out of our local authorities. We are all appalled by what has gone on in Monklands, where the local authority is badly run by bad Labour councillors; they should be ousted from control of that Labour authority.

8.33 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Tonight, we are discussing one of the most irrelevant Bills. It is being foisted on the people of Scotland and is utterly unnecessary. We are fiddling the

[Mr. Thomas Graham]

future of local government and finance when Britain is suffering from the burden of a £50 billion debt, which has been created by the mismanagment of the Government. We will not see a good proposal for local government from such a bad central Government.

I was a councillor for the Renfrew fourth district council —a small fish in local government, but near to the local people. I was a councillor for Strathclyde regional council, which was big local government, but not bad. I remember the day when I spent my time in Strathclyde and felt that I was contributing something worthwhile and that the services provided by Strathclyde were among the best provided by a local authority in Great Britain.

The Tory party's hatred of local government in Scotland is due to the fact that they cannot win enough seats there. They have not managed to win the confidence of the people of Scotland, so they see Strathclyde as big and bad because they cannot control and manipulate it, and because they are not the people involved in delivering good services to the community.

The Prime Minister said that Strathclyde was a monstrous authority. He should get "back to basics" and make a wee study, and he will find that, throughout the years, his Ministers were telling folk all over the world how good Strathclyde regional council was. The past two Secretaries of State for Scotland regularly said how good Strathclyde was.

However, the symptomatic problem with the Tories is that they have never supported local authorities anywhere where a council has been elected by the normal electoral method, such as the Greater London council, which they abolished. One of the proposals for Scotland will clearly abolish Strathclyde and is obvious gerrymandering to anyone who has some knowledge of local or central Government. The editorial of *The Herald* said:

"basic or not—against local government. The main aim has been fairly obviously to dismantle Strathclyde region, despite its record of responsible behaviour during the years of Conservative government."

The Minister knows that that newspaper is not a Labour party organisation. It may not be a Tory organisation either. However, it is certainly spelling out the message to the Government that gerrymandering is not on, and that the Government's whole aim is to abolish Strathclyde.

As I said, the Prime Minister called Strathclyde a monstrosity. I remember the days of monstrous local government in Scotland, when there was a move to abolish it and make local government more accountable to the public. It was reorganised, and very small local authorites were abolished which were never in a position to provide many of the services which we now receive. The Minister knows well that I served on the Renfrew fourth district council, which was too small to deliver services.

That reorganisation went down the right road. Strathclyde is a good authority and it is also on the right road. However, I do not believe that anything should just be left to roll along. I believe that improvements should always continue to be made, and that reviews should always be made. We are continually reviewing our own lives, so there is no reason why we should not keep improving local government and ensure that there is district machinery.

Strathclyde was a moderate council. It certainly was an innovative council. Its deliberations were always moderate, and it never sought confrontation with Government, be it Labour or Tory. It aimed to deliver the best possible services for the people it represents. It was a flagship Labour authority. I am proud to have been a Strathclyde councillor and to have served under some of the greatest local councillors, such as the late Dick Stewart, an amazing man who dedicated his life to improving our society.

What pleasure do the Government take from setting up a gerrymandering local government boundary? There will be a change of Government. A Labour Government will be elected, and they will repeal the damage that has been inflicted by this Government.

The other night, I sat here trying to take part in a debate on the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, which the Government had guillotined. People and businesses in Britain wished the Bill to be fully debated, but the "back to basics" policy came into play, and the Leader of the House decided it was back to bed for Tory Back Benchers. I understand that Tory Whips were phoning around to ensure that all the heads were on the right pillows. I am sure that they had a problem finding some of them.

We had a great folk singer who sang of the Dunlopillo in the sky. Many Conservative Members will be spending their time with a Dunlopillo in the sky and we shall be in government, because they will be rejected by the electorate, especially in Scotland.

The Government are putting us back to the wall. Scotland has good local authorities, with some wonderful characters and hard-working men and women, who have served them for many decades. Their experience, voices and opinions have been cast to the wind. Many Tory and Liberal Members have objected to this proposed reorganisation.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Name them.

Mr. Graham: The hon. Member wishes me to name them. I will ring them up after the debate and print their names in an early-day motion.

The Government are in a big enough mess without making a mess of local government in Scotland. We have had Iraq gate, and Westminstergate, and now we have Langgate. It is a big gate. I assure the Minister that the Bill will be exposed to the people of Scotland as a measure that will lead to bad, costly government. The people of Scotland will beg Labour to repeal it and to return to the common-sense government that they have been used to for the past 20 years.

The previous Prime Minister was going to abolish quangos. What did we see? They nearly filled Wembley with quangos. We have thousands of quangos, costing millions of pounds. In future, in Scotland we shall nickname them not quangos but "Langos". Asil Nadir may be over in Cyprus, but the Secretary of State's paid-for Tory boys will be getting a wee bit of dross to fill their buckets and to ensure that the Tory party gets some funs to put up a wee bit of a show at the local elections.

I do not want to take up all the House's time. I believe that the Government's policy on local authorities, especially in Scotland, is fatally flawed. The Secretary of State made a very sweeping remark: that the people of Scotland do not like their local authorities. Renfrew district council asked a neutral, professional organisation to conduct a survey on its behalf. Its findings of satisfaction were: refuse collection, 86 per cent., street cleaning 47 per

cent., libraries, 85 per cent., parks and open spaces, 63 per cent., and swimming pools and sports centres, 73 per cent. Overall, 62 per cent. of folk felt that their services were all right. Renfrew district compares well with other district councils in Britain.

Mr. Gallie: Given what the hon. Gentleman is saying about Renfrew district council, may I assume that he will support its plea to become a single-tier authority as opposed to Strathclyde's position?

Mr. Graham: I wish that I could propose what I would like to see for local government in Scotland. It certainly would be a million miles from this. It would suit the needs of the people I represent.

Renfrew conducted a postal poll, to which 79·5 per cent. of people responded. It covered Ralston, which is part of the Paisley, North constituency, Dykebar, which is part of the Paisley, South constituency, Parkhead, Neilston and Uplamoor, which is in the Minister's constituency.

In Ralston, 82 per cent. of people voted to stay with the council. Ralston has always had a Tory councillor, so one would not expect 82 per cent. of its people to reject the Government's boundary proposals. In Dykebar, the figure was 91·2 per cent., and in Parkhead and Neilston, which is in the Minister's constituency, it was 78·5 per cent.

What an indictment of the Government's gerrymandering of the boundaries. Ordinary men and women call it gerrymandering. They have seen through the Government. They have seen through the Tory party's plans to decimate our local identities.

The Secretary of State will reap the harvest at the next general election, but before that there will be the European elections. I am sure that we will wipe the floor with the Tories in Scotland. There will be none left.

I conclude by referring to an article in the *The Herald* by Claude Thomson, who covered local authority matters for many years. He is a journalist who is respected by hon. Members on all sides of the House. In that article, Mr. Thomson wrote:

"All but the most ardent opponents of regionalisation acknowledged that Strathclyde has performed much better than the authorities it superseded."

The article concluded:

"When the definitive history of Strathclyde comes to be written setting out not only its successes but its admitted shortcomings I have no doubt it will stand proud comparison with whatever succeeds it."

Even at this late stage, I call upon the Tory party in Scotland and on Tory Ministers to turn back and listen to the will of the people in Scotland, to return to sanity and to leave us alone.

8.50 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in the debate. During my time in the House, I can hardly think of another piece of major legislation in respect of which the speeches from the Government Benches were so pathetic and desultory in their attempt to present a rational case. In the Secretary of State and the hon. Members for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and for Dover (Mr. Shaw) we had respectively the bland, the bizarre and the plain bonkers. If they represented a selection of the cases that can be made for the legislation, it reflects very poorly on the Bill.

The false premise on which the Bill proceeds is that somehow we are returning to single-tier local government. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) and others have said, there never was single-tier local government in most parts of Scotland. All the Government's problems flow from that falsehood. The attempt to balance what cannot really be balanced produces the difficulty in providing authorities that are acceptable to the great majority of people in Scotland.

If an authority is small enough in geographical terms to be viable, the population is often not in keeping with that. For example, in the highlands there is a small population in a huge geographical area while there is a perfectly viable, and perhaps too big, population in Ayrshire for a single-tier authority. As a result, with the kind of balance that the Government are trying to strike, local government services and the places from where they are administered would be taken further away from the people who are represented. That is certainly true of my constituency.

For example, if an all-Ayrshire local authority had district council responsibilities, the centre of that authority would be much further from the people than at present. The same criticism applies to the north Ayrshire authority that the Government suggest for my constituency.

There is nothing new about the dilemma. It is precisely the dilemma that the Wheatley commission examined almost 30 years ago. That commission was faced with the fact that a plethora of authorities had been created by the forces of history. These included district and town councils, royal burghs and county councils. While there was clearly an unevenness of pattern, what had to be maintained from the system was the fundamental principle of two tiers. Some services were best delivered at the level of a large authority while other services were best delivered by a small and more local authority.

I am not expressing my personal views here with any force. However, if I had been starting with a clean piece of paper, I would have believed that there was a case for giving more powers to even smaller authorities than are proposed. Some very local responsibillities should best be decided at a local level. There should perhaps be more of a role for community-type councils.

I grew up in Dunoon which had a town council. That was an appropriate level at which to decide some matters which were of intense and burning interest to that community and to that community alone. Other decisions were taken at a county council level. That was a form of two-tier local government.

However, before this ridiculous legislation was proposed, no one suggested that there should be a pattern of uniformity throughout Scotland in respect of which everything would be decided on a single-tier local government level. That is the basic fallacy from which all the other problems flow and that is why there is so much opposition and resistance to the proposals in Scotland.

I believe that the status quo should be maintained. The status quo works reasonably well and it has a high degree of acceptance among the population in the area that I represent. Where does the obsession to change the way in which things operate at the moment come from? Was it a wicked socialist plot to set up the Scottish regions originally? Of course not. The legislation that is now being undone was passed by Parliament barely 20 years ago under a Conservative Government. There are still some Tory Members today who voted for the legislation which created the regions.

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

In the interim, a much more partisan type of Tory Government has emerged for whom it is anathema that there are authorities which are Labour-controlled and also deeply effective.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman referred to the status quo and why it should remain. If the status quo is so perfect and so right, why did the hon. Gentleman's manifesto refer to a return to single-tier authorities? Is the hon. Gentleman now saying that he supports a Scottish Assembly?

Mr. Wilson: I support a Scottish Assembly because my party supports a Scottish Assembly. That view was part of the manifesto. The hon. Gentleman answers his own question. We contemplated single-tier authorities because there was going to be another layer of government in Scotland and therefore the concept of two-tier government was going to be perpetuated. I cannot understand the hon. Gentleman's difficulty in comprehending that. Just because the brief states that he should ask that question does not mean that the question is very good.

Dr. Godman: The gerrymandering nature of the proposals is plainly demonstrated in the treatment being meted out to the proposed East Renfrewshire council and what is going to happen to Inverclyde district council. Thirty thousand people signed a petition which I presented to the Minister just three months ago. Those petitioners begged to have Inverclyde as a unitary council, but that was totally ignored by the Government.

Mr. Wilson: Again, that is the problem which Conservative Members purport not to understand. Of course there is no contradiction in what I have said. The vast majority of people in my constituency and, I suspect, in my hon. Friend's constituency, are not clamouring for the reform of Scottish local government. They wish to maintain the status quo; they appreciate the status quo. Of course they will take up defensive positions if change is forced upon them. In Ayrshire, and in Cunninghame specifically, given the option, the great majority of people would maintain the status quo. The more they realise what they are going to lose, the stronger their opinion will become. But if the status quo is not an option, of course, some people would support an all-Ayrshire authority.

As I have set out to demonstrate from the first day the measure was announced, if the other options fail, a viable case for Cunninghame is supported on a cross-party basis. But the one thing that nobody supports is what the Government are putting forward. That is the key point. There is overwhelming support for the status quo and there is support for other possibilities, but there is no support for what the Government are putting forward. I have repeatedly put that point to the Minister, with all-party support from the council chamber and from every walk of life in my constituency. I hope that that point will eventually be brought to bear.

I wish to go smartly through two or three points and raise a particular interest, which is the future of the Strathclyde passenger transport executive and the absolute folly of what is being done in respect of public transport in Strathclyde. It is one of the issues that will begin to press home upon even the most mindless Conservative Members. People have to appreciate what they have in order to become angry about what is being taken from them. In Strathclyde, we have the best suburban transport system in the British isles and one of the best in Europe, and we have it because we have a visionary local authority which has the scale and the resources to develop it, invest in it, and put serious backing behind it. If we fragment the basis of that system we will fragment the system itself and it will wither on the vine.

There are now two threats pressing upon the Strathclyde passenger transport executive. One is the privatisation of British Rail which, if it were not for the additional grant for which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) has agreed to be a conduit from the Department of Transport, next year alone would add £5 million to fares purely for the reorganisation costs of privatisation. The Minister indicates assent. In the long term, rail privatisation will be a deeply serious threat to the PTE concept. In addition, we have the crazy breaking up of the foundation on which the PTE is built.

I can only briefly explain the point, but it is important to have it on the record. If, under the legislation, a PTE continues, but does not have power to precept constituent local authorities, it will be only as strong as its weakest part. That problem is faced at present by PTEs in England.

Let me give a brief example, mainly from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). Recently, she and I attended the reopening of an old railway line, which has been closed since the Beeching days, in the north of Glasgow, serving communities which can particularly benefit from having such railway services. I am sure that my hon. Friend will confirm that they are already benefiting from them.

The only organisation that could do that was the Strathclyde PTE, which put the money into reopening stations. It was able to do so because it is a unitary body. In future, in order to make such investment decisions to give stations back to the people of Possil, Summerston, Ashfield and Maryhill, the executive would have to have the agreement of councils in east Renfrewshire, Milngavie and Bearsden—all over the shop. They would have to say, "We are prepared to commit resources which are not going directly to the communities that we represent."

I do not believe for one moment that, if that system had been in place, we would have had the wonderful electrification system in Ayrshire. I do not believe that we would be reopening stations at Whitletts and in other parts of Lanarkshire. I do not believe that there would be cross-subsidisation between successful Ayrshire lines, for instance, and routes in Lanarkshire which are inherently loss-making but which provide a social service. All that is being put at risk by the legislation. That is a real liberty to take with something which works so well.

At present, most of the anger about the legislation—let us be realistic; the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill is not the talk of the steamie—comes from groups within Strathclyde who realise the damage that will be done and who are apprehensive about the implications. There are people who are most impinged upon by specialist services. There are people who rely on special needs education and on specialist social work services. There are people who benefit from specialist educational services. Those people are beginning to realise the great threat that exists.

However, there is a very big category of people who are next to realise what will be done. Pensioners and others who rely on concessionary fares in Strathclyde will realise that that system, too, will be dependent on the weakest part

of the Strathclyde passenger transport executive. There is no prospect of maintaining a unified concessionary fare system if the legislation is passed.

I shall speak briefly about the county in which I spent the first 20 years of my life. I want to put something on the record because I may not participate in future debates on the Bill. It may be time for Argyll to be floated off. If that is the wish of Argyll, so be it. In passing, I shall give the Minister a history and geography lesson. Helensburgh is not in Argyll. It never was and it never will be in Argyll. The Minister can draw as many lines on the map as he wants, but he will never change that essential fact.

No one should ever underestimate what Strathclyde has done for Argyll. My late father worked for Argyll county council until his dying day. Until that day, wage negotiations for officials were a matter of seeing a local councillor; people who did industrial and manual work did not have proper clothing, much less proper wages and conditions; roads were third rate and single track; and education and social work provisions were all on the cheap.

Strathclyde has taken Argyll and its services by the boot-straps in the past 20 years, and a great many people in Argyll who will never vote Labour in their lives appreciate that. To denigrate what Strathclyde has done for Argyll is to denigrate the memory of people such as the late Geoff Shaw, who worked himself into an early grave ensuring that every part of Strathclyde had an equal deal —Labour and Tory; rural and urban. That is why Strathclyde was founded on such a firm basis.

I shall make my next point because I am sure that it will not be the centrepiece of future debates on the Bill. Clause 138 of the Bill is worth a mention. It has only two lines, which state:

"On and after 1st April 1995 no shootings, deer forests or fishings shall be entered in the valuation roll".

In the midst of spending hundreds of millions of pounds on a reorganisation of local government which few people want, and in the midst of money being squandered in all directions, there is only one cash break. Only one group of citizens will be handed money as a result of the Bill: the owners of shootings, deer forests and fishings, who will no longer be entered in the valuation roll.

I shall say one thing about Tory Ministers. They never forget their class basis; they never forget where their support comes from; and they never forget their role as political wing of the Scottish Landowners Federation. It adds farce to the general insult of the legislation that, while there are so many poor people and those who need housing, communications, social work and education, the only ones who will get a monetary handout under this Bill are the owners of shootings, fishings and deer forests in Scotland.

9.7 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am grateful that I am able to speak tonight because this debate transcends the normal details and, dare I say it, the minutiae of politics in Scotland. We shall have to live with the results of the legislation that we pass in the next few months. More than that, the Government will have to live with the results for many years to come. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said, it may not be the talk of the steamie, the clubs, the pubs, the buses or the football grounds at present. But as with the poll tax, there will be an increasing awareness as the practical implications of the Bill dawn on people, and they will lay the blame at the feet of those who introduced it despite all the evidence against it.

In the few minutes that I have been given, I shall make three main points. The question of cost has been covered effectively by most hon. Members who have spoken tonight. Frankly, I do not believe what Ministers said—that the net cost will be only £50 million. I do not believe what Ministers said not only because it goes against everything that they said previously. We do not have to look in the crystal ball; to gauge the costs involved we need only examine the history books. The examples given by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) illustrate the vast costs which have been involved in the Government's previous escapades.

Democracy has been mentioned this evening. Let me simply say that it is astonishing that Tory Members have managed to do a complete U-turn. They are about to rid Scotland of regional and district authorities which have served Scotland well. We are not talking here about the GLC, the bete noire of the Tory party. Names such as Geoff Shaw, Dick Stewart, Charles Gray or Bob Gould in Strathclyde have not dripped from the lips of the antagonistic Tory central office, and those people have not been branded as being part of the loony left. They have been credited during the past two decades, even by Conservatives, as practical, common-sense and down-to-earth politicians.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Reid: I see the hon. Gentleman shaking his head. There is no historical justification for the Conservative party getting rid of structures which have served Scotland well. There is no justification on ideological grounds either, because the Government came to power promising two things to their supporters. They promised to roll back the state and to extend choice. I put it to them tonight that no Government this century—Tory, Labour or Liberal—has rolled the state on more, or has centralised more, than the present Government. That is part of the tradition which the Government have maintained.

When Conservative Members shout about centralising socialist Governments, let them look at what they have done. They have rolled over trade union democracy and over ordinary individual rights. They have excluded people from the electoral register and have linked the right to vote to the payment of a tax—something outlawed by the American constitution 200 years ago. The measure is but one more step in that direction, because the Government are taking powers away from local government. Whether it is the police, water or sewerage, services will no longer be accountable to people who are, in turn, accountable to the electorate.

Choice is another slogan of the Tory party, although we have now learnt to be rather cynical about Tory party slogans. How is the choice of an old-age pensioner to travel extended by the taking away of concessionary fares? How is the choice of my constituents who live in parts of Uddingston and Viewpark extended by the creation of a new education authority which prevents them from sending their children to either St. John the Baptist school in Uddingston or Uddingston grammar school? That is because we now have a plethora of education authorities instead of a major education authority.

[Dr. Reid]

In terms of strategy, someone said to me at the beginning of the process that this was a stupid Bill introduced by people who knew little about local government. I think that that is wrong. This is anything but a stupid Bill from a partisan Tory point of view. It certainly does not come from people who know little about local government. It is a crafty and clever Bill from people who understand local government because it is a Bill which gerrymanders.

The Bill creates local authorities with a population of over 300,000, but also creates one in greater Eastwood and in East Renfrew with a population of 86,000 people. That authority has less people than my parliamentary constituency. The whole plethora of local government apparatus will be created for 86,000 people in the local government area of the constituency of the Minister at the Scottish Office. I refuse to accept that that is a result of anything other than a crafty and clever gerrymandering operation for partisan and biased party purposes.

That is my final point, and that is why it is so important that the Bill be rejected by the Scottish people. It lacks legitimacy. It does not have a structure which has been designed by an independent boundary commission, or which has resulted from a study by a group such as the Wheatley commission. It does not have the legitimacy of the parliamentary boundaries which have been drawn up. The areas of the authorities have been drawn up by the Conservatives themselves.

The proposals will be rejected because this is not government of the people of Scotland, by the people of Scotland, for the people of Scotland—it is local govenment of the Tory party, by the Tory party, for the Tory party. The Government demean themselves by doing that, but they do not demean the people who will have to operate under that local government, and that is why it will be overwhelmingly rejected by the people of Scotland.

9.14 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): One thing is obvious tonight. The Tories have taken a terrible drubbing in the Chamber. For many years we have not seen a set of Conservatives so unconvinced by their arguments giving such a pathetic performance to the House. The brilliant speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) was in sharp contrast with the brittle and unconvincing speech of the Secretary of State for Scotland. We must surely be reaching a stage at which the untruths which are peddled throughout the country about the wisdom of the Bill are beginning to sink home even with some Conservative Members.

We have heard some excellent speeches by my hon. Friends. They talked about the new towns shambles, which is to continue as part of the local government reorganisation. The Government have promoted unconvincing figures for the cost of reorganisation. We have heard from my hon. Friends about the need for a Scottish Parliament to bring sanity to politics in Scotland and tackle the democratic deficit.

We had a vintage speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). He not only entertained the House but spelled out clearly the concerns of ordinary people in his constituency. His experience is mirrored by the experience of Scottish Members from throughout Scotland.

The remarkable thing about the debate today is that we are dealing with a thoroughly bad Bill. The time of the House is being wasted by a Government who are no longer in tune with the reality of the Scottish people and their understanding of "back to basics". Indeed, we have a set of Ministers so divorced from that reality that we face three months in Committee dealing with a Bill that will do nothing for the aspirations of ordinary Scots. Indeed, the Bill will be fundamentally damaging to their aspirations.

The Bill is not about improving the effectiveness of government in Scotland. That was made evident in the speeches that have been made tonight. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said earlier, the Bill reeks of political intentions. It is naked in its intent; a shameless effort by Ministers, Conservative Back Benchers and certain of their Tory supporters in Scotland.

It is important to put on record again the reasons why we shall fight the Bill every inch of the way. First, the Bill is of course about gerrymandering. Following the debacle of Westminster and the unfolding controversy in Wandsworth no one can dispute that the Bill is about gaining party political advantage, using taxpayers' resources and creating for the first time the alien concept of safe havens in Scottish politics. It is disgraceful. It goes far beyond any knockabout that we want to see in the House of Commons. The Bill is deeply damaging to the interests of democracy, but, unfortunately, that is the nature of government in Scotland in 1993.

The second reason why we shall fight the Bill is that the Government wish to create the context for privatisation of Scotland's water and sewerage services and take the first steps towards it. It is difficult to find appropriate words to describe such a ludicrous and silly measure. It will do nothing for the quality of life in Scotland and the quality of water and sewerage services. It will do everything to satisfy the zealots who still occupy Conservative party headquarters in Scotland and, dare I say it, to promote some of the right-wing lunacy that we see from Ministers.

There is another issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton said that if the Government start to meddle with local government boundaries they will then be involved in parliamentary boundaries. That is an unforgivable step. It will mean that the concept of local government will be devalued. We lay the blame fairly and squarely on the Government. The Bill aims to ensure that the word "enabling" will start to become part of the vocabulary of Scottish local government. "Enabling" sounds innocuous, but it is about contracting out, privatisation, centralisation and undermining the fabric of the collective ethos of local government, which has been developed in Scotland since the early 1920s.

We have talked today about quangos. After the Peterken and Fyfe fiasco in Glasgow, who on earth would want more Tory placemen and placewomen to pack out the administration of essential services in Scotland? Our last concern is another matter that the Government may shrug off. We are about to embark on preventing 300,000 employees from participating in local government. If the Government do nothing else, surely they do not want to disfranchise one in six of the Scottish work force and one in 10 of the electorate by proceeding with the proposed

crazy reorganisation, without taking on board the genuine concerns of people who not only work for the community but want to contribute in a variety of ways.

Those are our concerns. We have talked about the fact that the politics of that is the overriding consideration for the Government. Why do Ministers want to joy-ride through £7·5 billion worth of expenditure in Scotland every year, 300,000 employees and, of course the valued services that are given to nearly 5 milion consumers? As my hon. Friends have said, the services—often life and death services—are provided imaginatively, represent value for money, are cost effective and delivered by councillors and officials who care, in sharp contrast to the group of mean-minded Conservatives who simply want to denigrate every effort in which they are involved to satisfy their own political whims. It is disgraceful that the House should have to witness such disinterest in attacks.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman has said, as has the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), that he intends to target English Tories on the Standing Committee, and forecast that some of them might be persuaded to rebel to save Scottish local government. In view of our experience this evening—none of them have appeared in order to listen to the arguments—does the hon. Gentleman think that that is a realistically viable strategy or one that is likely to be successful in the Standing Committee?

Mr. McLeish: I accept that none of the potential recruits to be dragooned into the Committee is before us today, but I remind the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that we shall try to persuade Tories; we shall not go into chambers and do secret deals with them under the pretext of putting Scotland first.

It is sad that the reorganisation will not put an extra policeman on the beat in Scotland, when the Government have presided over the biggest explosion in crime this century. It will not put an extra house in any district council in Scotland, when more than 100,000 people are homeless every night in Scotland under the Tories. Of course, it will not put another teacher in the classroom, where pupil-teacher ratios are still far too high to have the quality of education that we want to see.

We talk about "back to basics", but it is interesting that the Government are willing to put this Bill before the House yet are not willing to introduce a child care Bill. Their irresponsibility could be putting children at risk in our communities. For most Scots, "back to basics" should have a higher priority than the political shenanigans that we see from the Government. It is clear that, for the Tories, "back to basics" means trying to enhance their political advantage whereas most Scots want to see decent services provided by people who matter.

It is evident from the debate that—the Secretary of State should be aware, even though he is completely out of touch—the proposals are not supported by the people. The proposals have been abused by the media, ridiculed by the Opposition, exposed by academics, barely tolerated by the business community and opposed by COSLA. *[Laughter.]* What more must a democracy do before Conservatives take that seriously? Conservative Members are laughing away, but there have been other developments in Europe where people have fought for freedom and real choices. Conservative Members may laugh but, at the end of the day, there are some very powerful reasons why we should always want to value democracy first and not indulge in the kind of gerrymandering and contempt that we see.

As my hon. Friends have said, the Government do not learn lessons easily. In his exposition, my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton talked about gerrymandering. I do not want to touch on that matter other than to return to a loony authority that we now have in Scotland called Kyle and Carrick. I shall talk more about that in a minute. But what is the case? What can the Under-Secretary of State say to justify the massive upheaval in Scotland? There is no case. We have not heard one. The Secretary of State is quite happy to talk about the public being confused, about the need to respect old loyalties to counties and about waste and duplication. The real agenda, however, is the new enabling authority role, which is linked with the question of privatisation. We know what that means.

We benefited from the Wheatley commission, because it was set up to consider one part of local government in Scotland which was not working. It was clear that that structure had to be studied, root and branch. In 1973, I was privileged to enter that system and to serve 14 years in local government. Today the position is different, because there is no consensus. I accept that there is a point in considering the idea of single-tier authorities and other options, but the Government have plucked out of thin air their idea, which mirrors entirely their political aspirations. To talk about Wheatley in the same breath as the Government's proposed reorganisation is utterly ridiculous and contemptuous.

One argument that we have stressed tonight is the need for constitutional change. The Opposition have argued convincingly on many platforms that we need a Scottish parliament. We have no doubt that if there was a Scottish parliament, of Scots and by Scots, we could propose a local government reorganisation for Scots without being entrapped by the cosy clique of Conservatives in Scotland. That clique has been trumpeted in Parliament by Ministers.

If one accepts that there is consensus in favour of constitutional change, one has to ask why the Government are not prepared to subject their ideas to an independent commission? If I had a case to make, I would be quite happy to put it to the test. Why does the Secretary of State not have the guts to put his gerrymandering proposals to an independent commission? The answer is clear. The Government know that if their proposals were put to any objective test, they would simply fail. No one will demur from that answer. Conservative Members are slouching on the Benches, but they know in their hearts that they are trying to pull off a political wheeze. *[Interruption.]* I know that I am being extremely charitable. It is clear that the Government are in trouble.

What about the costs involved? Earlier, the Secretary of State tried to suggest that we were in some difficulty about the costs. We have never seen so many back-of-envelope calculations. The Scottish Office has produced documents that have been simply ridiculed in a modern democracy. It takes an extraordinary degree of unprofessional gerrymandering of figures to arrive at the mess that the Government have produced. Will that reorganisation cost £100 million or £200 million? The Government have then tried to make us believe that it will save £1 billion. How many people in the Chamber have ever seen any savings made from any reorganisation of the post-war period?

Mr. Gallie: Has not the hon. Gentleman, like me, received many submissions from district councils across Scotland, suggesting that they could make considerable savings if they were single-tier authorities with full responsibility for the range of local authority tasks?

Mr. McLeish: The simple answer is no. The costs are an essential and important part of argument. The Secretary of State has conceded, however, that it is a difficult process. If it is so difficult, my hon. Friends and I are willing to concede that, but why on earth are the Government tramping about the country suggesting that the initial costs will be £200 million and that savings of £1 billion will be made? That is ludicrous. No one believes that claim, so the Government have a problem.

Those hon. Members who represent English constituencies and who will serve on the Standing Committee must heed a warning. We have heard a lot about Tory tax increases. It is one of the "back to basics"—they want to tax people more. If the gerrymandered reorganisation for Scotland proceeds, it will simply mean that council tax payers will pay more and more for a reorganisation that they do not want, from a Government they simply despise. That action is illogical and irrational. I must warn those English Members who will serve on the Committee that they will be enacting something for Scotland that they would not have the courage to enact for their own constituencies.

Another issue for debate is emerging in which I am sure the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) will be interested. A booklet has been produced by the south Ayrshire authority.

For hon. Members who are not aware of what that is, it is the Kyle and Carrick district council at work. The document may be in contempt of the House because the district council has outlined a timetable for proceedings. It has named the day on which the proceedings will start in Committee and given some other information.

Mr. Stewart: That is more than I know.

Mr. McLeish: The Under-Secretary of State says that that is more than he knows. We want to know who is preparing information for that council. The provost is nicknamed "the Ayatollah"—a new example of the loony right.

The hon. Member for Ayr will be interested to know that the issue was discussed at a seminar on Sunday. That is interesting, but what is really illuminating is that the council has described what it wants to do after May 1996. It talks of "minimalist south Ayrshire" and uses the word "outsourcing", which basically means that it will privatise everything that moves within its authority. Finance, law, administration and information technology skills will be "outsourced". It will outsource planning, roads, estate work and leave all the development to local enterprise councils. It will privatise environmental health and outsource housing and social services. It will opt out every school and get consortia to run every other service.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: I shall be delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute.

The document highlights what the debate is all about —creating puppet councils that are run and administered by the Scottish Office, to which the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State can send willing underlings like the hon. Member for Ayr to do the Government's business. It is unbelievable, and we shall ensure that the document has a wide circulation to let the people of Scotland know what is happening.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has an advantage over me because I have not seen the document. However, I am delighted that a local council like Kyle and Carrick is forward-looking enough to look into the future, see what is good for its council tax payers and try to envisage the opportunities that lie ahead instead of behaving like the Opposition, who bury their heads in the sand, believing that money grows on trees and that services can be pulled out of the air. Kyle and Carrick is looking forward—good on it.

Mr. McLeish: "Good on it" sounds more like a football chant. The document talks about ensuring that party advantage is secured so that Strathclyde regional council does nothing in the wind-up. The hon. Gentleman said that he has no access to the document. He can have access to it after the Divisions because we shall ensure that it has a wider circulation.

Mr. Foulkes: Is my hon. Friend aware that Kyle and Carrick district council has already started that process? After a meeting at which the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) was present, it proposed to cancel a tender for cleansing and refuse collection, which still has two years to run and was given to in-house contractors. While those discussions were taking place, the provost of Kyle and Carrick council had at least two—perhaps three—secret meetings with a Spanish-based private company that wishes to take over that tender. That is what we shall face under the new privatised Tory councils.

Mr. McLeish: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his contribution. On 11 January, Glasgow's *The Herald* carried an article entitled

"Refuse Row to be Raised in Commons".

I am pleased to say that, unlike the hon. Member for Ayr who speaks to the press before he speaks to the Commons, I have suggested that that matter will be raised.

Conservative Members may laugh at a document produced by their colleagues but my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is right to say that the council's actions are illegal. A £3 million contract with two years to run is being torn up and the zealots who now run the authority will bar their in-house team from bidding. To show that Tory contempt exists not only in the House, the provost at that meeting confirmed that he had had private discussions with Spanish contractors.

Why do not Government Front-Bench Members drag in that Tory convenor and tell him that the attempt to bypass compulsory competitive tendering is not on? The Secretary of State has not said anything. Once again, there are double standards—what is good enough for some authorities in respect of CCT is not good enough for the Tory's new flagship authority, the loony right Kyle and Carrick district authority.

We are worried that the reorganisation process will allow councils to be manipulated. If there is one area that sums up the predicament it is my region of Fife. The scenario is this: Scottish Office advisers or Ministers suggested that Stirling must be a single-tier authority because an ex-Westminster city councillor, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), was advising them. They then had to decide how to achieve that end.

First, they decided to chop up Central regional council. Fair enough, but if they did that they then had to decide what to do about Falkirk and Clackmannan. They decided to link them together, but some bright spark in the Scottish Office realised that there was a river between them and that they were not linked. Hey presto, a genius said that they would take Kincardine out of Fife and provide the necessary link. How on earth can that be described as a logical, sensible or sensitive way to reorganise anything? We shall certainly be discussing such issues in Committee.

I conclude by dealing with two issues which give us great cause for concern. The first is quangos. The Government may rubbish people's concern about government by quango. None of my colleagues wants placemen running the key services but, if it happens, the quality of life for people in Scotland will be diminished. Our preliminary analysis of the Bill suggests that more than 100 new bodies—statutory and non-statutory boards and quangos—will emerge, and the creation of three super-quangos is an insult built on an injury. To try to bring about privatisation in such a corrupt manner is bad enough but to suggest that it is taken out of local authority control and given to super-quangos is worse.

The Bill also deals with water, but the Scots do not accept the Government's proposal. They do not want a further acceleration of quango government, but they want a debate about services. I began my remarks by dealing with services, and I shall conclude on that point.

The Government are ignoring the pressing needs of child care, education, transport and social work. We need investment in those key areas. We are lagging behind Europe and other parts of the developed world because we are pursuing the wrong agenda. If the Secretary of State feels that he wants to do something constructive in his remaining few years in that post, he would be well advised to tackle the issue of services.

What annoys the Scots is not only everything that I have described but the way in which Ministers are undermining the collective ethos of Scottish local government. We believe in community and in individualism being developed, nurtured and promoted, and we believe in aspirations being realised through the idea of community and collective provision. The Government are trying to trample those ideas into the dust as they progress with their political agenda.

We shall not rest after the Bill has been given a Second Reading. We shall ensure that the Government have a bruising battle in Committee and that they are exposed on every front. Our objective remains the derailing of the Bill. We shall have success as the Government move towards the next election but, if we do not, we shall have success when there is a Labour Government. Tonight we shall vote against this daft, dangerous and divisive Bill and ask the Government to scrap it now.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): When the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) opened for the Opposition he made a number of forecasts. Before the debate he made a forecast, which was carried in the *Sunday Times* on 12 December, in which he said:

"Labour is hoping to recruit right-wing Tories in an attempt to wreck the progress of the Scottish local government bill."

The article continued by saying that they would be targeted, the offensive would be co-ordinated and there would be discreet discussions. I have checked with my hon. Friend the Whip, who looks less than panic-stricken at the possible gain of right-wing Conservatives in the Labour Lobby tonight. The hon. Gentleman's forecast is about as accurate as many of his other forecasts about the effects of this admirable Bill.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) was in his usual ebullient form. He referred to Fife and local government costs and it is therefore worth reading the odd excerpt from Fife regional council's submission on the matter.

Mr. McLeish: I am not the leader now.

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate that, but I assume that the hon. Gentleman has got around to reading the document from Labour-held Fife regional council, which said:

"We welcome the opportunity to put forward a positive and well argued case for the continuation of local government services based on a single Fife authority."

That is what the Government have also concluded in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central also talked about costs and said that he did not believe the Government's figures.

Mr. McLeish *indicated assent.*

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman confirms that that is his belief. I am sure that he must believe the figures of his own Labour-held regional authority.

Mr. George Robertson: Why?

Mr. Stewart: Because I can tell him what they are. The authority concludes—it has nothing to do with the Government as they are the authority's conclusions—that the savings over a 15-year period, discounted, would be no less than £42·4 million, and that is for only one proposal. I am happy to say that I see no reason to dissent broadly from the conclusions that Fife regional council reached on savings.

Dr. Reid: I know that the Minister is a fair man. On the ground of fairness, will he give us the estimate made by Strathclyde of the extra costs involved?

Mr. Stewart: I shall deal with the costs more generally later. I was referring to the hon. Member for Fife, Central and simply reminding him of the savings talked of by his Labour-held authority.

Opposition Members seemed to be in great difficulty in deciding what their policy was. The hon. Member for Hamilton spent a considerable time talking about Westminster, which is not exactly affected by the Bill. He believes in a Scottish Assembly, where he would be the Secretary of State for Scotland, where he would have no responsibility for Scottish local government but would have a residual responsibility, as a member of the Cabinet, for local government in England. Perhaps he is just practising hopefully for that day when he earns £70,000 a year, or whatever Cabinet Ministers earn, for having no responsibilities in Scotland whatsoever.

What is Labour party policy? I suggest that it appears to be this. For the sake of argument let us assume that Labour were in Government. First, there would be a constitutional Bill to set up a Scottish Parliament which would take two years. A local government commission would have to be set up and would produce its report after a certain period at work. The Scottish Assembly would then take some time

[Mr. Stewart]

to look at the report's findings and draft legislation. That would be followed by a Bill, which would have to complete its passage, and the introduction of a new local government system.

I have worked out how long that would take, on the tightest reasonable time scale. It cannot be done before April 2004 because of the complexities involved in setting up a new Assembly—legislation, an independent commission and more legislation.

Mr. McLeish: No.

Mr. Stewart: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that it could be done faster, perhaps he could let me know. Labour party policy therefore means 10 years of uncertainty over the future of local government in Scotland.

Opposition Members have said that there is massive sustained opposition to those policies in Scotland. They have spoken about the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and its opposition. We were promised a mass lobby from COSLA on the date of the Second Reading. I have now discovered that COSLA sent a letter to all authorities saying that, unfortunately, it could not organise a mass lobby after all. That demonstrates a less than total commitment to sustained opposition to the Government's proposals.

Many hon. Members have referred to local government boundaries.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the proposals for Renfrewshire, why are the people of Inverclyde treated so differently from the people living in the proposed East Renfrewshire council area? What do the Government have against the idea of an Inverclyde council? Does it not make better sense to have three councils in Renfrewshire?

Mr. Stewart: I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because he implied, I think, in his comments that the representations that had been received from Inverclyde—I met an all-party delegation from the council, led by him—had not been considered. Let me make it clear, therefore, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have consistently said that detailed changes will be fully considered in the right and proper place—in Committee.

Mr. Kirkwood: I asked the Secretary of State a question earlier and I think that he slightly misunderstood me.

The boundary changes are crucial to hon. Members on both sidea of the House. Can the Minister confirm, first, that the Government are prepared to concede substantive changes on some of the boundary issues? Secondly, as I was trying to say to the Secretary of State earlier but did not get across properly, if individual Members table individual amendments applying to individual boundaries, that has a knock-on effect in other parts of the country. Therefore, if the Government wait until the whole of schedule 1 is debated to take it all away and think about it again before they bring back proposals for change, we need to know the ways in which the Government will deal with any substantive changes to the boundaries that they may have been prepared to concede in Committee.

Mr. Stewart: I also met a delegation from Berwickshire, led by the hon. Gentleman. I cannot forecast today the outcome of the deliberations of the Standing Committee on the Bill. We will carefully consider substantive amendments that are put forward by the hon. Members who serve on the Committee. I cannot make a commitment, but it is worth recording that the proposals for the previous reorganisation of local government in Scotland were substantially changed as the Bill passed through its stages. We will therefore consider carefully the representations that are made by hon. Members.

Mr. Salmond: A few seconds ago, the Minister referred to the year 2000 when he was discussing the Labour party's proposals.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The year 2004.

Mr. Salmond: I stand corrected. The hon. Gentleman must consider that to be a reasonable period for forecasting in terms of the Bill. Can he therefore, for the House tonight, rule out any move towards water privatisation in that time scale to the year 2004?

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it absolutely clear that the Government have no proposals for water privatisation in Scotland. He could not have been clearer.

A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have naturally raised a range of detailed points about the boundaries of individual authorities. My hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) and for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) did not appear to hold a unanimous view on one aspect that they raised. I have no doubt that such points will be fully discussed in Committee.

I was grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) for recognising that, in relation to King's Park and Toryglen, the Government had responded to the representations made by him and by his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) also referred to boundaries. He made the general point that it is impossible to have efficient small education authorities.

I can answer that point best by reading a quotation from the Committee debating the Local Government (Scotland) Bill in 1973:

"Let me tell the Government that local interest in education is understandably intense, probably more intense"

than in housing.

"the education service should, in our view, be responsive to this interest. If, in order to get this responsiveness it was necessary to move housing from region to district, it is worth while taking education out of the hands of a very large authority and giving it to a smaller authority."

I shall repeat the last phrase for the benefit of the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram)—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful for hon. Members' appreciation. To repeat:

"it is worth while taking education out of the hands of a very large authority and giving it to a smaller authority."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 1 February 1973; c. 205.]

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth referred to my view, which is identical to that, as twaddle, or some similar word. I suggest that he have a word with his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). He expressed precisely those sentiments, which I have just quoted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside referred to costs and to staffing. He said that, on the

previous occasion on which local government was reorganised, there was widespread concern about increased salaries for senior staff in local government. I tell him—this relates directly to costs—that we are determined to prevent excessive salary increases and golden handshakes. The Bill will enable the Secretary of State, if necessary, to appoint a body to examine excessive salary increases and to recommend reductions.

The Bill also contains powers designed to discourage people from accepting redundancy when they know that they will be re-employed by a new council. In those circumstances, the council in question could be obliged to repay the compensation to the Secretary of State. Those proposals will be widely welcomed as giving my right hon. Friend the power, if necessary, to ensure that some of the excessive increases that occurred on the previous occasion are not repeated.

On costs, my hon. Friends have rightly pointed to the many individual district councils that have identified substantial savings from their unitary status. Other estimates within the world of local authorities, including Strathclyde, do not reflect those figures. I point out to the Opposition that, according to the whole range of estimates given by Labour-held authorities, large and small, the authorities say that under a unitary system they could provide services cost-effectively.

That is true even of authorities as small as Clackmannan, which is Labour held. A delegation from that authority, led by the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), came to see me. The delegates argued that Clackmannan could provide all services, including the specialist services, cost-effectively. How was that council able to do that, the hon. Member for Fife, Central may ask. How could such a small council conceive of being able to supply the specialist services? Its members told me, "Minister, we would be an enabling council. Minister, we have no hang-ups about getting specialist services from other councils. Minister, we have no hang-ups about getting specialist services from the private sector."

That was the view of the Labour-held Clackmannan district council. That suggests that the thinking of many councils in Scotland is miles ahead of the thinking on the Opposition Front Bench. Many Labour authorities in Scotland have recognised that local government increasingly has an enabling role and that they may not only supply services by their own hand but use other means of delivering services. As I have referred to the hon. Member for Fife, Central, I shall give way.

Mr. McLeish: On an important issue concerning Falkirk and Clackmannan, will the Minister tell the House whether Kincardine will be moved, even if people there wish to stay in Fife, to complete the utterly ridiculous gerrymandering of two parts of one, so-called unitary authority?

Mr. Stewart: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to confirm that he supports Fife regional council's figures on the massive savings that will occur as a consequence of the implementation of the Government's proposals. I have no doubt that his detailed question will be raised during Committee, where it will be fully considered. Surely the hon. Gentleman did not expect me to say anything other than that.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Minister think that a small authority could have put together the financial package that brought Motorola to Bathgate? Would that have been possible without the Lothian region?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, absolutely. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that industry does not set up in areas with small authorities? That is nonsense. The lead organisation for encouraging inward investment in Scotland is Locate in Scotland and it will work in partnership with local authorities, which will have continuing industrial powers, as they have at present.

Dr. Reid *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I have only two minutes left and I must continue.

My hon. Friends the Members for Kincardine and Deeside and for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) specifically mentioned community councils—an aspect of the Government's proposals which has not received widespread attention. I can confirm to my hon. Friends and to the House that community councils will have the right to be consulted on local planning issues on which we have indicated to the local authority that they wish to be consulted. They will also have the right to be consulted on the schemes which authorities draw up on decentralisation services. We regard those schemes as extremely important. Part of making local government more local is unquestionably local community councils having a right and proper role. The Bill will confirm that firmly.

I should like to make one point absolutely clear to the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke)—*[Interruption.]*—who asked about the——

Mr. Welsh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. All night, the Government Benches have been empty because there has been hardly an English Member present. Now, they have all come in to vote the measure through against the wishes of the Scottish people and they are making so much noice that we cannot hear the end of the debate. Will you, Madam Speaker, ensure that those Conservative Members are quiet? They have not listened to the debate yet they are now going to vote for the measure against the wishes of the people.

Madam Speaker: Would the House come to order and hear the Minister's last few remarks?

Mr. Stewart: Hon. Members asked about representation on joint boards and the hon. Member for Midlothian asked about the police. All members of joint boards will be local authority representatives.

No coherent policy has been proposed by the Opposition in this important debate. By contrast, the Government have proposed clear, coherent proposals to make local government simpler, more accountable and more cost-effective and to make local authorities local and give them real authority in Scotland. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 318, Noes 277.

Division No. 68] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Aitken, Jonathan	Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alexander, Richard	Amess, David

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put (pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills)),

That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. George Robertson.]*

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 315.

Division No. 69] **[10.17 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry

Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David

Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.
Bill accordingly committed to a Standing Committee.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That at this day's sitting the Motion relating to Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill [Ways and Means] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 208.

Division No. 70] **[10. 31 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian

Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*

Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—
  (i) any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred in consequence of the provisions (other than any provision authorising payments out of the National Loans Fund) of the Act; and
  (ii) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment;
(b) the charging on and issuing out of the Consolidated Fund of sums required by the Secretary of State for fulfilling guarantees given by him for the discharge of any financial obligations in connection with sums borrowed by any water and sewerage authority established by the Act; and
(c) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by the Secretary of State for the purpose of making loans to any water and sewerage authority established by the Act.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

10.43 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Parliamentary longevity as a Member of the House does not, of itself, entitle me to suppose that I can offer better, more balanced judgments than parliamentary colleagues who have been here for less than thirty-one and a half years. On the contrary, on many matters the judgment of colleagues who were elected for the first time more recently may be more valid for the early 1990s.

However, parliamentary longevity entitles a man to do one thing, which is to warn and sound warnings. As one who went through it last time, I warn the House that the price of upheaval in local government is colossal and far greater than anyone suspects before the event.

Incidentally, money may not be the most important element in the price. Upheaval in local government anaesthetises action; initiative is stifled; decision makers are understandably less immersed in decisions of policy than concerned with their own future; and progress in helping the public is slowed down and often grinds to a halt.

My hon. Friends, many of whom have experience in local government, know what happened last time—many officials and councillors were simply distracted from the job of helping their constituents and ours.

Unpicking Lothian region would disadvantage my constituents and especially my most disadvantaged constituents, those who depend on the social services.

Unpicking Strathclyde—dare I say that it was a friendly neighbour?—would be a monumental task. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie), who was the Strathclyde convenor for social work, knows better than any of us how difficult and costly such an intricate operation would be. We must therefore ask ourselves whether it is worth the candle. Often my hon. Friends would give a resounding no.

We are discussing the money resolution and I wish to go into some detail. I hope to be on the Committee and, if so, I shall certainly pursue the money aspect. At exactly 4.23 pm—we can check it in *Hansard*—I understood the Secretary of State to say that the net cost would be less than £50 million over three years. If I am wrong, the Minister will interrupt me, but I think that I heard correctly. How can that be reconciled with Touche Ross's estimates and with the Bill?

Page ix of the explanatory memorandum of the Bill, which deals with part V, states that the transitional costs of part I are estimated at £120 million to £196 million, offset by savings of £22 million to £62 million. Touche Ross estimated transitional costs and ongoing costs and savings for each of the four options. Its estimate was nearest the 24-unit costs and would mean transitional costs of £194 million on annual savings estimated at £120 million. Those figures are disputed by the regional councils, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The equivalent Strathclyde regional council figures for the 24-unit option were transitional costs of £439 million and ongoing costs of £14 million.

First, what is the difference between the Touche Ross estimate and the Government's estimate? Secondly, do the Government dispute the details that they have been given of the Strathclyde estimates?

I wonder whether the Secretary of State would like to interrupt to clarify the position. I can see that notes are being passed. We are talking about the money resolution. Ministers introduced the Bill, so they should be able to give us the information off the top of their heads if they know what they are talking about.

Frankly, I do not think that the Government have begun to understand the matter and that is the trouble. Incidentally, before putting too much trust in Touche Ross I would go through the CIPFA criticism, which states:

"This area is essentially complex and much 'guesswork' is required but having taken specialist advice on the question of early retirement and redundancy, Touche Ross concluded that the package offered to employees would be a 'redundancy' package and therefore no early retirements other than those related to the reductions in staff numbers would occur. Given that 26% of employees are aged 50 or over, this is an optimistic assumption and"——

this is emphasised——

"seriously understates the potential costs associated with this item. Changes in status, remuneration, location and activity will affect an individual's choice and could lead to a significantly greater number of staff leaving the service than that assumed by Touche Ross."

Frankly, I must tell Ministers and their civil servants that I believe that local government treasurers know a great deal more about the subject than they do. I do not think that the Scottish Office is in command of the figures, which are guesswork. CIPFA and people such as John Lindsay—who have done the work—are far nearer the financial realities than the Scottish Office. I have been a Member of Parliament for thirty-one and a half years and I have absolutely no confidence in the financial management of the Scottish Office in this subject, although I have always been friendly to civil servants.

No Labour Member of Parliament in his right mind would suggest that there should never be a change in local government. In the early 1960s, my first Secretary of State Jack Maclay and his successor Michael Noble were driven to the conclusion that there had to be a fundamental reflection on local government structures. Tom Fraser, Peggy Herbison, Willie Ross and Jo Grimond shared that view. So did most local authority heavyweights of all parties, elected councillors and officials in the local government service.

The result was that most people looked forward to the all-party consensus-seeking group, which we know as the

Wheatley commission. It was agreed by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), the late Betty Harvie Anderson and by Ames Imrie. It was a serious attempt to make some sort of constructive proposal.

This time round it is totally different. Can the Secretary of State tell us where the demand for change is coming from? We all heard him say that many people supported his point of view. I interrupted to ask whom he had in mind —[HON. MEMBERS: "Allan Stewart."] That is it: the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). Other than the hon. Gentleman, with his mad local fixation, who wants it? That is what it is about and it is totally frivolous.

I repeat to the Secretary of State what I told him in his room, when he courteously invited anyone who had not been called to speak in the debate that took place in Edinburgh. He will recollect that my last words to him at that time were a request to go along the Corridor to the other place to seek out his noble Friend Lord Campbell of Croy and ask him about his experience. Lord Campbell of Croy will tell anyone that he laments greatly that his whole time as Secretary of State was vitiated by the fact that the Government had got into the mire of local government reform. Everything else that he wanted to do was swamped.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State did as I advised him, but he would have been wise to do so. I warn him that for years to come any type of initiative in Scotland will be torpedoed by the fact that everyone is thinking about their positions in local government reform. It is only human.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): It is happening already.

Mr. Dalyell: The Chairman of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs says that it is happening now. I am afraid that it has started. The anaesthetic has started to work. That is a great pity. Not only is it a pity, but it seriously affects those whom we represent.

I have another question—not that I have had much success in getting any answers so far. I shall ask a specific question about the most costly item of all. If I briefly give some views, I had better say first whose views they are. They are the views of the Scottish School Board Association, the Scottish Parent Teacher Councils, the Forum on Scottish Education, the Catholic Education Commission, the Church of Scotland Education Committee, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland—Mr. Sandy Watson, its chairman, put the document together—the Educational Institute of Scotland, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, the Professional Association of Teachers, which is not exactly a Labour organisation, the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association and UNISON Scotland. At the end I shall ask about the costings in relation to education:

Those organisations say:

"The costs of change are unjustified at a time of government restrictions on local government funding generally, and when the education service is faced with substantial additional cost factors over the next few years.

The Minister for Education has been advocating 'consolidation, stability and partnership' for the Education Service, but the proposals on local government reorganisation threaten stability, introduce more change, and possibly remove the notion of meaningful partnership."

I confess straight away that I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) was instrumental in helping to set up the committee, but those are views far, far wide of those of my hon. Friend, who speaks on education on behalf of the Labour party. It represents every serious education organisation in Scotland and it goes on to say:

"The implications for services have not been thought out properly. Education—a universal service with more than 50 per cent. of all local authority expenditure—is dismissed in two small paragraphs and fewer than 200 words in the White Paper.

There are dangers in concentrating only on detailed, practical implications—which are, of course, important—and losing sight of the current strategy for change in education and local government."

The document concludes:

"There is strong concern about the nature of the decision-making process (which compares unfavourably with that of the Wheatley Commission and with the process adopted south of the border) and about the lack of proper consultation on issues which are of fundamental importance to the people of Scotland. The signatories to this document call for a Royal Commission on Scottish Education"—

and let us remember who the signatories are.

"The implications for education have not been thought through and warrant more detailed consideration."

What thought has been given to the education costings? [HON. MEMBERS: "Absolutely none."] My hon. Friends on the Front Bench say "absolutely none". That is not only their view; it is the view of the bodies that I listed so carefully and slowly to the House. Surely there should be some answer to them?

Will a serious response be given at an early stage in the Committee to the directors of education or, better still, to the organisations themselves? If the Government were sure about the Bill, they would have given a serious response some time ago. If the Government were sure about the Bill, they would have given a proper answer to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. They would have given some answer to the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

I am glad to see the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food here tonight. I know, from being a guest of the Norwich Labour party, that she was extremely highly thought of as a Norfolk county councillor. Why are not we in Scotland having at least the discussion and the care that is being taken over the reorganisation of local government in England? Why should we be different? The right hon. Lady knows very well from her experience as a Norfolk county councillor about the difficulties of local government reform.

I tell the English Members who will be members of the Committee that they should not regard the Scottish Standing Committee as a political penitentiary. I ask them to raise their heads from their constituency correspondence. If they listened, they might start to warn Ministers of the troubles that are likely to be caused by the Bill. Let us remember where the poll tax started.

I offer my committed support to my hon. Friends in their efforts to oppose the Bill in Committee.

I heard a lot this afternoon about the Wheatley commission and about Lord Wheatley's views. On what would have been the late Lord Wheatley's 86th birthday, I wish that certain people would not attribute to him views that he certainly did not hold.

[Mr. Dalyell]

11.1 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The House always listens with great respect to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Apart from the fact that he has been here for 31 years, we know that he always speaks with great sincerity and knowledge. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is here. The hon. Gentleman said that the extra cost caused by reorganisation would be £50 million over the next four years. That is a massive sum. It is almost as much as the EC spends every day on dumping and destroying food. To that extent, it is an enormous amount.

The House will also wish to congratulate the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who appears to have had a Front-Bench position thrust on him. We wish him every possible success as a Whip, because he has waited for so long.

Having been a councillor many years ago in Glasgow, I am well aware that a single-tier local authority—only cities were single-tier authorities then—involves less spending. When two-tier administration was introduced in Scotland, there seemed to be ample evidence that there were increased costs, more bureaucracy, more officers and more confusion. To that extent, although I believe that we must listen carefully to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, I hope that hon. Members will appreciate that, for Mr. Average, there are cost benefits and satisfaction benefits in having a single-tier local authority.

I hope that Scottish Office Ministers will listen carefully to this important point. Since going to Southend, East as a Member of Parliament, I have had lots of experience of making representations to Ministers and to Departments. I sometimes find that those representations are treated rather casually. Sometimes we feel that they are treated in an off-hand way, and sometimes we gain the impression that no one is listening.

I made representations on the Bill about expenditure on behalf of the residents of King's Park. We know that they are well looked after by the excellent hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). I simply put forward the views of local residents in a brief letter. I wish to record that, in all fairness, not only did I receive a satisfactory reply, but two Ministers came to talk to me and not only showed courtesy, but wanted to know the arguments, the background and whether there was a good case. I was delighted to see in the revised Bill that, instead of King's Park being put into Lanarkshire, which the local people did not seem to want, it has been returned to Glasgow.

Having had limited experience of making representations on behalf of four or five old friends in King's Park, I genuinely found that the attention, courtesy and consideration given by the Scottish Office was an example of government. I feel that the Government would be on an even stronger basis than they are according to the opinion polls, if other Departments and Ministers showed the same consideration and expenditure as the Scottish Ministers.

It is not my habit to stand up and pay compliments, but I genuinely feel that, although I am sad that I am no longer a Scottish Member of Parliament, even though the proposals may be politically unacceptable to some people in Scotland and even though some of the policies may be criticised there, they have a most courteous and attentive Secretary of State and excellent junior Ministers. Irrespective of what happens in politics, I hope that the excellent tradition of the Scottish Office will continue. I pay credit to it, and I wish that all Ministers in all Departments acted in the same way.

11.6 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): That was an interesting view of the Scottish Office, from Southend. I must tell the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that those of us who have to deal with the Scottish Office day in and day out and month in and month out on behalf of our constituents, see it in a different light. Knowing the genuine interest that the hon. Member has had in Scottish affairs in the past, I wonder whether the Secretary of State may like to consider offering the hon. Gentleman, as he has expressed interest in the money resolution, a place on the Committee.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): *indicated assent.*

Mr. Home Robertson: I see that the Secretary of State is indicating his willingness to do so. Since, unlike most of the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary colleagues from Scotland, he has experience of serving on a local authority in Scotland, he may be able to bring some rather unusual wisdom to the Committee.

If the Bill goes through, it will cost not only the Treasury but many of our constituents very dear. I listened to most of the debate on Second Reading, and I must endorse the concerns expressed by a whole range of right hon. and hon. Members following the representations which we have all had from our constituents about what the reforms will cost them. There are not only the transitional costs and the upheaval to consider, but the extra costs that will arise from watering down the high-quality services that they enjoy at the moment.

I have received a large number of letters from the parents of disabled children who require specialist education that is now available to them under the auspices of the Lothian regional council. They are understandably concerned that they will have access to that kind of specialist education only if East Lothian goes to Edinburgh as a result of a sort of second-hand contractual arrangement between different local authorities.

Then there is the small matter of all the people who depend heavily on concessionary travel and the excellent service that makes it possible for my constituents in the Lammermuir hills and around the coast of East Lothian to travel throughout the region, to visit relations, to go shopping and to go to hospitals with the benefit of a proper, comprehensive, concessionary travel system. I fear that that system will not be available to them under the kind of fragmented local authority system that the Government are proposing.

I am interested to see the list of sponsoring Ministers on the face of the Bill. The Chief Secretary of the Treasury is one of the names printed. I saw that he paid a fleeting visit to the Chamber during the debate. It must be a "back to basics" Bill if he is supporting it. He is joined by the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for the Environment and, mysteriously, for Wales, and the hon. Members for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). There is no guilt by association for the other Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who has managed to be

missed off the list of guilty people sponsoring the Bill. I wonder whether the Chief Secretary realises what he is letting the Treasury in for by endorsing the Bill.

I agree with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said. He referred to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and to the work undertaken by the director of finance of east Lothian district council, John Lindsay, who knows much about local government finance. On behalf of CIPFA, he and his colleagues have carefully considered the Bill.

It is very difficult to see how the Government and Touche Ross make the figures add up. They do not make sense. I shall give one or two examples that have been drawn to our attention, on which we have not received proper replies from Ministers.

What about the projected costs of planning and economic development? Touche Ross has calculated that savings ranging from £58·4 million at the 51 unit level to £75·1 million at the 15 unit level—so we can assume that it is thinking of savings of about £60 million—could be made from planning and economic development.

As the Scottish Office calculation of grant-aided expenditure for development in 1992-93 for regions and districts was £68·3 million net—the source for that figure is the Scottish Office publication on grant-aided expenditure for 1992-93—it will be interesting to know how savings of as much as £75 million will be made from a combined regional and district service that costs £68 million. Something does not add up, and it has not been explained. It is an example of how the Touche Ross analysis has been shown to be seriously flawed.

The big issue has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow—transitional costs. Every time any Government service is reorganised, it costs more than anybody anticipated. Extra costs are always involved in changing staff, structures, corporate identities, maps and everything else. I see that the cost of winding up existing authorities has been estimated by Touche Ross to be £88 million over five years before inflation, whereas experience elsewhere shows that expenditure on this item could amount to 3·7 per cent. of current expenditure—£275 million. That is crucial to any sensible cost analysis of this upheaval. We have not had proper answers to those questions.

I am baffled how the Chief Secretary to the Treasury can associate his name with the Bill, because anybody in the Treasury must be able to take a pretty jaded look at the figures produced by Touche Ross, the figures being postulated by the Scottish Office and the wildly optimistic ideas proposed by the Under-Secretary to justify this dotty gerrymandering operation.

Of course the transition will be very costly, and in many cases it will give rise to more expensive, less efficient services. Nowhere could that be clearer than in the local authority that the Government propose to serve my constituents. They are proposing to split East Lothian in two and to float off one bit that happens to have a majority of Tory councillors and add it to part of the Borders region, Berwickshire, which has a few Tory councillors, in the hope that they will produce between them a Tory-controlled local authority. It is pretty blatant. There is no other reason for the proposal.

In order to carve out that bizarre boundary straddling the Lammermuir hills, with only one all-weather road linking the two parts of that proposed local authority, the Government suggest a local authority that will comprise a population of 75,000 souls. That would be the smallest mainland local authority in Britain. It would be an all-purpose local authority, running the whole range of services, including social services and education. It would have a sparse population in a large area that is naturally divided by a range of hills. It would have a very small tax and population base. Of course the proposal will be expensive.

If the Government pursue that demented idea, my constituents will be saddled with an extremely expensive range of local authority services. They will be paying very high council tax bills, and they will probably receive poorer quality services.

The Treasury will have to pay more, and that means that the taxpayer will have to pay more, as a result of the costs of transition. There will also be a range of other costs. At the end of the day, our constituents will be paying higher local authority taxes for worse services. I do not know how the Government have the brass neck to introduce this kind of legislation to the House, but I suppose that nothing should surprise us nowadays.

11.15 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I commend the considered, thoughtful and quite excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Conservative Members should take on board his point about the breadth of opposition in Scotland to the measure. The Bill is not simply opposed by political parties on the Opposition Benches. It is not just opposed by local authorities in Scotland. Opposition to the Bill is much wider.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow referred to Mr. Sandy Watson, the chairman of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland. I met Mr. Watson and Mr. Peter Bates, the chairman of the Association of Directors of Social Work. They made exactly the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow made earlier. They said that voluntary organisations, parents' bodies, the Churches and all those who benefit from local services in Scotland are 100 per cent. opposed to the Bill. They will not understand why Conservative Members chose to vote down an opportunity for them to have a say in the Committee stage of the Bill when they voted against committal to a Special Standing Committee.

Conservative Members must accept that, because they have a majority in the Chamber and can railroad through whatever legislation they choose, in the end that is bound to rebound against them if they continue to ignore the democratic opinion of those who send us to this House in the first place. That is particularly apposite in this debate.

We must remember that the party in government won only 25 per cent. of the vote in Scottish constituencies at the last general election. The results of an opinion poll will appear in the Scottish press tomorrow which will show that the current standing of the Conservative party in Scotland is just 15 per cent. Even those who supported the Government at the last election are turning away from them because of measures like this which the Government are railroading through the House.

By ignoring that public opinion, the Government simply undermine public confidence in institutions like Parliament. In the long run, they will undermine the longevity of this Parliament by taking such a cavalier attitude to those we represent.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in the highlands, the previous Conservative party parliamentary candidate in my constituency leads the campaign against the Government's proposals in Caithness? Is he also aware that another former Conservative candidate, Mr. John Young, has also joined that campaign and rejects the Government's proposals most vociferously? Not only are non-party people opposed to the measure: Conservatives are also against it.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point. The last education committee of Tayside council to consider the measure passed a resolution unanimously, with the support of Conservative councillors, which expressed concern about the implications of the measure and its impact on education, particularly on Catholic education.

If the Minister and his Back-Bench colleagues believe that they can continue to ignore the opinions of just about everybody in Scotland and do as they like to the Scottish people and even to their own supporters in the Conservative party, they are in for a very rude awakening when the measure eventually winds its way from the House and into the real world outside.

I should like to refer in some detail to some financial aspects of the Bill—in particular, staff who are likely to be rendered surplus to requirements as a result of the move to single-tier authorities. I am speaking about headquarters staff in regional councils—for example, staff in administration, finance, property and planning departments People who work in such departments in regional councils are likely to be declared surplus to requirements as a result of the Bill.

I will give way to the Minister on this point. If staff are rendered surplus, made redundant or given early retirement as a result of the Bill, will the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 apply? If they take employment with authorities, will the same wages and conditions of employment apply in their new jobs? That is an important issue, and it is worrying people who work for local authorities, but we have had no guidance from the Government.

Equally, we must also consider severance payments to staff who are declared surplus. Upon privatisation, there were generous severance terms for people who worked for the gas industry, the Thames water authority, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the South of Scotland electricity board, and, in the Post Office, telecommunications. Will similar severance schemes be available to local authority staff who have to quit their jobs as a result of the Bill?

If the Minister thinks that he is likely to achieve savings to the public purse from the sale of regional council property which is no longer required by the succeeding authorities, he should consider the situation in Dundee at the moment, and Tayside house in particular. The freehold of that building belongs to Tayside regional council, but the condition of the building is such that it requires significant expenditure to bring it up to a proper standard. As the Minister knows, the market for office accommodation in Dundee is very slack indeed, and the likelihood that the local authority will be able to make any saving from the sale of Tayside house is virtually non-existent.

If the Minister has worked into his calculations that he is going to make savings from the sale of buildings such as Tayside house, he had better think again. He will know from his friends elsewhere in the Government that Customs house in Dundee, which the Government spent more than £1 million to refurbish with a view to selling it, remains on the market. Nobody wants it. Given that track record, the property savings which the Government claim to arise from the Bill are almost certain not to occur.

The motion makes available to the Secretary of State money with which to finance borrowings by water and sewerage authorities. The point of the argument on Second Reading was that the Government would not privatise Scottish water companies. Of course, they had to say that, given the massive opposition to privatisation in Scotland: fewer than 1 per cent. of those who responded to the consultation process supported privatisation.

We now have three quangos set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland. In effect, they will offer the private sector contracts to design, build, operate and control services. The private sector will then be in complete control of water and sewerage operations in Scotland. It will set the prices, and it will make profits from water and sewerage services in Scotland. What we have is privatisation.

The very heart of the Bill is flawed; there is an inaccurate analysis. Perhaps there was a deliberate attempt by the Government to mislead their own supporters and Back-Bench Members, saying that they would not privatise water services when they were doing so but are keeping the fact behind a public sector smokescreen. That flaw runs through the whole Bill.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friends have indicated that they would like to intervene in this short debate, so I shall leave it there.

The Government must take on board the fact that their majority in this House does not give them the democratic right to destroy local government in Scotland. If they proceed with the destruction of local government in Scotland, they will pay the ultimate political price for it.

11.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I shall try to answer as many points as I can in this short debate. Undoubtedly, hon. Members will raise these and similar points in Committee.

Ministers listen to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) with great care. We all appreciate his experience and knowledge in this specific area, and we look forward to his contributions in Committee. The concept of the Chief Secretary not knowing about the costs of the Bill must bring a slightly wry smile to one's face, because the Treasury takes a keen, and right and proper, interest in all areas of public expenditure. I can confirm that the Treasury has been rightly involved in all the calculations of costs.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): We are not saying that the Scottish Office has not told the Chief Secretary the cost of the reform; we are saying that the Government have not told the Chief Secretary the truth about the costs. Indeed, they have not taken on board the real costs of local government reform.

Mr. Stewart: The Government have fully taken on board the real costs of local government reform. Hon.

Members have referred to the Touche Ross report. Not only did we have that report: there were comments on that report, which we have taken fully into account in the figures that have been published. Figures for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 have been announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. They relate to the Touche Ross figures as amended in the light of consultation. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) suggesting that the Government should not have taken into account the comments that were made on the Touche Ross report? Of course we took them into account.

The estimates for a 15-year period are that the costs will be between £128 million and £196 million with annual savings estimated in the range of £22 million to £66 million. It is sensible to put forward a range, because much will depend on the decisions of individual authorities.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked me about the allowance for surplus buildings with regard to a specific building in Dundee. We have been extremely conservative——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 122

Division No. 71] **[11.28 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek

Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Robert C. Hughes.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—
  (i) any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred in consequence of the provisions (other than any provision authorising payments out of the National Loans Fund) of the Act; and
  (ii) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment;

(b) the charging on and issuing out of the Consolidated Fund of sums required by the Secretary of State for fulfilling guarantees given by him for the discharge of any financial obligations in connection with sums borrowed by any water and sewerage authority established by the Act; and

(c) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by the Secretary of State for the purpose of making loans to any water and sewerage authority established by the Act.

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

[Ways and Means]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient—

(a) to authorise the Secretary of State to direct a water and sewerage authority established by the Act to pay him such sums as he may direct, being sums not required for them for the exercise of their functions, nor otherwise payable by them under or by virtue of any provision of the Act;

(b) to authorise the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State, otherwise than in repayment of any loans made by him, in consequence of any provision of the Act; and

(c) to authorise the payment into the National Loans Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State in repayment of loans made by him to any water and sewerage authority established by the Act.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

11.40 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I have not spoken in the debate so far, and certainly I shall not serve on the Standing Committee. That gives me the opportunity to say a few words about the parts of the Bill that deal with water and sewerage, to which the motion refers.

Paragraph (a) authorises the Secretary of State

"to direct a water and sewerage authority"—

hon. Members should remember that there will be only three in the whole of Scotland—

"established by the Act to pay him such sums as he may direct"——

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I object to the hubbub being created by English Tory Members at the Bar of the House. Will you warn them that if they do not leave the Chamber they will be asked to serve on the Standing Committee?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The hon. Gentleman is right: there is quite a noise going on, not only at the Bar of the House but in the rest of the Chamber. I hope that hon. Members will note what has been said.

Mr. Maxton: As I was saying, the Secretary of State is authorised to direct one of those three authorities

"to pay him such sums as he may direct, being sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions".

The Bill will take all water and sewerage powers away from local authorities, many of which have had such powers for a very long time. Glasgow, for instance, has had the water supply to Loch Katrine for well over 100 years. Now the Government are removing all that from Strathclyde region and putting it into the hands of a quango whose members will, presumably, be placemen of the Secretary of State—his Tory friends. Presumably they will be paid substantial salaries. The Government are taking away from the local authorities many assets that are not necessarily directly related to the supply of water or the disposal of sewage.

Much of the land owned by local authorities that will be affected by the water provisions comprises some of the most beautiful countryside in Scotland—certainly in Strathclyde region. Loch Katrine, for example, is a very beautiful part of the country, as anyone who has sailed up it will confirm. I do not know whether the boat still travels up the loch, but it certainly used to.

According to clauses 93 to 95 of the Bill, the boards will have the right to sell off any land that they consider to be surplus, or do not require for their functioning. If that is the case, the Secretary of State can instruct those boards to hand all the money over to him. He is then obliged to add it to the Consolidated Fund, which means that it becomes part of the general money that the Government spend on various items.

The people who will not receive any benefit from any sale are those who have paid their local rates and taxes over the years to purchase and develop the land for the water and sewerage services. If the boards sell off parts of the beautiful Scottish countryside to developers for tourist purposes—perhaps cheap, shoddy hotels will be shoved up, offering all sorts of leisure activities, which the local people do not particularly want—the local authorities will be unable to do anything about it. Even if they tried to refuse planning permission, the developers could appeal to the Secretary of State, who presumably would overrule those local authorities.

Some of the most beautiful countryside in Scotland will be under threat as a result of the Bill. The money gained from any sale of such countryside will not be——

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Here comes an experienced salesman.

Mr. Maxton: Yes. The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) is an expert on selling things.

The land will be sold off, but the people to whom it rightfully belongs, the Scottish people, will not get any benefit, because the money will eventually be added to the Consolidated Fund. That money will then pay for the services of the constituents of those hon. Members who voted for a Bill that will gerrymander local government in Scotland. Because of the terms of the Ways and Means resolution, it will be possible for the Secretary of State to take money from the new boards, arising from the sale of land, and not to use it for the benefit of those who originally paid for that land.

The resolution also states that boards should pay the Secretary of State

"sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions".

I presume that the "exercise of their functions" includes the salaries of board members. Can the Minister tell us what sort of salaries will be paid to the chairmen of the new boards? What will each board member receive?

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Perhaps £80,000.

Mr. Maxton: That is a large amount. Presumably the chairmanship of a board will be a part-time job. It will go to some business man or lawyer friend of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. The Bill should be known as the Stewart Memorial Bill, as it was designed to save his seat. He will appoint his friends as chairmen of the new boards and their salaries will have to come out of the money put aside for the "exercise of their functions". A local authority committee on water and sewerage would not pay itself the sort of salaries that the new boards will command.

What is most dangerous about the resolution is the way in which it gives the Secretary of State power to push public opinion towards accepting, or at least being prepared to consider the eventual privatisation of water. It gives him the power to take such sums "as he may direct". He may therefore say to the boards, "You are to pay me X amount." That will mean that the charges set by a board just to maintain its services to its customers and to pay off

[Mr. Maxton]

its debt will be forced up. The Government are hoping that, as the boards have to undertake investment to bring water and sewage up to EC standards, and as the Government have the power to force charges up as high as they want, Scottish people will see their water charges rise and, with a little propaganda, will eventually say, "Well, we don't like it, but if water were in private hands it might be cheaper because the companies could sell things off and operate differently from the boards."

The most dangerous part of this Ways and Means resolution is the power that it gives the Secretary of State to take whatever money he wants from the new boards, forcing the boards to put up prices and, as a result, pushing people into accepting privatisation. I do not believe that the Scottish people will ever want water and sewerage to be privatised, as they made clear when the Government issued their consultation document on the matter. They made it so clear that the Government had to back down. Whatever some people may say, I believe that the Government were intent on privatising water and sewerage until they felt the weight of opinion not just of the Labour, Scottish National and Liberal Democrat parties but of their own supporters in Scotland. They then had to back down.

Instead, the Government decided on a halfway house. This Ways and Means resolution is part of that halfway house and I shall vote against it when the time comes tonight.

11.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): This resolution is yet another increase in central Government powers and contradicts yet again the Government's claims that it is a decentralisation measure. Through the resolution, the Secretary of State is taking more control to himself.

The resolution authorises

"the Secretary of State to direct a water and sewerage authority established by the Act to pay him such sums as he may direct".

That is compulsion. The water board will have no control or say over its finances, which proves yet again that those quangos are simply the creatures of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The resolution also provides for the authorisation of

"payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State . . . in consequence of any provision of the Act".

Once again, the Treasury grabs the cash and the only cash that it can grab comes from consumers of water services in Scotland. Everyone must use those monopoly services on a daily basis.

In future, the benefit of any payments for water services will be snaffled by the Treasury and surpluses from water services will benefit not the consumer but the Government. That is neither just nor sensible, but it is now being built into the Bill. It fits in well with the pattern which the Government have introduced into Scotland. For example, billions of pounds of North sea oil revenue have bypassed Scotland and gone straight to the Treasury, and Scotland has had little benefit.

It adds insult to injury if the Treasury now wants any surpluses produced by water services to bypass Scotland. They will be swallowed up by the Treasury instead of being ploughed back into improvements for consumers who created that money in the first place. Water and sewerage services are essential, monopoly services. People have no option but to use water services and therefore no option but to contribute to any surpluses which the Treasury would take to itself.

England and Wales received billions of pounds in the form of a green dowry but, apparently, that will not happen in Scotland. The Government would rather use Scottish public money to further their ideological objectives than to clean up Scottish water. National Audit Office figures show that when the Government privatised water services south of the border all the national loans fund debt incurred by the water industry, which totalled about £5,028 million, was written off.

In addition, with great munificence, the Government authorised an additional cash injection in English and Welsh water of £1,499 million in December 1989. Overall, the green dowry that the Government quickly gave for the privatisation of water services in England and Wales amounted to some £6,527 million. I notice that the Secretary of State has been quick to avoid answering the question whether there will be any such debt write-off in Scotland.

In England and Wales, additional water privatisation costs of £131 million were incurred by the Department of the Environment. They included the costs of underwriting, customer share incentives and consultancy fees, and they were paid by the Government without a second thought. An additional £240 million was incurred in financing water privatisation, but it was excluded from the Department of the Environment's costs. It involved the flotation and privatisation costs of the Water Services Association and the water authorities, which came to £166 million, and——

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am following closely what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but is it relevant to the ways and means resolution? He is talking about water privatisation in England. We are debating a narrow resolution. Surely the hon. Gentleman's speech should relate to Scotland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was listening carefully to what the hon. Gentleman was saying. If I thought that he was out of order, I would have ruled accordingly.

Mr. Welsh: I welcome the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), who represents an English constituency. This is the first time he has shown his face in the Chamber throughout the debate. He has voted against Scottish wishes and interests without having heard the debate, which is ludicrous. His presence enables me to make a point: hon. Members who, like him, have not received one vote or any mandate in Scotland will serve on the Committee and force through a measure against the wishes of the Scottish people. I welcome the hon. Gentleman if he wants merely to listen to the debate.

The fact that the Government paid the sums that I have described as a green dowry in England and Wales but are not considering the debt burden on the Scottish water boards is relevant to the resolution. I remind the hon. Gentleman of more, although smaller, amounts: £166 million was paid to the Water Services Association; £10 million was spent on preparing legislation and establishing the new regulatory system in England and Wales; and restructuring costs amounted to £64 million.

About £7,000 million of public money was used by the Government to sweeten water privatisation in England, but

what is happening in Scotland? Silence. Are we to have a similar debt write-off? Will all, some or none of the debt in Scotland to be written off? I remind the Minister that £700 million of Scottish taxpayers' money was used by the Government to sweeten privatisation in England. Similar amounts should be made available to write off the water boards' debts in Scotland. It would make a difference by helping service provision and freeing cash to improve water quality, which is essential.

To judge from the silence of Ministers, however, it appears that there will be no green dowry for the Scottish water boards and no capital debt write-off. I would that it were otherwise, and I should be happy to let the Minister intervene to tell me that it is otherwise. I have put the same question to the Secretary of State time after time but I met only silence. The Government were happy to hand out public money for private purposes in England, but the Secretary of State will not say whether they will give a similar deal for the publicly controlled Scottish water boards. Is it Government policy to use public money for private profit and private purposes only in England and Wales?

Greater powers and more centralisation to the Secretary of State are contained in the resolution, as well as much unfairness to those who will have to contribute to any surplus that is produced by the water boards because water is a monopoly service. Any surplus made by the boards should be used for service improvement—for improving the infrastructure, for investment and for lowering prices to Scottish water consumers. That is what I want. What customers in Scotland pay in, because they have no option, should be returned to them in the form of services or improved infrastructure. I do not see that in the resolution. I see greater centralisation and the Government taking even greater powers, instead of a fairer deal for Scottish water consumers and water services.

11.59 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): First, I must admit to having a deep suspicion of the Government and would like to enquire of them the purpose of paragraph (b), which does not mention water and sewerage authorities but says "any sums" and

"any provision of the Act".

To me, as I have a suspicious mind, that might read like a catch-all asset-stripping provision. The fact that it does not refer to water and sewerage means that any money realised from anything that is sold off can be put in to the Consolidated Fund and, in fact, returned to the Treasury.

If that is the case and paragraph (b) does not refer only to the water and sewerage authorities, as the Government see it—they do not believe in the sort of authorities that the Labour party and other parties would support, but in what they call minimalist authorities—there are so many assets to strip among everything that local authorities hold. Local authorities' buildings, which they have said will become surplus, could be sold off and the proceeds returned not to the local authority but to the Consolidated Fund, via this part of the resolution.

If the Government wish to put up for sale profit-making services, they could put that revenue into the Consolidated Fund. Even the houses held by housing authorities could be sold because the Government have a stated ambition to increase the number of private houses in Scotland. If paragraph (b) does not refer only to water and sewerage, they could also force the sale of authorities' housing assets and give that money back to the Treasury.

Hon. Members may say that that is ridiculous and that the Government would not do that. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, will remember Hamilton college of education, which was sold cheap to form a private school. That is what the Conservatives want—they want the country to be run by the private sector, regardless of how much it costs the individual in additional charges. They are chasing an ideology that could lead to tremendous asset stripping.

We heard of the minimalist council of south Ayrshire and I know of the ambitions of the Conservative Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Minister of State, Department of Employment, for his authority. He wants a minimalist council that will sell off its assets. If they have only a few meetings a year to hand out contracts, they will not require buildings or be responsible for running any services and they can get rid of all the assets.

I warn the Government that, if that is the case, unless clause 23 merely pays lip service to devolution of power and to decentralisation of delivery of service, it will require a fantastic input of assets. I know that the clause is written in such a way that the Secretary of State can decide what is and what is not devolution. It may mean that there would be a token gesture. If paragraph (b) can be interpreted as an asset-stripping provision—I hope that it would not be—they will have nothing left to have their devolved services delivered from.

I should like the Minister to make it clear whether paragraph (b) refers only to water and sewerage authorities or whether it is a catch-all provision which would allow sums for any sale of any assets from any of the new local authorities to be returned to the Secretary of State and through him to the Consolidated Fund.

If it concerns only water and sewerage authorities, it is important to re-read the words of paragraph (a), which states that those authorities will pay the Secretary of State any

"such sums as he may direct".

I ask hon. Members to think of a parallel to what may be happening with the water and sewerage authorities, which was so eruditely described by other hon. Members. For example, the Post Office is controlled by very much the same sort of provision. The Treasury can instruct that any sums can be returned to it, as it desires. Although the Post Office is a profit-making organisation—I think that it donated £60 million to the Treasury last year—it has been instructed under the new financial controls to return £160 million to the Treasury next year. The result was a penny on the postage stamp rate—to pay for a direction by the Treasury to return moneys to the Treasury.

This clause appears to be similar—a clause whereby the Government could instruct that the water charges would be increased, not for the purpose of investment in improved water, nor for the purpose of investment in water infrastructure, nor for the purpose of better sewerage, cleansing and dealing with effluent from industry or the domestic user, but merely to give money back to the Consolidated Fund to aid the Treasury's attempt to gather in moneys to keep the deficit down.

One might say that it might not make that much money, but £160 million is all that the Government are demanding from the Post Office. If they think that it is worth putting

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

a penny on the postage stamp to obtain money for the Treasury, it would not be beyond the bounds of imagination for the Government to force up water charges by simply telling the water boards that they want more money to be returned to the Consolidated Fund and to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State said earlier that if people faced the prospect of doubled charges for their water to pay for investment in the infrastructure required in Scotland they would not be so happy with water charges. That is not the case. If people knew that the doubled charges would go to the democratically controlled local authority to improve water and sewerage services, they would be happy to pay a doubled charge.

Under the Bill, however, they could be forced to pay doubled charges merely for the purpose of returning money to the Scottish Office—money which would then, presumably, go into the Consolidated Fund or be taken as part of the income to the Scottish Office so that the direct grant from the Treasury for Scottish services would be reduced. The clause is laden with dangers for water consumers, because it can mean a burden of increased cost that is not reflected in the improvements that we know to be necessary in the water and sewerage infrastructure of Scotland.

I wish the Secretary of State to give us some assurances that he will not use the clause for that purpose. His silence will be taken as an admission that he is already thinking along those lines—that it will be a money cow which can be milked because when he has the boards they can be made to pay him sums of money and the cost will then be passed on the consumers with no real benefit to them. We need an explanation of what seems to be a tiny piece of the legislation but is laden with dangers for the consumer and for democracy in Scotland.

12.7 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): There is always a bit of mystery surrounding Ways and Means resolutions, and my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) has extended the mystery surrounding this one by giving us his interpretation of paragraph (b), which takes us beyond the duty being imposed concerning the application of funds from water and sewerage authorities. He has read that paragraph by itself and he may be right to do so. He may well be right in suggesting that it creates scope for the application of funds from a range of different functions and services provided by local authorities and gives the Secretary of State even more power to direct local authorities to dispose of assets or to make profits and to syphon off money by those means into the Treasury.

It appears that the main purpose of the resolution is to make provision for the Secretary of State to direct the new water and sewerage authorities to pay to him such sums as he may direct, being sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said earlier, the new water and sewerage authorities will be straightforward creatures of the Secretary of State for Scotland, Clause 64 tells us that the water and sewerage authorities will be composed of between seven and 11 persons who appear to the Secretary of State to have knowledge or experience relevant to the discharge of that authority.

One might like to think that that would mean that a load of plumbers would be nominated by the Secretary of State to be members of the water and sewerage authority. However, let us consider one example of a body appointed by the secretary of State for Scotland, which is chaired by someone whom the Government regard as having the requisite knowledge and experience to discharge that function. The Historic Buildings Council for Scotland is chaired by no less a person than the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who is well known for his interest in water and things liquid in Scotland.

I fear that such authorities will not be accountable to people in Scotland; they will not be primarily interested in providing a quality service to people in Scotland. They will be there, like every other quango nominated by the Scottish Office nowadays, to exercise the political will of the Scottish Office.

That development raises one or two alarming prospects. Under the resolution, the Secretary of State will have the power to direct the bodies that he has nominated to apply their moneys in certain ways. That could, as already suggested, be a softening-up exercise leading in the direction of the privatisation of water and sewerage services.

In that case, if would be perfectly consistent with that ethos for the Secretary of State to direct the nominated bodies to start making a profit, rather than just breaking even, providing a service and balancing the books, and in doing so, providing a quality service to water consumers all over Scotland. He could direct them to start making a profit so that he could take the money out of their trading account and apply it back to the Treasury—another form of indirect taxation on people in Scotland. The Secretary of State should come clean about that and tell us whether that is what he had in mind when he tabled the resolution.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know whether this is a matter for you. I have been carefully studying the monitors which some of us, even with our failing eyesight, can read in the Chamber. I noticed that when my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) was speaking, his name was written in large letters. I have been watching carefully for the name of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and I cannot read it. It is impossible to read because it is in very small letters. Fortunately, I am in the Chamber so I know who is speaking, but those who may not be able to read the monitors outside because of the small letters may not know that my hon. Friend is speaking. Does the matter fall within your remit, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would care to refer the matter to the Broadcasting Committee.

Mr. Home Robertson: My hon. Friend's point of order——

Mr. McAllion: That is why the Chamber is so empty.

Mr. Home Robertson: As my hon. Friend says, that may be why the Chamber is so empty; people do not know that I am speaking. I am tempted to give my hon. Friend the

Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) a long and boring explanation of my long and boring name. The length of my name is the reason why it appears in such small print on the monitors. I must not be diverted from the narrow terms of the resolution.

I have expressed my concern that the Secretary of State may take advantage of the terms of the resolution to direct water and sewerage authorities to seek to make a profit so that he can use them as a vehicle for taxation. I am all the more worried when I look at clause 100, which provides for water metering. Water metering has been experienced in the Isle of Wight and in parts of England. Many water consumers have found themselves in terrible difficulties because of spiralling charges for water and sewerage. it may not be just a break-even exercise. First, the Secretary of State may direct the authorities to make a profit so that they can pay money into the Treasury, which is a matter of great concern.

The second point that worries me, almost as much as the first, is that, as well as trading profits, the water and sewerage authorities will have capital assets in abundance in Scotland. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart said, assets build up over many years as a result of the enterprise, public concern and investment of local authorities. My hon. Friend referred to Loch Katrine. One could list a whole range of lochs and reservoirs and the land surrounding them all over Scotland.

We must consider not only the land surrounding those lochs and reservoirs, but the sporting and recreational rights that go with them. In my constituency, Lothian regional council water and drainage department has a number of reservoirs and lochs for which there are quite good fishing rights and on which people enjoy sailing. It is straightforward for any citizen to pay a reasonable charge for a day's fishing on those reservoirs or to go sailing on them, which makes all kinds of sense as part of the public service and the public assets to which the public have access.

I fear that Ministers may say, "Ah, those lochs and reservoirs have a capital value. We could direct our new nominees on the quangos"—in this case the new East of Scotland water authorities—"to sell off the public assets and to reduce public access to fishing on those lochs and reservoirs." Already, I have had experience of what happens when certain types of developers and private operators become involved in land holdings in different parts of my constituency.

Traditionally, on the boundary of my constituency, people have walked up to the highest point in the Lammermuir hills on open moorland, not bothering anybody. A couple of years ago, somebody from Hampshire I think bought the estate and has instructed the estate staff to begin turning people off the land. I fear that that will also happen on and around the lochs and reservoirs which are currently operated by our local authorities, where people have access to fish, sail or do anything that they want in and around those beautiful areas in the hills and uplands of Scotland.

We can see the fences going up, the gates being closed with signs saying, "keep out, private property", the higher charges for access and sporting rights in those areas and people being denied the right of access to the hills and uplands of Scotland. That would be a scandal, but it would be possible under the terms of the Ways and Means resolution. Clause 95 makes it clear enough:

> "a new water and sewerage authority may dispose of land held by them in any manner, to whomsoever and for whatever purpose they wish.
>
> Except with the consent of the Secretary of State, a new water and sewerage authority shall not dispose of land under subsection (1) above for a consideration of less than the best that could reasonably be expected to be obtained on the open market."

The Secretary of State will direct the authority to go for as much as it can whenever it sells assets. It is all about privatisation and benefits to the highest bidder.

Mr. Maxton: If the local authority wished to purchase some land to put it into a country park or for the enjoyment of the people who live in that area, it would have great difficulty in finding the price to pay for land. However, if a private builder wished to build bungalows on the site of Loch Katrine, presumably because he would be able to pay the market price, he would be able to do it.

Mr. Home Robertson: That would be the ultimate irony—public assets in the hills created as a direct result of the foresight, planning and investment of local authorities and their ratepayers, poll tax payers and council tax payers over the years, being taken out of the local authority sector and handed to central Government quangos as laid out in the Bill and then sold to the highest bidder.

Local authorities may well find themselves trying to buy back their own property to protect the rights of their citizens to have access to the hills and to go fishing on their lochs and reservoirs.

This is far from a technical resolution. What is being provided for is part and parcel of the thrust of the legislation, and it stinks to high heaven. That is why it is right for us to debate it and to vote against it.

12.19 am

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): This must be an important debate. At 12.20 am, it has attracted more Conservative Members representing English constituencies than any other stage of the Bill. I am delighted to see them in the Chamber and I look forward to the informed contributions that they are likely to make to a debate which I hope will be prolonged because we are dealing with issues that are central to the people of Scotland. I should not want Parliament to skate over the motion without giving it due consideration.

As a number of Members are present from English constituencies who do not have wide experience of Scottish local government issues, especially of the way in which water and sewerage services are delivered in Scotland, it may be as well to help them by explaining the process to them. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) does not have much knowledge of these matters either, so for his benefit and that of Tory Members perhaps I should explain that water and sewerage services are delivered by elected local authorities and that the Scottish people want them to continue to be so.

When the Government put out for consultation the proposal that they should take water and sewerage services from local authorities and give them to quangos, area water boards or privatise them, they received a massive response. I understand that no fewer than 4,733 submissions were received from individuals and organisations in Scotland.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): My hon. Friend is offering an excellent explanation to English Members. He said that the Scottish people want water to continue to be provided by local water authorities, but it is not good

[Mr. Jimmy Hood]

enough to say that the Scottish people want it. He should explain what percentage of the Scottish people want it, because opinion polls showed that more than 90 per cent. of Scottish people opposed the Government's proposals.

Mr. McAllion: I was about to point out to Conservative Members the seriousness of supporting a proposal that is overwhelmingly opposed by the people of Scotland, including Conservative supporters who have no time whatsoever for the changes that are being pushed through the House.

Of those 4,733 submissions, 4,057 came from private individuals and only 676 from organisations. Of all those responses, only five supported the change from local authorities to privatised water boards, of which four were from companies interested in taking over water and sewerage services in Scotland. Another submission came from the economic affairs committee of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association. That can hardly be said to have democratic support in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) is right. The most recent opinion poll showed that 95 per cent. of the Scottish people oppose the Bill's proposals for water and sewerage services. Indeed, so unpopular is the Bill making the Conservative party in Scotland that it is beginning to become less popular among Scottish people than Michael and Kevin Kelly are among Celtic supporters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is beginning to stray a little wide. He must stick to the subject that is before us.

Mr. McAllion: Michael and Kevin Kelly can be blamed for many things, but not for the privatisation of water and sewerage services in Scotland.

Under paragraph (a) of the Ways and Means motion, the Secretary of State will be given the power

"to direct a water and sewerage authority. . .to pay him such sums as he may direct, being sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions".

I should be interested to hear from the Minister what sums will accrue to the new water and sewerage authorities which they do not require for the exercise of their functions.

The new water authorities are to be area water boards and public boards appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland. It will be their function to deliver water and sewerage services. However, they will not carry out those functions themselves. In the main, they will appoint private sector agents to deliver the services. Those agents will design, build and operate the water treatment plants that are necessary to provide those services.

As I understand it, there will be a contract between the area water board and the private sector agent which will pay the private sector agents for carrying out the work on behalf of the area board. The cost of that contract will be met by the levy of a water rate that will be paid by the consumers of water and sewerage services in Scotland.

The consumers—the Scottish people—will be asked to pay for a service delivered to them by private sector organisations over which they have absolutely no democratic control. They will not control the appointment of the private sector bodies that will deliver the services. Similarly, they will not control the appointments to the water boards that will appoint the private sector companies to deliver the services.

It is clear that paragraph (a) is deeply undemocratic in the way in which it delivers water and sewerage services in Scotland. Those who vote for the motion had better keep that in mind.

The water rate that will be levied to pay for the contracts and to pay for the services will not be collected by the private sector agents. It will not even be collected by the area water boards. The rate will be collected by the new single-tier councils. I assume that the area boards will authorise the councils to collect only as much money as is required to pay for the contracts that have been agreed with the private sector agents.

I do not assume that the area boards will be allowed to instruct the single-tier councils to collect more than is required to pay for the water and sewerage services. If they could be instructed to collect more, the area boards could create a surplus for themselves by charging people too much for those services. That would be a form of taxation.

If the Secretary of State is saying that, if he came across an area board collecting more than the sum required to pay for the services being delivered, he would instruct the area board to return that surplus to the consumers who had paid for the services, that would be one thing, but that is not what the Secretary of State is saying in paragraph (a). He is saying that, if he comes across an area board that is charging too much for the services that it is delivering, he will simply require that board to return the surplus money to him. As I understand it, that money will go into the Consolidated Fund.

In other words, according to the motion, the Secretary of State has the opportunity to impose a further form of taxation on the Scottish people by allowing his appointees on area boards to charge more than they need for the services and to hand the surplus to the Secretary of State for his own purposes.

The other possibility is that the contracts agreed between the area boards and their private sector agents might be too generous. That might allow the private sector agents to make too generous profits from the operation of the contract by charging too much for the services provided. If the Secretary of State came across private sector agents making too much profit from the contracts agreed with the area boards, I would expect him in all decency and morality to instruct the area boards and private sector agents to return the surplus to the people who are paying the water rate. Of course, that is not what he says. He says that he wants any surplus for himself. He wants it to go back into the Consolidated Fund—yet another form of taxation.

More likely, the Secretary of State will ignore the fact that private sector companies and area boards are ripping off water consumers in Scotland and will let them get on with it. The only people who support the Tory party in Scotland are the type of people who would rip off the Scottish people and charge them too much for services.

Another problem arises. Ever since the poll tax was introduced in Scotland, a tradition of non-payment has arisen. Even the council tax, which has met much less resistance in Scotland than the poll tax did, still suffers from the problem that people are getting out of the habit of paying their bills. There is resistance to paying bills.

What will happen when an area board employs a private sector deliverer to provide water services in its area, when

there is a levy to pay for that service, when the single-tier local council is collecting that water rate, when there is non-payment and a consequent shortfall in the money going to that responsible area board and it does not receive the money to pay to the private sector agent to deliver services? Is that why we have paragraph (b)? It states:

"to authorise the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State, otherwise than in repayment of any loans made by him, in consequence of any provision of the Act; and"

Is the purpose of the Consolidated Fund to make up the shortfall to the area boards so that they can pay the private sector agents, as agreed in their contracts? If that is the case, it is a convoluted and unnecessary way of organising the delivery of water and sewerage services in Scotland. Surely it would be much easier to let local authorities carry on delivering those services in the efficient and economical way that they have done throughout the existence of regional councils since 1975.

Nobody has complained that water and sewerage services were not good enough, that they were not being delivered properly, or that they cost too much—quite the opposite. People in Scotland understand that water and sewerage costs in our country are far cheaper than they are in England and Wales because they have not been privatised. If they were privatised, the immediate effect would be to push up the cost of water and sewerage services.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am following my hon. Friend's argument very carefully, but I am rather worried. He has said that some people have difficulty paying their bills. He says that the motion could bring about a situation in which we could have artificially high charges for water. Does my hon. Friend foresee the possibility that the government might introduce consequential legislation which would provide for the cutting of domestic water supplies in Scotland, which would be a horrifying prospect?

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend raises an important issue which, at least to my knowledge, has not been touched upon this evening. There have been repeated statements by the Secretary of State for Scotland that he does not intend to change the law in Scotland on the illegality of disconnecting domestic users from water and sewerage supplies. I am sure that he does not propose to do that.

However, if the situation that I am describing arises in Scotland and if the cost of water and sewerage services is so high that some consumers cannot afford to pay and, as a result, do not pay, and the single-tier authority collecting the rates cannot collect the rates from those individuals and a shortfall then accrues to the water board and it cannot pay for the contract that it has taken out with the private sector, someone has to pay. Either the general taxpayer will pay out of the Consolidated Fund, as outlined in the motion, or the Secretary of State will change the law in Scotland and allow the disconnection of domestic consumers from the water and sewerage supply, as is allowed in England and Wales.

The Government continually tell us that this is a unitary Parliament which presides over a unitary state and that what happens in one part of the country happens in any other part of the country. They do not like to carry that argument too far when it comes to water disconnections because it is too embarrassing for them. However, it will come to that if they are faced with a level of resistance which damages the ability of water boards and private sector agents to deliver the sewerage service.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I offer the hon. Gentleman a third option and that is to do what is becoming increasingly prevalent in England and Wales —self-disconnection through the introduction of water metering. That seems to be the road down which the Government are moving. In England and Wales, the Government are allowing people to disconnect their own water and sewerage service. That is why it is important to strengthen the provisions in the Bill so that self-disconnection will not be allowed in Scotland.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) pursues that point, I must point out that the terms of the Ways and Means motion are fairly narrow. Although passing reference may be made to other matters, this must not develop into a full-blown debate about disconnections.

Mr. McAllion: That is a fair point to make, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was talking about the reference to the Consolidated Fund in paragraph (b) and asking the Minister to clarify whether any shortfalls that may accrue from non-payment will be met by the Consolidated Fund or, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has suggested, by the introduction of metering. Effectively, that would be the introduction of self-disconnections for Scottish domestic consumers.

Perhaps that is not a matter of grave concern to Tory Members because their constituents are already subjected to such deprivations, but it is a matter of concern for Labour Members because our constituents are protected by Scottish law at present. We want to ensure that that position remains and no move is made by the Government to change the law in that respect.

Mr. Maxton: I come back to the phrase "exercise of their functions" in paragraph (a), to which my hon. Friend referred. I wonder whether that covers the cost to local authorities of collecting water charges. Presumably the collector of the money will have to carry out any disconnections, not the water authority. Labour-controlled local authorities could be forced to disconnect people from their water supply, although they have no control over that supply at all.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. As I understand the motion and the substance of the Bill, collection of water rates will not be one of the functions of the water and sewerage authorities. That function is being allocated to the new single-tier councils, which will have nothing whatever to do with the provision of water and sewerage services.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right—there may well be a level of resistance to paying water rates to the new area boards. But that will not be a problem for area boards because the responsibility for collecting water rates will lie with local authorities. Local authorities will get the blame if they have to pursue non-payers through diligence and through the courts, the sheriff, warrants and so on.

One of the Government's great arguments about the measures contained in the Bill is that they make things clearer and more accountable. We cannot imagine another situation in which it is not clear where accountability lies other than the one referred to by my hon. Friend.

[Mr. McAllion]

My final point relates to paragraph (c):

"to authorise the payment into the National Loans Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State in repayment of loans made by him to any water and sewerage authority".

I should like the Minister to explain what those loans are likely to be. We know that, once the water companies in England and Wales were privatised, they quickly moved away from solely providing water and sewerage services and diversified into other areas of economic activity. They became involved in waste companies and leisure activities.

As my hon. Friends have said, there is a great danger that the land, rivers and lakes associated with water and sewerage authorities will be quickly divested by the new water boards and sold to private sector companies, which can then exploit them for profit by putting up fences and gates, denying access to the public, and increasing charges for fishing, walking and sailing on the lochs. That is a serious issue which the Minister must explain to the House before the resolution is passed.

The measure has met almost complete opposition from the people of Scotland. It will have a deleterious effect on the way in which people pay for their water and sewerage services. Indeed, costs will spiral upwards until they match those in England and Wales. Disconnections will occur and metering will be imposed on people against their will.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): My hon. Friend has not mentioned the cost of collection. At the moment, collection is carried out by regional councils, whereas presumably under the new arrangements there will have to be a separate department to deal with the collection of those water and sewerage charges. That will mean that a separate finance department and separate arrangements wil be needed for collection and billing. Does my hon. Friend agree that that will mean a substantial increase in administrative costs?

Mr. McAllion: Very much so. We are not simply dealing with the taking away of water and sewerage services from regional councils where regional councils are left in place. Those regional councils have finance departments and have the means of collecting council tax at the moment. Another part of the Bill relates to the abolition of regional councils and the break-up of finance departments and of the systems for collecting taxes and water rates. Those systems will not be in place in 1995 or in 1996.

The water rates will have to be collected by the new local authorities, many of which may not be in a position even to collect their own council taxes. Those authorities will then be expected to collect water rates on behalf of the area water boards as well. I had a meeting this morning with some officials of Tayside regional council. They said that they cannot see for a number of years any system coming into operation which effectively would collect the council taxes or water rates that are due as a result of the changes proposed in the Bill.

The Government are inflicting upon the Scottish people an exercise in political gerrymandering. The proposals will also bring absolute chaos to the provision of local government services and to the collection of the costs of those services. The Government had better understand that, before they progress with the Bill. Irrespective of the political implications of the Bill, the sheer practical chaos which will be caused by the attempt to make the Bill work will make the poll tax look simple indeed. The lesson has not been learnt.

The Government got themselves badly burned over the poll tax and I thought that, having done that, they would never return to any madcap scheme such as is tied up in the Bill. There are few Tories left representing Scottish seats in the House. I predict that, once the measure begins to bite in Scotland, there will be even fewer in the future.

12.43 am

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): We are not seeing tonight the Government's concern to provide water services in Scotland. Instead, this is a fit of pique by the Government because of the response to the proposal to privatise water in Scotland. The Minister himself received an horrific reply from his constituents, with some 15,000 of them saying that they wanted nothing to do with water privatisation. Ninety-five per cent. of the people of Scotland have said that they want nothing to do with it.

The Government now, in a fit of pique, have decided that they will have privatisation by one means or another. The phrase in the resolution which concerns me is

"pay him such sums as he may direct".

That one phrase covers all tonight's debates on the matter. The boards which the Secretary of State will appoint, or the lackeys whom he will appoint to the boards, will then be directed to

"pay him such sums as he may direct".

When will the Secretary of State decide what those sums are to be? Will the decision be taken first, or will he see what the board has left at the end of the financial year and then take that sum? What will come first—the chicken or the egg? Will he tell the boards what amount they must have left over? Will the boards then have to decide how they are to raise that sum and how will they come to that decision?

Will the boards be asked to sell off the very asset that the people in Scotland have warned them not to sell off —the water itself? Will we see the sale of Loch Katrine? Will the boards then be instructed to rent it back to supply water to the people who have paid for it in the first place? Who will make that decision?

The Tories have never provided water out of the goodness of their hearts. One of the first water companies in my consitituency was set up to provide water not for the common people but for bleaching the cloth in Paisley, a textile town. While the company was providing water for bleaching the cloth, people were dying in typhus epidemics because of the dirty water supply. That is a position to which we could well return under the provision that the water boards must pay the Secretary of State such sums as he may direct. Where will that stop? What will be the ceiling of the sum that he may direct and how will it be collected?

Mr. Foulkes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Conservative Government are doing the same thing to the Post Office? It is required to pay such sums to the Secretary of State as he may direct. That is crippling the service and making it more difficult for the Post Office to improve its services. It is perhaps paving the way for the privatisation of the Post Office. In the same way—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you have rightly said, this is a narrow motion. Has not the hon. Gentleman deviated into an irrelevant matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that I can manage without the assistance of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was about to come to a conclusion. I was about to say that the Government were paving the way for privatisation of the Post Office. That may well be what they have in mind for water and sewerage in Scotland.

Mrs. Adams: If the Bill does not open the door to privatisation, it is certainly providing the key to that door. It is providing a means whereby the boards will have to raise such moneys. The boards appointed by the Secretary of State will have no choice but to sell off their assets and will force prices up so much that they will price themselves right out of the business of providing water. All that they will then do is set themselves up as an intermediate body which buys back the water that they have sold off and then provides it to the people who have paid for it in the first place.

We see yet another hidden tax in the Bill—yet another means of the Secretary of State raising funds by the back door. Those funds will go back into the Consolidated Fund so that once more he does not have to give money from that fund to provide services in Scotland. It is a double measure. First, it gives him the key to the back door to water privatisation, which was so overwhelmingly rejected by people in Scotland. Secondly, it allows him to raise yet further funds to go back into his own coffers.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): When my hon. Friend looks at paragraph (c) of the Ways and Means motion, does she find it remarkable that there should be provision in Scotland to repay over a period certain loans, at the whim of the Secretary of State for Scotland, when, at the time of the privatisation of the water industry in England, the majority of the water authorities' outstanding loans were wiped out?

Mrs. Adams: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The loans were wiped out in the main when the water industry was privatised in England. But no provision is made to wipe out loans when the water is provided by boards in Scotland. I presume that we shall see such a provision when we get the back-door water privatisation.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the Bill is a fit of pique. The Secretary of State has determined that he will privatise water in Scotland by one means or another. As he cannot do it directly because of the reaction in Scotland when privatisation was first proposed, he now intends to do it indirectly. He will put such a price on water that the boards will price themselves out and will be forced to sell all their assets. The people to whom they sell the assets will set the price at which the water is sold back.

Mr. Connarty: The Secretary of State said earlier that people would not take kindly to having their water charges doubled if that was to pay for the increase in water and sewerage quality that is required in Scotland. Paragraph (c) requires a responsibility for the repayment of loans; paragraph (a) provides for a completely new charge of any sum that the Secretary of State wishes to charge. It is as if local authorities had taken a power not just to borrow the money to pay for improvements, but to start giving profits to pay for other services. This is an additional water charge for local authorities.

Mrs. Adams: I entirely agree.

The Government refused to accept that people in Scotland did not want to be privatised. They have tried by every means possible to make that come about. I think that they will receive the same response as last time: people will not be fooled. People in Scotland are very concerned about the lack of democracy that we are seeing again here. Not only is the Secretary of State appointing yet another quango; he is deciding that he will milk this quango dry —that he will set the charges. We have no means of knowing what he means by "to pay him such sums"; what sums are we talking about? Will he set them at the beginning of the financial year, or will he wait until the end and see what sums the board has? If the Secretary of State sets the goal first, the price of water services in Scotland may well double.

People in Scotland might not object to that if they received those services—if they were assured of a clean water supply and the renewal of sewerage systems that are currently failing desperately. They would not mind if they knew that all the money was being ploughed back into such services. But, as my hon. Friends have pointed out, metering may result in self-rationing: people will simply turn off their water supplies, because they will know that at the end of the week they will not be able to afford the bill. Where will that stop? Where will the price increases stop, as a means of bringing money back into the coffers —such sums as the Secretary of State may determine?

The Secretary of State must tell us exactly how he will go about this and when he will determine what sums will be involved. Will this happen at the beginning of the boards' financial year? Will the boards be expected to sell off assets to pay

"such sums as he may direct"?

Does that simply mean assets such as the land around the water, or does it mean the lochs themselves? Before the Secretary of State goes any further, he must answer all those questions.

12.54 am

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): According to the well-known saying, "if it isn't broke, don't fix it". Where is the demand for this measure? The truth is that people in Scotland are delighted with water and sewerage services.

I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is present. I listened with interest to his remarks on the money resolution, when he paid tribute to the excellent way in which he had been treated by some of his Scottish Front-Bench colleagues.

According to an opinion poll in tomorrow's Glasgow *Herald*, 15 per cent. of the Scottish people now support the Conservative party. That figure is higher than it should be. The hon. Member for Southend, East may have felt nostalgic about his time as a Conservative Member for Scotland, but I am sure that he cannot remember any other time when Conservative support was as low as 15 per cent. People must ask why.

Mr. McAllion: Was my hon. Friend present when the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said that he was extremely sad that he no longer represented a

[Mr. McAllion]

Scottish constituency? My hon. Friend should tell him that the people of Cathcart are not at all sad that he is not their Member.

Mr. Hood: I was present, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Southend, East had his tongue in his cheek when he said that. These days, there is not much future in being a Conservative in Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend may not be aware that, before the hon. Member for Southend, East became the Member for Cathcart, he was a member of the old Glasgow corporation. One of the great prides of that corporation was its water supply and waterworks, including Loch Katrine. When the hon. Gentleman was a councillor, I am sure that he took pleasure in sailing across Loch Katrine, because councillors had the right to do so. That privilege will no longer be available to the elected members who represent the new future Glasgow authority.

Mr. Hood: If the hon. Member for Southend, East lived in Glasgow, I doubt that he would support the motion. I am sure that the same could be said of a great many other Conservative Members.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I certainly did not take advantage of all the perks on offer to councillors, which were scandalous: that was a thing for Labour councillors to do. *[Interruption.]* May I offer a little advice to the hon. Gentleman? I must tell him and his colleagues, who are moaning and shouting, that if they had a good argument and put it nicely and constructively to the Secretary of State, he would accept their case. I did just that to save King's Park from the indignity of being part of Lanarkshire. Why not try that? Opposition Members should ask the Government nicely, reasonably and sensibly to consider their case. They might be amazed at the results.

Hon. Members: Just like Maastricht.

Mr. Hood: I would be flabbergasted, absolutely amazed or any other adjective that the hon. Gentleman might like to use. Will the Government withdraw this nonsense of the Bill? [HON. MEMBERS: "Please."] After all, 95 per cent. of the Scottish people do not want it. Will they please withdraw it? That suggestion does not seem to work.

The hon. Member for Southend, East made an unfortunate remark about councillors' perks. These days, there are not many of them. In 1974——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the motion will bear the interpretation of councillors' expenses that is put upon it.

Mr. Hood: I thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker.

May I just say that, when a councillor attended a meeting of a water board in 1975, he received a £10 attendance allowance. In 1993, nearly 10 years later, councillors who attended such meetings barely received £10. To suggest that councillors still receive great perks is nonsense. One of the great disasters of local government is the fact that proper remuneration is not offered to those who are supposed to be accountable to the electorate for a council's work.

Mr. Wray: The Secretary of State got it wrong when he said that he would get half the required £52 million from the private sector. To date, he has received £2·5 million. The boards that will be established will do the same as the health boards: they will sell off all their assets and make the ratepayers pay for anything to do with water.

Mr. Hood: We have heard much from the Government about how the private sector will be funded. One has only to think of Crossrail, the channel tunnel and all the other wonderful projects to see that they have not come up with the goods.

Since I came to the House in 1987, a short time ago —it sometimes seems a wee bit longer—these motions have always confused me. They are always ambiguous. We have been asked to pass a measure that gives the Secretary of State a range of powers with which we do not necessarily agree. The measure is open-ended and allows him to do as he likes, without real accountability to the House.

Paragraph (a) says:

"to authorise the Secretary of State to direct a water and sewerage authority established by the Act to pay him such sums as he may direct, being sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions".

What are "such sums", how are they worked out, and who will decide? Will there be an equation for working out that sum? Should we not be told what those sums are before we pass this measure? A few weeks ago, a money resolution mentioned "something like £4·6 million" but we did not know what the "something like" was. What does the term "such sums" mean?

This resolution will create a water tax that will provide revenue for the Government. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) said, it will go into the Treasury's Consolidation Fund, not into investment to provide better services. Almost two years ago, the Government promised us all that they would not increase taxes. They told us that they were about cutting taxes but, as soon as they were re-elected, their policies were all about tax.

I need not remind the House that the Chancellor has admitted that the measures introduced by him and his predecessors were equivalent to a 7p increase in income tax. The Government used to say that the Labour party would spend, spend, spend. This Government tax, tax, tax, but they do not necessarily spend.

Mr. Pike: Does paragraph (a) mean that, if the motion is carried, water authorities in Scotland will be asked to produce not only income for investment and for their revenue expenditure but additional income for the Government's Consolidated Fund? As my hon. Friend says, it is a new source of indirect taxation.

Mr. Hood: That is exactly what I was trying to say.

Mr. Connarty: I wonder whether my hon. Friend is aware that the laws that govern the raising of funds for local authorities contain a clause that says that a local authority shall raise sufficient funds for the provision of its services. In the High Court judgment against Stirling district council when I was leader, the High Court judges said that that should be interpreted to read "only" sufficient funds as are required for the provision of its services.

Does my hon. Friend not find it rather strange that the Bill says that this will have the boards raising more than sufficient funds—it states this clearly—

"required by them for the exercise of their functions"?
Is it not an oddity that this Bill provides for the raising of additional sums other than those required for water and sewerage delivery? It should be explained by the Secretary of State, and possibly even withdrawn, so that they raise only sufficient funds for the purposes for which they are set up.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, which was the second point that I was going to come to.

I am pleased to see the Secretary of State now sitting in his place. The hon. Member for Southend, east said that, if I asked you nicely, you would respond much better to our representations. The hon. Member for Southend, East even suggested that, if I asked you nicely to withdraw this ridiculous proposal, you might do so.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is no point in the hon. Gentleman talking to me nicely—I can do nothing about it.

Mr. Hood: I am sure that if I asked you nicely, Madam Deputy Speaker, you might consider it.

Will the Secretary of State consider withdrawing this ridiculous measure which 95 per cent. of the people of Scotland do not support? *[Interruption.]* That is as nice as I can be. If hon. Members do not think that that is nice, they have not seen me being nasty. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) mentioned English Members, and I am thankful that one or two have arrived since I began to speak.

Much has already been said about Strathclyde. As a Member of Parliament, I have had my moments with many departments within Strathclyde regional council, but one of the most satisfactory departments with which to deal is the water and sewerage department. If one rings it about a problem, one gets an almost instant response. In addition, it provides a considerably cheaper service than any in England and Wales. It provides an excellent service at almost half the cost of that elsewhere, but we are discussing a measure that will destroy it all.

I do not often agree with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmon), but he made a valid point. He said that, at this stage, the Secretary of State was not talking about introducing legislation to cut water supplies, but I am sure that metering will lead to it. It has happened with electricity, so it will undoubtedly happen with water.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the taxation on water and sewerage authorities is set too high by the Government, it is likely that many more people will be disconnected? Such a method of taxation is likely to result in far more disconnections than would conceivably be the case otherwise, and is it not regrettable?

Mr. Hood: It is certainly regrettable and we should be taking action to impress on Ministers, preferably before they have gone too far, the true results of what they are proposing.

The resolution also deals with the area boards. I have already mentioned Strathclyde, and the excellent brief states that a west of Scotland water authority will have between six and 10 members. We are told that taxes or levies, whatever one wishes to call them, will be placed on the boards, and I wondered who would take part in the negotiations.

There must be two sides in a negotiation; one represents one interest and someone else represents the other. If a member of a quango involved in the negotiation is also to decide whether one has a job, it makes the job of negotiating much easier. If the local authority represents the community, one expects it to resist the Secretary of State and argue its corner, but the result would not be the same if the area board was a quango appointed by the Secretary of State. If there is any disagreement, the Secretary of State will do what he did with the health boards—someone else will be appointed.

We have also heard about the consumer's interest, so let us consider the customers council. One would think that the customers council would look after the interests of the consumer and I am pleased to see that our expert on consumer affairs is here to listen to the debate. Who appoints the customers council?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to remind the hon. Member that that does not relate to the motion.

Mr. Hood: I was explaining the contradictions in the negotiations between area boards and section (a) of the ways and means resolution.

Mr. Davidson: May I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the words in paragraph (a):
"being sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions"?
The Secretary of State could decide not only who to appoint to the board, but how much they should be paid. Presumably he would also be able to amend that payment during their time on the board.

By using that part of paragraph (a), presumably he could point out that the amount of money received by members of the board was not really required, and could therefore threaten them with a drastic reduction. That would give him another power: to compel them to agree with his evaluation of how much they should be paying in tax.

Mr. Hood: I think that we are hearing the analogy of the carrot and the stick—patronage or the sack. In fairness, I must come to the Secretary of State's defence for a moment. His history is not one of the stick. It is quite an enjoyable experience being sacked by the Secretary of State or the Scottish Office, because one is well looked after. When I was a miner in the pits, if anyone got sacked they were down the road with a part of the pay that they had earned on that day. If someone is sacked by the Secretary of State, they can get £80,000, a pat on the back and a wee mention in the new year's honours list, so he has a good track record of looking after his cronies.

To return to the resolution, because I have been tempted away, Madam Deputy Speaker, the truth of the matter is that patronage is a worrying feature. The vagueness of the resolution and the powers it seeks are also worrying.

Mr. Connarty: Is there not a more worrying dichotomy in paragraph (a)? If one of the functions that they have to exercise is investing in water and sewerage infrastructure and if the Secretary of State has an instruction, as is the case with other departments—the Post Office, for example —to find funds and such sums as he decides, he will be tempted not to place on the authorities the type of functions that we would wish, such as improvement of and investment in the infrastructure and in sewerage and water systems. That would lead not to more money to pay for those investments but to spare money, which would be returned to the Secretary of State. Those are the sort of grand pressures involved—the choice between investment

[Mr. Connarty]

and paying back money on investments and giving back free money to the Secretary of State for some other purpose set by the Treasury.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. May I refer to the earlier debate about the cost of the reform? Perhaps some people in the Scottish Office think that they will understate the cost of the reform and make up for the deficit and additional costs by putting less hidden tax on the water consumer.

I am trying to come to the close of my remarks—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."] My hon. Friends are so kind.

We are being asked to pass a resolution that gives powers to the Secretary of State—or whoever holds that office—and to faceless people in the area boards, and we are told that the customers council will look after consumers' interests. No Conservative Member has suggested that we will provide a better and cheaper service to the consumer. I hope that the Minister will try to answer those questions, among others, when he has an opportunity to respond to the debate.

Where will the real negotiation take place? Will it take place in Scotland, with the area boards with the Secretary of State? Will it take place in representations from the customers council, appointed by the same people—the same cronies who probably go to the same meetings at night and the same parties? Even worse, will all the decisions be taken in the Treasury, just across the road?

Mr. Davidson: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a danger that many of the decisions will be taken at social functions of the Conservative party? Is he aware that there have been many occasions on which appointees to health boards and the like have been with Ministers at party political functions on behalf of the Conservative party? Does he believe that it is a grave danger to the system of the water industry that might be established, that the appointments would not be above board; that they would be conducted solely within the ranks of a fund-raising event for the Conservative party?

Mr. Hood: That concern is not limited to the Bill. It has been expressed about much legislation that has passed through the House since I have been here. I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you have sat doing your excellent duty and listened to many concerns about that in special ways and means motions.

It is a bit of a cheek, is it not? I heard the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) speaking about 22 members of a council that employs 2,000 people as if it was a large number. The we consider what happens in appointments to boards—to health boards and to that enterprise board, to that local enterprise company—all patronage, all placepeople. When we talk about "back to basics", is it not back to common values, decency, things that one can trust? Is that what "back to basics" means? How can one trust the judgment of a person who is there to so-called represent one on a customers council or a health board, if that person is there by the patronage of a political appointment?

Surely, if we talk about decentralisation, whether it be in the case of health boards or whatever, we should have democratic elections—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—communities represented by people who are accountable to the community. Surely that is the way forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is beginning to take off again and is leaving the order far behind.

Mr. McAllion: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hood: Of course I will.

Mr. McAllion: Perhaps I can bring my hon. Friend back to the motion before the House, and direct him back to schedule 7 to the Bill, which deals with appointments to the new area water boards. We find in schedule 7 that the Secretary of State has been empowered not only to appoint up to 11 members to those area boards, but to pay them such remuneration, such reasonable allowances, such compensation, such pensions, allowance and gratuities, as he and the Treasury think fit. In other words, among the sums which are required to carry out their functions in terms of the order is the function of the Secretary of State paying off his political friends by appointing them to the boards with big fat salaries, big fat remuneration and big fat allowances in return for political loyalty to him and his party.

Mr. Hood: Again my hon. Friend emphasises the vagueness of the measures. We could be talking about hundreds of thousands of pounds. We could be talking about millions of pounds. I could mention the recent fiasco —I do not want to dwell on it—of the Glasgow health board, and talk about the amounts that it has cost there. That was with one person only. There will be 12 people per board, and we do not know how much they will be paid.

I do not think that it is unreasonable for Members of the House who come here to pass legislation to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, or whatever Secretary of State it is in a measure such as this, what sum is involved. What will he pay the people who will be on those boards? What is wrong with asking that?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does that hon. Gentleman accept that, if we privatised water in Scotland, as we have done in England, we should do away with all the political patronage, which I think is quite shocking? Why do we not go the same way as England and go for water privatisation? We should then get rid of all the political patronage.

Mr. Hood: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that one is better burnt than scalded. Are we being asked not to be scalded, but to be burnt? I pay twice as much in water rates for my one-bedroom flat in London as I do for my house in Scotland, where I get better, cleaner water. Yet the hon. Member for Southend, East recommends that we should go down the road of privatisation, despite all the troubles that is has brought to England and Wales. If the people of England and Wales were given the choice of going back to public ownership——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is broadening the debate. Some of the interventions are helping the hon. Gentleman in that respect, but they are not helping the Chair.

Mr. Hood: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Pike: The resolution refers to other money. Could that reference be based on the assumption that the water authorities in Scotland will take action similar to that taken by North West Water? It does more to improve the water quality and to make profits in Kuala Lumpur than it does in the north-west.

Mr. Hood: That is obviously a great concern.

Conservative Members have accepted that the resolution is important. There are more hon. Members discussing the resolution at 1.21 am than there have been since 3.30 pm.

Mr. Home Robertson: English Members may be flocking into the Chamber because of the implications of the resolution in connection with clause 102. It provides for the supply for use outwith Scotland. It provides for the export of publicly owned water from Scotland for sale south of the border in England. Under the resolution, discriminatory charges could be applied on water that is exported south of the border. It could be subject to directions by the Secretary of State. More money could be raised from the exported water, which would be a tax on the people of England. I might think that that was a good idea, but I am not sure that Conservative Members would agree.

Mr. Hood: I am sure that my hon. Friend heard the excellent speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and others. They made the point that English and Welsh Members should beware. They will not escape the consequences of their party in England and Wales if the Government are allowed to get away with their proposals.

Mr. Davidson: Does my hon. Friend accept that there could be yet another Conservative fund-raising event? There was discussion between officials of Scottish Enterprise and officers of the Conservative party about the possibility of piping Scottish water to England and Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) mentioned Kuala Lumpur. Given that the channel tunnel is about to be completed, the scope for the export of Scottish water to the continent is considerable. Levies could be put on that water by the Secretary of State, which could price Scottish water out of the French and German markets. That would be a decision by the Secretary of State which would affect Scottish exports, which all of us would deprecate.

In my constituency, the Scotch whisky bottling industry is an important part of the local community's economy. If the whisky was to be marketed jointly with Scottish water——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Member is given to overlong interventions.

Mr. Hood: I think that my hon. Friend made a good point.

Mr. Ingram: Would my hon. Friend accept some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) and relate them to the gas pipes that currently run all over Europe? If gas were not flowing through those pipes, water could flow in a reverse action. That could take water from Scotland as far as Siberia with some of the extensions that have been made in the gas distribution network, so we could easily find ourselves exporting water to Kuala Lumpur.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I suggest that he does not follow that path but returns more closely to the resolution.

Mr. Hood: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for rescuing me. I was trying to work out gas and water going different ways, and gave up.

Genuine concerns have been expressed about the power that the resolution vests in the Secretary of State. Even as hon. Members have expressed those concerns, the Secretary of State has been either studying the problem or he has nodded off. He is obviously studying the problem. I hope that, before the House rises, we may get a response. I do not think that that is unreasonable. The point that I made earlier about the appointments to the area boards and its ability to seek the power to pay remuneration, pensions and so on should be addressed. We should be given an idea of what those salaries would be.

I can remember, as I said earlier, the Tory members of Parliament who were defeated at the last election. I used to be represented by a Tory Member of Parliament when I lived in Nottingham for a few years. He was the Member for Sherwood, Andy Stewart, a farmer from Strathavon. I bumped into my former Member of Parliament, a congenial chap with whom I have quite a fair relationship. I said, "Hello, Andy, how are you doing?" And Andy said: "I'm busy. I'm the chairman of the agricultural board." I said, "Very good, Andy, well done."

One can bet a pound to a penny that the chairman of the agricultural board is paid a lot more after being kicked out by his constituents in Sherwood than he was when he was their Member of Parliament. In 1987——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not the time to engage in extensive reminiscences. The purpose of the resolution is much narrower than that.

Mr. Hood: I apologise if I transgressed from what I originally wanted to say. However, there is an inference of the powers being sought by the Secretary of State in the resolution, of which I gave an example.

Mr. Gallie: Which was irrelevant.

Mr. Hood: It was not irrelevant. Such information should certainly be supplied to the Standing Committee.

Mr. Davidson: Will my hon. Friend comment on the amounts that may be payable to the officers of the water board in those circumstances and tell us his view on how that compares with the amounts presently paid to elected councillors who presently sit on the boards of water boards?

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I must tell him that, again, this is going wide of the resolution.

Mr. Hood: Much to your disappointment, I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am coming to a close.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does not the hon. Member think, even as a socialist, that, if we sold our water with the same success as we sell our whisky, it would be of great benefit to his constituents and to all the people of Scotland?

Mr. Hood: I was in Athens a few weeks ago with my Select Committee, and was pleased to learn that Greece imports more Scotch whisky than any other country in Europe. I am sure that it would import Scottish water if it was available. Water privatisation and area boards are not necessary for that, when local democracy controls services.

I hope that the power sought in the resolution is given to the Standing Committee, because when the Government

[Mr. Hood]

are proposing measures that do not have the support of 5 or 6 per cent. of people in Scotland, it is important that they give the facts and figures to back up their argument. We have already shown that the Government's assessment of the costs of the Bill is much lower than its true cost. We suspect from our discussions tonight that they may use a water tax to meet the deficit. If the Secretary of State and his Ministers disagree, they should come up with the facts.

Mr. Home Robertson: May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to clause 73(7), which deals with charges schemes? It says:

"A new water and sewerage authority, in making a charges scheme and the Customers Council and the Secretary of State in considering whether to give approval to such a scheme, shall endeavour to ensure that no undue preference is shown, and that there is no undue discrimination."

The charges scheme will include a surcharge—a tax—that is supposedly subject to the consent of the customers council and the Secretary of State for Scotland. Is it not incestuous for the Secretary of State for Scotland to tell the new water authorities to impose a surcharge on water so that he can put money back into the consolidated fund while posing as the safeguard of the public interest in preventing water charges from going too high? Is it not odd that he is trying to have it both ways?

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend makes his point in his usual excellent way. We have heard similar concern tonight, but if the Secretary of State knows the sums that he is seeking to spend, he should let the House know. If he does not know, he is incompetent and should not hold his position. I have my own views and disagreements with the Secretary of State, but I believe that he has the figures, and we should know what they are. If he cannot give them tonight, I am sure that my hon. Friends in the Standing Committee will pursue the matter.

1.33 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): As you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have reminded the House, this is a——

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been waiting since 3.30 pm to make a contribution. Would it be appropriate for me and my hon. Friends the Members for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) and for Falkirk, East (Mr. Canavan) to be called before the Minister replies? Is not that the normal procedure in debates of this kind?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is a matter for the discretion of the Chair. The Minister has been asked a number of questions and he will now have the opportunity to reply.

Mr. Ingram: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not want to come into conflict with you in any way, but I have sat through the whole of this debate. I left the Chamber briefly to get something from the Library as a result of what was said during the debate and I wanted to make a contribution in relation to that. Although I recognise your powers, I feel that there are matters that remain to be raised which the Minister should be required to answer. I would welcome your ruling on that point.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have ruled that it is within the discretion of the Chair. Many hon. Members have intervened and have had an opportunity——

Mr. Canavan: Further to that point of order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is no further point of order on that matter. I have made the point.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot hear all points of order at once.

Mr. Canavan: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can the debate continue after the Minister has spoken?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, it can.

Mr. McAllion: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If the debate is allowed to continue after the Minister has made his contribution, will he be allowed to answer the points made subsequently and to re-enter the debate at that stage?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That can be done only with the leave of the House.

Mr. Foulkes: On a different point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If the Minister is not allowed to reply, would it be possible for the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, in whose name the motion is tabled, to reply to the debate? My hon. Friends the Members for East Kilbride, for Falkirk, West and I have points to make. It would be unacceptable if those points could not be dealt with. It looks as though the Government are trying to railroad through this rather important measure.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Chair to decide who will speak on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Stewart: As you have rightly reminded the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a very limited motion. May I consider first the key criticism of the motion, namely the surrender of surpluses by the water boards to the Treasury. That is a standard form provision to ensure that, where genuine surpluses are generated, they are properly available to the public sector as a whole.

In all cases, of course, the needs of the industry will have the first call on revenue.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: No, I want to explain the motion.

The hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) asked about the meaning of

"such sums as he may direct"

and whether the normal financial regime would include such sums. I assure her that that is not the case. They will not be a key element of a normal financial regime. The provision will deal with a wholly exceptional situation should that arise.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) asked about the possibility of the motion allowing assets owned by local authorities to be taken from them. I assure him that that is not the case. The motion contains no provision that would enable the Secretary of State to require authorities to dispose of assets.

Hon. Members have raised many other points related to the motion to which we will no doubt return as the Bill progresses through the House.

This is a standard motion, there is nothing particularly controversial about it, and I therefore commend it to the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 233, Noes 49.

Division No. 72] **[1.39 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackay and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Otner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew

Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Jim Cunningham.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put accordingly.
The House divided: Ayes 231, Noes 49.

Division No. 73] **[1.50 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Oiner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Jim Cunningham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient—

(a) to authorise the Secretary of State to direct a water and sewerage authority established by the Act to pay him such sums as he may direct, being sums not required by them for the exercise of their functions, nor otherwise payable by them under or by virtue of any provision of the Act;

(b) to authorise the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State, otherwise than in repayment of any loans made by him, in consequence of any provision of the Act; and

(c) to authorise the payment into the National Loans Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State in repayment of loans made by him to any water and sewerage authority established by the Act.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

REHABILITATION SUPPORT

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6625/93, relating to the European Commission's proposed rehabilitation support programme in developing countries; and supports the Government's policy towards the proposed programme.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

FISHING FLEETS (CAPACITIES)

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6888/93, relating to the capacities of fishing fleets in the Community, and 7378/93 and ADD 1, together with the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 19th November, relating to the Transitional Guidance Programme; notes the Court of Auditors' criticism of Community expenditure on decommissioning; notes the measures taken by member states under their guidance programmes; and endorses the Government's view that, in order to conserve fish stocks, a combination of measures designed to regulate fishing effort is required.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ordered,

That Mr. Alan Howarth be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. Anthony Coombs be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Newspaper Ownership

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

2.1 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Let me begin my expressing my appreciation to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage, who will reply to the debate, and my regret that it is not taking place several hours earlier. Unfortunately, the peculiar and arcane procedures of the House must take their course.

I hope that I am pushing an open door tonight. I am well aware of what was said by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage at today's lunch, when he addressed the Media Society on cross-media ownership; I have obtained a transcript of his words. I believe that the door is beginning to open, but I hope that what I say tonight will help to push it a little further ajar, allowing some recognition of the changes that have taken place in the world of the media. I hope that those changes will be reflected in the ownership of the various bodies that have an opportunity to provide the British public with news and entertainment.

I often feel that parliamentary legislation is somewhat similar to fighter aircraft. My hon. Friend may think that a rather peculiar analogy; but building a fighter plane means first having to design it—which means a lot of work on the drawing board—then building the prototype and testing it. Eventually, after a successful test, the designer decides to move into production. As soon as that first fighter comes off the production line, it is out of date, because a more modern version is waiting on the drawing board.

The same could be said of the Broadcasting Act 1990. When it was at the design stage, it was up to date; almost as soon as it became an Act, it was out of date.

I served on the Committee that considered the original Telecommunications Bill of 1983 and the subsequent 1984 Act. That legislation split the Post Office from British Telecommunications and allowed BT to operate in the private sector, along with the newly created cellular network and Mercury. At that time, none of us realised the speed at which the development of information technology would take off. We knew that we would change the scene, but we did not know that everything would alter at such a rate.

When we considered the Broadcasting Bill, none of us knew that satellite television would succeed. Murdoch was brave enough to invest millions of pounds in it every week, but there was hardly a queue forming to take over and compete in the satellite market. Only one other competitor then existed, but it soon fell by the wayside. Murdoch has now succeeded in that market.

At that time, there were few radio stations. One could listen to pirate stations, such as Radio Caroline; now there are more stations than one can shake a stick at. The same can be said of the cable companies. In 1990, the cable franchises were not taken up and only one half-viable franchise was operating in the United Kingdom. Now Britain has been cabled and those companies are taking a bigger share of the market. They are also moving into the voice telephony market. We have witnessed the growth in the development and use of fibre optics. If we allow BT to

[Mr. Richard Page]

use the twisted pair of wires that go into each home to provide further media communication, the market will expand even more.

When the Broadcasting Bill was enacted, the measures contained in it were reasonable. The game has changed, however, and the world has moved on. We must catch up. It is clear that the Government's policy for the media has, for understandable reasons, been unable to keep pace with the technological and cultural changes that have occurred.

It is imperative that state regulation does not harm the health of a vibrant United Kingdom industry. I therefore warmly welcome the broad review that my hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 3 Janaury and the thrust of his speech to the Media Soceity today. Nevertheless, I am concerned that changes must be made sooner rather than later, which is the theme of my speech.

Such is the pace of change in the industry, and the rate of advance of overseas competitors, that we do not have the luxury of a long gestation period. In just three years, the cross-media ownership provisions of the 1990 Act, have, frankly, become antiquated. At that time, it was thought reasonable to leave the ownership of satellites open, while placing restrictions on terrestrial broadcasting. As my right hon. Friend has said, then there was not a long queue of entrants to the satellite market.

The growth of new means of communication has begun to leave terrestrial services almost literally stuck in the mud. It is no longer tenable for their development to be artificially restricted. Newspaper owners are being prevented from making the investment that would bring about the important synergies. My greatest concern is that, although we have now reached a point when there is a broad acknowledgement of the need for our industry to be updated, there is no real sense of urgency.

The conflict in the Gulf provided the American Cable News Network with a golden opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of modern communication media. More recently, 60 ft yachts sailing around the world have been able to relay film from among the icebergs of the southern oceans straight to United Kingdom viewers, using digital compression. When one thinks of the length of time that it took for film to be relayed from the Falklands on to our television screens, some 10 years ago, one appreciates that the new developments are nothing short of miraculous. Those examples show how information technology has brought news and comment to the British people, in a manner undreamt of a few years ago.

Why should international media companies with full access to those technologies be allowed to transmit to the British people, whereas our newspaper industry is restricted to, at most, a 20 per cent. stake in any venture based on cable? Our newspaper industry is the envy of the world. It may not be the apple of the Government's eye at present, but I can think of nowhere else where individuals have such choice. However, for reasons that have no relevance in 1994, those newspapers are prevented from taking a serious part in the communications revolution that is under way.

In most other industries, the United Kingdom is a model of liberalisation to its European partners. It is strange, therefore, that we should choose to be more restrictive when it comes to certain aspects of the communications industry. Having led the way in enabling the provision of cable services, we risk allowing that technological lead to dwindle away by refusing to allow the communications industry to evolve on the established base provided by our newspapers.

It is clear common sense that the benefits of integration between media sectors should not be denied to the industry. But, beyond that, the experience of recent years has shown that technological change and the growth of overseas competitors will wait for neither a lengthy review nor a slow implementation of liberalisation.

In a world where the creation of a global product that can be marketed to the largest possible audience is so important, the creation of media groupings will bring broad competitive advantages. It would be unwise to prevent United Kingdom newspapers from becoming the hubs of modern United Kingdom media groups. If we do not act to allow that desirable development, I am convinced that the decision will be taken for us, with the media industry that provides services to the British public becoming increasingly foreign dominated and owned.

On the other side of the coin, the development of our newspaper industry will be restricted, providing a service in a highly competitive market where there will be an increasing number of desirable alternatives. Restricted circulation will lead to mergers, closures and reduced customer choice—the very opposite of what we wanted to achieve.

The United Kingdom has a media ownership restriction brought on by information technology advances that have bypassed sectoral regulations. My Adjournment debate is entitled "the future ownership of newspapers", because I believe that, if the regulations are not relaxed, the number and spread of newspapers will be reduced. Why cannot television companies hold satellite licences from the Independent Television Commission—only 20 per cent. of a firm's shares? If a British company buys a television station anywhere in the world, why will it be disqualified from classification as a United Kingdom independent television producer? Even Associated Newspapers' 20 per cent. ownership of Westcountry means that it cannot become an independent producer. Why does national commercial radio restrict newspapers and holders of TV franchises to 20 per cent?

From 1 January 1994, the United Kingdom has the most liberal regulatory regime in Europe for foreign investors but the most restrictive for domestic United Kingdom competitors. Changes are needed quickly.

2.14 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on securing the opportunity to raise this most topical and important subject, and on his extremely well-informed and persuasive speech. He has raised some very important questions.

Last month, during the debate on the new ownership order, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage said that the Government would be keeping the ITV company ownership rules under review, and that they would consider the wider issues of cross-media ownership. Earlier this month, my right hon.

Friend announced that the Government would be reviewing the rules that restrict ownership between newspapers, television companies and radio stations.

The increasing convergence of technologies and the recent developments within the international media market suggest that it is now right to re-examine the framework within which United Kingdom media companies are operating. Tonight's debate is therefore most timely.

As my hon. Friend knows, the review has been conducted as a joint exercise by several Government Departments, including the Departments of National Heritage and of Trade and Industry and the Treasury. The two lead Departments are the Departments of National Heritage and of Trade and Industry. Each will take the lead in the aspects of the review which fit most naturally with their wider responsibilities. Other aspects of the review will be carried out jointly.

The Government have invited, and would greatly welcome, contributions to the review from those operating in the various industries likely to be covered by it, and from others with an interest in developments in the media generally. Contributions should be sent by 25 February to Mr. Paul Wright, the head of the broadcasting, film and sport group in the Department of National Heritage.

The Broadcasting Act 1990 was an important step towards deregulating what had hitherto been a highly regulated industry. It was part of the Government's general policy of trying to remove unnecessary burdens on the operation of commercial enterprises. The aim of the Act was to increase diversity, choice and competition in the provision of broadcast services. It also set out to create a new pattern of broadcasting, making it easier to introduce many more new services.

The Act has enabled a huge range of services to be licensed. At one end of the scale, there are the terrestrial television services available throughout the United Kingdom and the new national independent radio services. At the other end, there are local delivery services to bring television and radio services to groups of 1,000 or more homes, via cable or microwave systems, and restricted service licences, which allow local events to be covered by temporary radio services in a limited area.

The main development in the United Kingdom broadcasting market since 1990 has been the growth in the number of satellite and cable services, and the growing audiences for them. The Independent Television Commission has licensed more than 70 such services. There has been heavy investment in new cable distribution systems, and cable companies are now offering telephony as well as programme services to their subscribers.

Meanwhile, the more established media interests, especially the press, are becoming concerned about the limited scope for expansion in their traditional spheres of activity, and now want to take part in the growth of new media services. The present regulations relating to cross-media ownership under the Broadcasting Act 1990 and the subordinate legislation set out to limit the cross-ownership of larger established media interest and to prevent undue concentrations of media ownership in the United Kingdom.

The policy reflected not only the objectives of creative diversity and competition in the provision of services but the importance of having different, independent sources of news, information and entertainment, and thereby maintained freedom of speech and expression. Those principles remain very important. However, we need to consider whether the current regulations are inhibiting the growth of broadcasting and other media activities.

Broadcasting is changing from a national and highly regulated activity to an international market. Services produced in one country can already be broadcast directly to audiences in other countries by cable and satellite. With new digital technologies, many more channels will be available. Five hundred television channels has been suggested as a possible figure by the end of the decade.

To fill those channels will need a lot of material. Some of it will come from well-established sources, which include television and radio programmes, films, videos, music, computer games, home shopping and information of all kinds from a variety of sources, including newspapers and news agencies, gathering information from all over the world.

Many services will provide output aimed at clearly defined audiences. There will be specialist services as well as those for sections of the general public. In the foreseeable future, people should be able to choose from a wide range of information, entertainment and education, to which they will have direct access. They will be able to pay for items as well as for whole services. Traditional broadcasting, with schedules of different types of programmes, may be a small part of that multi-media work.

A great deal has been written during the past few months about the convergence of broadcasting, telecommunications and computer technologies. At this stage, there are uncertainties about which of the many technical options will be taken up by the public and emerge as the market leaders. Successful developments may not be the most technically advanced. They are perhaps more likely to be those that people find easy to use and which evolve most naturally from their present modes of receiving information, entertainment and education. However, we can be confident that some of the services will be interactive and that there will be profound changes in the present methods of distributing material of all types.

Those changes in the methods of distribution are likely to result in changes in the formats of the material to be distributed. There are already some systems which allow people to decide which of several camera angles they wish to select when watching a television replay of a sporting event. Information, which in the past would only have been available in a printed form, is already available on audio and video cassettes and discs. Computerised encyclopedias include not only capabilities for sophisticated searching of the contents, but also complex visual images and sound extracts, for example extracts from speeches or pieces of music.

It is quite possible that we will be able to receive the latest news in our homes when we want it, in a form which combines written text, sound extracts and moving visual images. It could be a combination of a newspaper and magazine, radio or television news bulletin. People will be able to select which sections they wish to receive and in which form.

It is obvious that, if maximum advantage is to be taken of the developing opportunities, it makes sense to think in terms of developing multi-media services, which can use the various means of production, communication and distribution, either separately or together. It that is to be done effectively, it may well make sense to develop partnerships between those now operating in different sectors. Major media organisations are already combining

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

in groups of linked enterprises, with partners in different countries, to co-operate in media production and distribution both nationally and internationally. We want to ensure that there are no unnnecessary restrictions to prevent United Kingdom media organisations from playing a full part in those developments.

Some of the developments have happened much more quickly than we expected a few years ago. That is why the Government believe that it makes sense to take a wider look at the present restrictions on cross-media ownership.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, the rules restricting joint ownership of ITV companies, Channel 5, radio licences and newspapers are contained within schedule 2 of the Broadcasting Act 1990 and in the Broadcasting (Restriction on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991, and the 1993 amendment. The Act and the Order also limit the holdings of newspapers in broadcasting services.

National newspaper proprietors are limited to up to 20 per cent. holdings in Channel 3, Channel 5 or local radio licences, but there are no restrictions on newspaper proprietors holding in non-domestic satellite services or licensable programme services. Local newspaper proprietors may not hold more than 20 per cent. in channel licences, which serve an area that is significantly the same as that served by the newspaper. Nor can the proprietor of a local paper hold more than 20 per cent. of a local radio or cable television licence serving an area that is significantly the same.

Links between local newspapers and local radio stations are in practice often quite strong, but extensive cross-ownership might—I stress that word—increase the risk of local media monopolies in the independent sector. Those are among the issues that we shall want to consider. We shall also wish to review the joint ownership of ITV companies, the ownership provisions on radio stations and ITN and the provisions on newspaper mergers and the Fair Trading Act 1973. Indeed, it should be made clear that the review will take a very broad look at all cross-media issues.

We must keep an eye on wider European developments. In December 1992, the European Commission launched a Green Paper on pluralism and media concentration in the internal market. The Commission set out suggestions for the way forward, from doing nothing to much greater harmonisation of approach throughout the European Union. Plurality of ownership does not necessarily result in increased choice for viewers, listeners and readers. Equally, experience in the United Kingdom during the past 20 years suggests that, even where there is some concentration of ownership and control, there continues to be some variety in the strands of output whether by newspapers or broadcasting channels.

On the other hand, there is understandable concern about too great a dominance by a group or small number of groups of media interests. For example, hon. Members have in the past often expressed anxiety about the position of News International in the United Kingdom, as well as News Corporation worldwide.

Concentration of media interests can restrict access in a number of ways. It can, for example, limit the choices available to those who wish to advertise goods and services. It can increase costs by limiting competition. Concentrations of ownership could also restrict freedom of expression, making it more difficult for those with unpopular views or new ideas to reach the public. The review will have to take full account of those anxieties. We do not underestimate their importance.

The next 10 years are likely to be a period of rapid evolution. We want United Kingdom media industries to expand in the United Kingdom and overseas, but that expansion must not be achieved at the expense of viewers, listeners and readers at home. People in the United Kingdom are used to home-grown, original broadcast programmes and a wide variety of newspapers and magazines. That should continue.

The review will reconsider cross-media ownership issues in the context of fundamental changes that are taking place in the media industries throughout the world. The review will consider the current ownership restrictions for broadcasting and the press, to see whether the current rules do or do not strike a satisfactory balance. The review will take into consideration the need for diversity and choice for audiences, while encouraging the United Kingdom interests to play an active part in national and international markets.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 18 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety Executive (Grant Aid)

1. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed reduction in grant aid to the Health and Safety Executive on charges to industry.

2. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed cut in grant aid to the Health and Safety Executive on charges to industry.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Next year, the grant in aid to the Health and Safety Commission will be increased in cash terms. It is for the HSC to decide how to plan its work within the available resources.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Is not the reality that there will be further charges? I refer specifically to the letter from the director to the staff of December 1993, which said that there would be an increase in charges to industry. Will not that add to the burdens that are placed on business generally? Will not there be cuts in the number of Health and Safety Executive staff, which will mean fewer on-site inspections and less access to the professional support and guidance that is required, leading to a further lowering of standards of health and safety?

Mr. Forsyth: The position is not as the hon. Gentleman suggests. The Health and Safety Commission has decided for the time being not to increase the range of charges that it levies. The hon. Gentleman is right—there may be a reduction in the overall staffing of about 120 posts, but that will be done by natural wastage. As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will know, staffing levels reached a record total in September last year and they are something approaching 50 per cent. higher than they were when the Health and Safety Commission was established by the last Labour Government.

Mr. Mudie: Does the Minister accept that his first answer, in which he said that the grant was being increased in cash terms, is incorrect and that in real terms a cut of many millions of pounds is being made? Does he agree with the director-general of the HSE that proposals are coming through that will increase the charges on businesses? How can he defend the cuts in services and staffing which could have horrifying consequences? Or does he care?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman heard the answer that I gave about charging, which is that this is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission. At present, it is not minded to increase the scope for charging. That is what it has decided. As for the points about safety and the concerns in the workplace, the hon. Gentleman must know that we have had the lowest ever figures for fatal accidents in the workplace. That trend has been sustained through some three years. If the hon. Gentleman is arguing that the Health and Safety Commission has additional duties as a result of the Government's actions, I would accept that that is so. Even compared with the duties of the Health and Safety Commission under Labour when it was established, there has been a substantial increase in staffing. Any reductions in posts will maintain those front-line functions.

Mr. Waterson: Does my hon. Friend agree that once the Government's deregulation Bill has become law, bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive will be able to concentrate on those regulations dealing with health and safety rather than on the unnecessary and pettifogging regulations that are the true causes of unnecessary charges to industry and business?

Mr. Forsyth: I absolutely agree with the sentiments that my hon. Friend expresses about the importance of reducing the burden of unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy. One of the ironies of this debate is that the Labour party, which established the Health and Safety Commission and wrote into the legislation that it was under a duty to review and modernise the health and safety regulations, now distances itself from that very proposition to make cheap political points against the Government.

Mr. John Greenway: Although I appreciate that he may not have personal knowledge of it, will my hon. Friend reassure my constituents in the vicinity of the proposed Kelt UK Ltd. gas-fired electricity generating plant in the vale of Pickering that the changes within the commission will not in any way undermine its ability to regulate that proposed plant, that it will be safe to the public and that there will be no damage to the environment?

Mr. Forsyth: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance as part of a general assurance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have repeatedly given. That is, nothing that the Government do, or that the Health and Safety Commission proposes, will in any way undermine standards of health and safety. On the contrary, by making regulations more understandable and by removing duplication and red tape we shall ensure higher standards of health and safety in the workplace.

Mr. Barron: If the Health and Safety Commission is not going to increase charges, can the Minister assure the House and businesses that no charges will be levied on businesses to pay for the statutory duties of the commission?

Mr. Forsyth: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that that is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission. It is for the commission to make proposals and Ministers have made it clear that we shall be guided by its advice. The hon. Gentleman cannot argue that the

taxpayer should put in more money while at the same time arguing that a large proportion of the Health and Safety Commission's income, which comes from charging, should not be reviewed from time to time. The trouble with Opposition Members is that they are not prepared to embrace change or to take account of changing circumstances.

Employment (East Midlands)

3. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the total of civilian employment in the east midlands has changed in the last 10 years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Between March 1983 and September 1993, the civilian employment total in the east midlands rose by 170,000.

Mr. Garnier: Has my hon. Friend had a chance to study the reports of the Lloyds bank business survey, which deals with both the national position and that in the east midlands and which predicts larger job increases, more profits and wider overseas markets for east midlands businesses? Is she aware that the employment picture in Harborough is better than it was 10 years ago, last year or even last month? Indeed, our unemployment figures are under 2,000.

Miss Widdecombe: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that, quite fortuitously, I have here the survey that he mentioned. It shows, among other things, that about a quarter of the firms in his constituency have taken on more staff. It also confirms that 16 per cent. expect to take on more staff during the next six months. It ends with a sentiment which I think would be generally echoed from the Government Benches:

"This survey clears up any doubts that the UK economic recovery is finally established and under way."

Mr. Jim Marshall: That reply displays an unwarranted sense of complacency. The Minister may not have to hand the figures for my constituency, which is adjacent to that of the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), but may I remind her that it still has an unemployment rate of more than 13 per cent? Until the Government take a more proactive role, unemployment will remain unacceptably high.

Miss Widdecombe: It is abundantly clear that the new year's resolutions taken by Opposition Members did not include one to put cheer, heart and encouragement into their constituents. Perhaps I could carry out that role for the hon. Gentleman and give his constituents some heart and encouragement by saying that in his area there has also been a rise in civilian employment of 78,000 during the period in question. Will he please welcome that?

Mrs. Angela Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware of the recent publication of a pamphlet entitled "Unemployment in Derbyshire", which shows that unemployment was falling fast in the county and that vacancies were rising? Does she agree that that underlines the fact that Britain is moving out of recession? Does it also mean that the prospects are better, not just for those without a job in the county and in my constituency of Erewash, but for school leavers this summer?

Miss Widdecombe: I can confirm what my hon. Friend says. With the exception of the Opposition, there is now no one in the country who does not welcome the fall in unemployment in every region, the increase in vacancies and in civilian employment and the flexibility which means that we can take advantage of inward investment. When the Opposition start cheering those facts, I will believe that they care about British workers.

Part-time Employment, Leeds

6. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female part-time workers in Leeds, West.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt): Up-to-date information is not available, but unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency has decreased by 9 per cent. in the past year and by 21 per cent. since 1986.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that many of my constituents are being offered permanent temporary work, but on a "term-time only" basis? That applies to people who are offered work at the Leeds metropolitan university, in the hospitals, and increasingly in business. It means that people have to sign on and off the dole and be in and out of the benefit office three, four and five times a year to make up their incomes from social security. Is not that employment practice reducing people to casual hired hands reminiscent of the last century, and costing the economy dearly?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is living in the past. First, I greatly regret that the hon. Gentleman did not see fit to welcome the decrease in unemployment in his constituency. Secondly, I ask him to examine the statistics, which show that the percentage of those employed in temporary and casual work has remained between 5 and 6 per cent. in the past 10 years. I agree that it has increased sharply in the rest of Europe. It has trebled in France. In Spain, mainly as a result of the statutory minimum wage and other restrictions, the share of temporary and casual work has increased in the past 10 years from 15·6 per cent. —bearing in mind that it is between 5 and 6 per cent. in this country—to 32 per cent. Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on that?

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest employment figures.

Mr. David Hunt: Employment increased by 124,000 in the six months to September 1993 and the total employed in the civilian work force now exceeds 25 million.

Mr. Parry: The Government's recent crowing about the drop in unemployment will raise no joy in Liverpool, Riverside. Is the Minister aware that there is 24·3 per cent. unemployment in Riverside, and 306,000 are unemployed in the north-west region? Can he say when he expects the figures to drop below 10 per cent. in Liverpool, especially in Riverside?

Mr. Hunt: I regret that the hon. Gentleman has not welcomed the fall in unemployment in his area and in the north-west, nor recognised that it has now fallen, as a

national average, below 10 per cent., nor that unemployment in the nation is 226,000 less than it was in January last year.

I believe that the prospects are good in Merseyside. I wish that Opposition Members would stop disparaging Liverpool and Merseyside. Merseyside has some of the best-known companies in the world, which are not only doing well but setting an example in Europe and in the rest of the world. I would simply refer the hon. Gentleman to the example of GPT, which I visited only a few weeks ago. It has revolutionised working practices and now has one of the most competitive work forces in the world. We are the centre, for instance, of the intelligent payphone industry, exporting from Chorley and Liverpool to 88 countries throughout the world. The hon. Gentleman should start singing the praises of the work force on Merseyside.

Sir Michael Neubert: For a proper perspective, is it not important to remember the present size of the work force? Does my right hon. Friend know the number of people in work, as opposed to out of work, and what proportion of the population of working age it represents?

Mr. Hunt: Those are two interesting statistics. First, the number of people employed now exceeds 25 million, which is 1·4 million more than were in the work force 10 years ago. That is a good figure. My hon. Friend also asked about the percentage of the working-age population in work. We have one of the highest rates in the whole of Europe; close to 80 per cent. of the male population of working age, and 63 per cent. of women of working age are in work. Altogether, 69 per cent. of adults of working age are in work. It is about time that the Labour party started looking at the statistics and praising the performance of the British people.

Ms Eagle: Will the Secretary of State admit that in drawing attention to the plight of the long-term unemployed on Merseyside my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) was talking down not Merseyside but the Government policies that have led to a massive loss of manufacturing employment there, and have thrown on to the scrap heap large numbers of young men, who find that they have no role in life and so turn to other diversions? Will the right hon. Gentleman admit that substantial and persistent high unemployment, such as has been suffered on Merseyside during his Government's time in office, does serious damage to the social fabric of our society and to our local communities, and that we must return to full employment to create a society "at ease with itself"?

Mr. Hunt: Most of my political life has been spent fighting the Labour party in and around Merseyside. Socialism has done enormous damage to Liverpool and Merseyside, and I am not prepared to take lectures from the hon. Lady on that subject. She referred to criticisms of policies, but her party would introduce a statutory minimum wage that would cost up to 2 million jobs, compulsory working weeks and statutory works councils. The Labour party wants to move in that direction just at the moment when the rest of Europe is beginning to heed our language and to realise that flexible labour markets bring more job opportunities.

Mr. Mans: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating British Nuclear Fuels plc on the opening of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, and on the extra job opportunities that that will create in the north-west? Does he agree that it is scandalous for the Labour leader of Lancashire county council to preach a policy of more jobs, while trying to prevent the plant from opening?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Labour party was split on that issue as on so many other key issues facing the nation today. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said one thing and the chairman of the county council said another. Fortunately, the overwhelming arguments in favour of that prestigious development prevailed, and it has now provided much-needed job opportunities in the area.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Secretary of State accept that, despite some of the improvements, unemployment today is at least 1·75 million more, using the fiddled figures—or 2·5 million more—than in 1979, when the Conservatives won the election on the slogan, "Labour isn't working"? Does he accept that, even with the present improvement in employment, it is likely to take until the next century for him and his Government to achieve the levels of employment and unemployment taken on by the Tory Government in 1979?

Mr. Hunt: I greatly regret that the hon. Gentleman has referred to the figures in a way that casts a great deal of suspicion on the independent statisticians in my Department. I make him the same offer as I made to his predecessor: I invite him to come to meet the independent statisticians whom he slanders, and to hear them tell him how much they, as well as I, regret that slander. I take great pride in the fact that productivity is at record levels. I recognise that that has led to a reduction in employment in manufacturing, but I take great heart from the fact that today 4 million people in the manufacturing industry are producing more than 7 million people produced in 1979. I believe that we have one of the best work forces in the world and that is why I believe that unemployment is on a firm downward trend. The hon. Gentleman disparages the country for being a service industry, yet he works in the service sector himself and it is about time that he exposed himself to a little market testing.

Inward Investment

8. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what studies his Department has made of the employment implications of inward investment into England.

Mr. David Hunt: Extensive and very positive.

Mr. Luff: If I were to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's excellent record of attracting inward investment into Wales, would he join me in paying tribute to the inward investment by American, Japanese and European companies in my constituency of Worcester, creating and safeguarding many hundreds of jobs? What estimates does he have of the total number of jobs safeguarded and created in England by inward investment which was largely opposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. The record on inward investment has been quite spectacular. Since 1979, in the United Kingdom there have been 3,800 projects, involving more than 500,000 jobs—many of them new and safeguarded jobs. They are good jobs and have provided a

real local base. As we look forward to the future, let us stop talking down the United Kingdom and England and start talking up the fact that that investment is coming because we have the best work force in the world.

Mr. Cryer: When does the Minister expect the inward investment to allow us to get back to the basic figure of 4·1 per cent. unemployment—around 1·8 million people—of April 1979 under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Hunt: As I pointed out earlier, that was when we had 7 million people producing as much as 4 million people produce today. It is about time the hon. Gentleman reflected on the fact that British industry was so uncompetitive when we took over in 1979 and we have seen some of the best productivity increases seen anywhere in the world.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I warmly welcome the most encouraging statistics that my right hon. Friend has given to the House in answer not only to this question but to others today. Will he accept that my constituency has one of the lowest levels of unemployment in the country, but that the north-west has in recent times encountered one or two serious and unfortunate blows, not least the receivership of Ferranti International—the sonar division of which is based in my constituency—and, more recently, the redundancies at Avro International Aerospace at Woodford on the periphery of my constituency? Will my right hon. Friend explain to the House what assistance he is giving to those two companies and to those being made redundant so as to minimise the adverse effects of those redundancies on them and their families?

Mr. Hunt: I greatly regret the redundancies that have occurred and the incidents to which my hon. Friend referred. Those jobs, certainly the ones recently announced by British Aerospace at Woodford and Chadderton, are part of British Aerospace's overall drive to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Of course there are concerns about the joint venture with Taiwan, but talks with Taiwan are continuing and British Aerospace has made it clear that Avro will continue in business whatever the outcome of those talks. Of course, local training and enterprise councils and the employment service will give the maximum possible assistance to all those who are affected by the closures.

Health and Safety

9. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Acts and regulations relating to health and safety in force before December 1992 have been affected by the six EC directives which came into force on 31 December 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Implementation of the directives has resulted in changes to 70 Acts, regulations and orders. I will arrange for a full list to be placed in the Library. However, of particular interest to Opposition Members might be the repeal of the Gut Scraping etc. Preparation of Tripe, Welfare of Workers Order 1920 and the Spinning by Self-Acting Mules Regulations 1905.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Minister recall the press release issued by the Secretary of State on 20 July, which referred to the Government's scrutiny report into the implementation of Community law? In it, he said that health and safety legislation had been implemented in the United Kingdom without what he called the addition of unnecessary extra requirements, and that the scrutiny demonstrated that the charges that the Health and Safety Executive had been gold plating EC directives was completely unfounded. Does not what he said prove that it is entirely possible for the Health and Safety Executive to remove redundant legislation without a special Bill?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that the DTI scrutiny absolved the Health and Safety Executive and the Government of any blame that we were gilding the lily in implementing EC directives. However, the hon. Gentleman is perhaps not aware that the Health and Safety Executive asked the Government to look at section 1(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, which it believes prevents it from repealing redundant legislation without replacement.

Mr. David Atkinson: Can my hon. Friend confirm that only two member states of the European Community—Denmark and the United Kingdom—have implemented in full into their national legislation all nine of the EC directives on health and safety at work? Are they not to be congratulated, rather than criticised, for that fine record?

Mr. Forsyth: Of course I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He is quite right. Only two member states—Britain and Denmark—had implemented the so-called six-pack by the January deadline. Indeed, only three EC countries have not been subject to criticism by the Commission in respect to their implementation of health and safety legislation. It is important not to regard the matter of health and safety as passing regulations and legislation. It is about influencing people's conduct in the workplace.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister recall bragging in November that Britain had opted out of European legislation to protect children from exploitation at work? The Social Affairs Commissioner said in Strasbourg this week that

> "It is very regrettable that the UK cannot endorse a minimal threshold for the protection of children, considered acceptable by the other 11 Member States."

What would the Minister say to him? Is it not the case that, as the Commission and the International Labour Organisation have condemned the British Government, the whole rotten deal to exploit children will soon be thrown out?

Mr. Forsyth: If ever we needed evidence of the Labour party's federal view, we have just heard it in that question. Those in Europe who seek to prevent us from allowing paperboys and others to continue their jobs should mind their own business. We have a long tradition of youngsters taking those jobs, and only the Labour party would wish to frustrate that continuing tradition.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Is my hon. Friend being somewhat defensive about health and safety regulations in this country? Is it not a fact that we have probably the best health and safety record in the world? It is Opposition Members who want to run down the excellent work and the excellent partnership between the Health and Safety Executive and caring employers and employees.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Our record on health and safety is second to none. It is among the best in the world—better than those of many of our European partners.

Mr. Prescott: Why change it?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) asks, "Why change it?" That is exactly why the Government have resisted the approach from Europe which, a few minutes ago, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) criticised us for doing.

Youth Training Guarantee

10. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people under 18 years of age are not covered by the Government's youth training guarantee.

Miss Widdecombe: All young people aged under 18, who are not in a job or full-time education, are guaranteed the offer of a suitable youth training place if they want one.

Mr. McFall: Will the Minister look at the figures again? In Scotland, the Labour party contacted both the careers service and local enterprise companies, and the figure of 8,000 young people without a guarantee was given. That figure has still to be refuted. Whatever the precise figures, does the Minister agree that many thousands of young people are going about the United Kingdom without a job, without benefit, without hope and without a future? If back to basics means anything, does it not mean going back to giving a commitment to young people about a job and their future?

Miss Widdecombe: The long faces among Labour Members are equalled only by the sheer inaccuracy of their figures. I have in front of me the figure for Scotland, which the hon. Gentleman quoted as "8,000". The exact figure is 1,535. Perhaps I could give the hon. Gentleman some good news from his constituency. In August, 688 young people were waiting more than eight weeks, but today there are only 141. That is progress. Let the hon. Gentleman loudly welcome it.

Mr. Paice: Can my hon. Friend confirm that CAMBSTEC—the Cambridgeshire training and enterprise council—which services my constituency, now has only 12 young people waiting over eight weeks for their guarantee? Does not that underline why CAMBSTEC regularly comes near the top of all the surveys of training and enterprise councils throughout the country? Does not it demonstrate that the guarantee can effectively be met if TECs get their act together?

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed, I congratulate CAMBSTEC on its performance on the youth training guarantee, as I do on its performance on other issues. I have pleasure in confirming the figure mentioned by my hon. Friend. I have even greater pleasure in confirming that there are TECs with even lower figures, and many now with nought.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Those 16 and 17-year-olds who have been abandoned by the Government, often to a life of the sort of crime that people up and down this land resent, are the direct victims of the Government's policies. Can the Minister deny that this time last year, when the Government were claiming that there were no 16 and 17-year-olds not on the guarantee, their labour force survey later revealed that 125,000 young people were not in work? Let me make it clear that we do not accuse civil servants of fiddling the figures or lying. The answer as to who is lying is much higher up the chain.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand the way in which the youth guarantee works, despite patient explanations from the Government. No young people are abandoned by the Government. They are in one of three places. They are either in education—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentleman welcome the fact that 77 per cent. of 16 to 18-year-olds are now in full-time education, or will he take the line that education is second best and Labour Members want an untrained, lowly qualified work force, rather than a highly educated one? Will he welcome the number of young people in training and jobs? Will he welcome the decrease in the number waiting? When will Labour Members welcome that performance? Will the hon. Gentleman stand up now and welcome all that?

Labour Statistics

11. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest unemployment figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Two million seven hundred and sixty-six thousand two hundred—that is, 9·8 per cent. Last month's fall of 46,800 means that unemployment is 226,100 lower than it was in January 1993.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Is it not the case that the improvement in the figures is largely due to the fact that the job market is responding more quickly to the upturn in the economy because of more flexible labour relations?

Mr. Hunt: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. There has been a transformation in industrial relations in this country. In 1979, industry lost 1,270 working days per 1,000 employees through disputes and strikes. By 1992, thanks to Conservative legislation, that number had fallen to 24. That is a significant development, and my hon. Friend is quite right to pay tribute to it.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Welcome as the reduction in unemployment is, does the Secretary of State accept that unemployment has fluctuated between 2 million and 3 million during the past 10 years? Will he look to the future and state when he thinks the figure will go below 2 million or 1 million? In the post-general agreement on tariffs and trade era and with the recovery of Germany and Japan and the rising nations of the Pacific rim, does he believe that this country has the skill base to compete and to ensure low unemployment and competitive trading conditions?

Mr. Hunt: First, may I thank the hon. Gentleman for doing what the Labour party did not do, which was to welcome the fall in unemployment.

The hon. Gentleman must recall that there has been an increase in jobs during the past 10 years, with an increase in the number of people in work of 1·4 million. Nevertheless, I accept that 2,766,200 is still an unacceptably high level of unemployment. I want to see that number brought down, and brought down permanently.

Therefore, I ask the hon. Gentleman and his party to oppose the Opposition policies of a minimum working wage, statutory works councils and compulsory working weeks which would only cost jobs. I urge him to join the Government in creating a new and modern apprenticeship scheme which will help to restore skills that are lacking at certain levels—particularly NVQ level 3.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the news that unemployment in Lancaster has fallen steeply compared with this time last year is welcome? The figure has fallen faster than either the national average or the regional average. Does my right hon. Friend also agree that if Commissioner Millan were to agree with the proposition made in the European Parliament by my noble Friend Lord Inglewood, that tourism should be declared an industry, we could do even better?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend on the significance of tourism, not only as an employer but also as a contributor of substantial sums of money. I cannot give her what she is looking for in terms of categorisation, but I recognise the importance and the significance of tourism. I welcome with her the reduction in unemployment in the north-west.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Secretary of State accept that the reduction in the employment figures is due to the transformation of the labour market and that the loss of 3 million full-time jobs since 1979, and their replacement by 3 million part-time jobs has transformed the British labour force into a low-pay, low-skill skivvy labour force? Does the Secretary of State accept that that is no way for Britain to get economic prosperity?

Mr. Hunt: First, the hon. Gentleman got it wrong. We are talking about a fall in unemployment, and not employment as he said a few moments ago. There has been an increase in employment.

It is quite absurd for the hon. Gentleman to categorise the great success of this country as if it were just an increase in fast food jobs. We heard earlier a question regarding the fast food industry, because some Opposition Members have said that the rise in employment has come in the fast food industry. I do not know what those Opposition Members want. Do they want slow food, as they are in the slow lane of British politics? McDonalds? They are in the era of Ramsay MacDonald. Pizza Hut? They are still in a stone age hut. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues woke up to the modern world.

Employment Service

12. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the north-west region have been placed into work by the Employment Service in the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: More than a quarter of a million people have been placed into jobs by the Employment Service in the north-west.

Mr. Sumberg: May I pay tribute not only to the Employment Service but to the people of the north-west, whose businesses are coming through the recession with success and determination? Has my hon. Friend noted the silence on the Opposition Benches? Is not good news for Britain and Lancashire bad news for Labour?

Mr. Forsyth: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Opposition Members are the first people in history to shoot the messenger when he brings good news. The north-west is benefiting from the recovery more than any other part of the country. That was demonstrated by the Lloyd's bank review, which showed full order books there at a better level than in any other part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Even before the collapse of Ferranti and the loss of jobs at British Aerospace, only one school leaver out of 12 in my constituency could get a job. What does the Minister say to the other 11?

Mr. Forsyth: I would tell those youngsters looking for jobs that they should not listen to the Jeremiahs on the Opposition Benches but should recognise that 250,000 people have been placed in work in the north-west in the past year, that the Lloyd's bank survey showed that more than a third of employers expect to take people on in the coming years, and that we shall get more jobs only by being more competitive and rejecting the Labour party's policies.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Visits

Q1. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit South Elmsall.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I have no immediate plans to do so.

Mr. Enright: With the closure of Frickley colliery, one in three men in South Elmsall is now out of work, which is extremely serious. Will the Prime Minister promise to back Wakefield district council's bid for coalfield area funds so that it can co-operate, as it has successfully before, with the local chamber of commerce, British Coal Enterprise and others to produce a regeneration programme, which is so desperately needed? Wakefield council has shown that it can do it sensibly and sensitively and I ask that it be given the opportunity.

The Prime Minister: I understand the difficulties that face the hon. Gentleman and those of his constituents presently without work. I am delighted that unemployment has fallen in his constituency in recent years, but I recognise the serious problems that exist there. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's constituency will specifically benefit from the coalfield area fund, but a wide range of help will be available. In the hon. Gentleman's area alone, £4 million will be available for an industrial and commercial development programme, and £3 million will be provided to training and enterprise councils for training and business support. As the hon. Gentleman will know, intermediate area status has been granted. Regional enterprise grants have been extended and, in addition, in excess of £2·5 million of European structural funds has been granted to the Wakefield area. We shall continue to keep those under review and do all that we can to help miners who have lost their jobs.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my right hon. Friend spare a moment today to congratulate police and Customs on the co-ordinated job that led to the seizure of £50 million worth of cocaine in Manchester recently? Is he in a position yet to announce how the Government will co-ordinate Government departmental activity to give new impetus to the Government's own efforts to counter drugs misuse?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend touches on a vital point, which is of great concern to this Government and across Europe. The fight against drugs involves all of us —police, customs, parents and Government—and we must all play our part in stepping up the campaign against those who deal in that trade. I welcome the seizure of cocaine to which my hon. Friend refers and congratulate all those involved in it. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced before Christmas that the Government are setting up a drugs unit, the purpose of which will be to ensure that the policies of all Departments are co-ordinated to improve co-ordinated action against the general problem of drugs.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell us whether by any chance he received a memorandum around the time of the Budget from the Treasury informing him that freezing income tax allowances for two years in succession would force 400,000 low-paid people into income tax for the first time? Was he aware that his Budgets would have that result?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, take-home pay for people in all strands of income has risen materially over recent years—by 40 per cent. plus for those on average earnings since 1979 and by 30 to 40 per cent. for those on half-average earnings. The right hon. and learned Gentleman might also recall that it fell between 1974 and 1979 for single people and for couples without children, and barely rose for couples with children.

Mr. John Smith: That was hardly an answer to my question. If the Prime Minister cannot answer that question may I ask him whether anyone told him that the tax changes in those Budgets would put the equivalent of 7p on income tax and that a typical family would have to pay another £1,330 over the next two years, or are those things that he preferred not to know about?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not entirely satisfied with the first answer, let me tell him further that even after the Budget there will be half a million fewer taxpayers next year than there were in 1979. Tax rates have fallen dramatically over that period and low inflation means that freezing personal allowances will cost basic rate taxpayers 34p a week when compared with inflation. He mentioned people on low incomes, but he neglected to mention family credit, child care allowance, the uprating in child benefit and the fact that the real take-home pay of families on average earnings will be 40 per cent. higher than when his party was last in government.

Mr. John Smith: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman to make a special effort of memory? I know that it is hard for him with all these papers crossing his desk all the time, but can he not struggle to recall his repeated promises to the British people that he would not increase income tax or national insurance and that he would not extend the scope of value added tax? Is not the breaking of those promises the reason for justified public cynicism and anger at this discredited Government?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is beginning to sound like a very worn record. It is absolutely clear that the standard rates of tax under the Conservative party have dropped dramatically since the Opposition were in government and, in any given circumstance, the rate of taxation under any Conservative Government would be lower than under any Labour Government at any time.

Q3. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Winterton: Bearing in mind the interest presently shown by the press in the lives of the politicians, does my right hon. Friend agree that the press itself should show the same honour and integrity that it expects of others?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker,— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am as anxious as anyone to hear the response to that question.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend might think that; I could not possibly comment.

Q5. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mudie: The Prime Minister will be aware that at permanent secretary level he was advised that the aid package to the Malaysian power station was a bad buy, uneconomic and an abuse of the aid system, yet he still instructed that the aid should be given. In view of the fact that it will cost the British taxpayer more than £230 million, does he consider that to be good judgment, and if so, why is he refusing to allow Members of the House to see papers relating to that decision?

The Prime Minister: The Government made a commitment to the Pergau project in 1989 personally to the Malaysian Prime Minister. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I decided in 1991 to proceed, both to honour the commitment made by my predecessor and in the wider context of maintaining billions of pounds of British exports to Malaysia—exports of £5 billion since 1982, and doubled exports between 1988 and 1992. To have withdrawn the contract would have put British jobs at risk. It is about time that the Opposition took a consistent position on these things. How does the hon. Gentleman

reconcile his party's call for lower unemployment with his criticism of this project? The British Government are backing British business and achieving orders abroad and all the hon. Gentleman can do is carp and criticise. Does he want jobs for British workers or does he not?

Mr. Kynoch: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the latest figures for manufacturing output show further significant growth? Does he agree that that represents further proof that the United Kingdom is leading Europe from recovery into a period of sustained growth?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can certainly confirm that to my hon. Friend and the basis of this is the record that we have on inflation, the fact that we have been able to bring interest rates down and the fact that it is now clear to everyone that the British economy is recovering and growing—recovering more comprehensively and growing more rapidly than any other economy in western Europe.

Q6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Prime Minister aware of the concern felt by so many people at the amount of financial sleaze in this country arising from Government policies and attitudes? Is he further aware that the one "back to basics" attitude that people desperately want and crave is the restoring of integrity to public life? Is it not clear that they will not get that from the Government?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely about the necessity for integrity in public life. The hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members have sought to take a moral stand about standards in public life. I do not object to that. It is also necessary for those Opposition Members to look at their own colleagues who spread smear and innuendo on a week-by-week basis with a complete disregard for the truth. Smear and innuendo are the hallmarks of political cowardice and they have become the trademark of the Opposition.

Dr. Liam Fox: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate Rover Cars on its 9 per cent. increase in sales last year many of which were exported through Royal Portbury docks in my constituency? Is he aware that their production output outstripped Mercedes Benz in a difficult market and that neither the success of Rover nor Royal Portbury docks would have been possible without the privatisation programme which only the Conservative party would have had the courage to champion?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend both about the remarkable success of Rover Cars which I hope and expect will continue in future, and the success of privatisation both specifically and generally. It has been remarkable. What we now see in the motor car industry—in Rover and other parts of the industry—is that it has made the most remarkable turn around in recent years and soon will be a net exporter of motor cars. It is quite different from the old days a few years ago when Red Robbo and others were wrecking the entire industry.

Q7. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Ms Quin: Is it not the case that the only clear message that the Prime Minister gave to the public yesterday when he was questioned by the Scott inquiry was, "Don't ask me, I'm only Prime Minister?"

The Prime Minister: I suggest that, in due course, the hon. Lady reads the six hours of detailed evidence that I gave. She might then regard her remarks of a moment ago to be just a touch inadequate.

Ministerial Visits

Q9. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Prime Minister whether he plans to make an official visit to Worcester.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Mr. Luff: If my right hon. Friend were to visit Worcester—*[Interruption.]* would he join me in welcoming the decision by two of the teacher trade unions to drop their boycott of national curriculum tests? Does he agree that that sets an excellent example for the other teacher trade union—the National Union of Teachers—to follow?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I very strongly agree with that. I very strongly agree with the two teacher trade unions that have decided to drop their boycott. It would be of immense help, not just to the profession of teaching but, essentially, to the children in the classroom, if the NUT were to take precisely the same action so that the tests can proceed. I believe that there is no justifiable reason for the boycott in the future. There was little, if any, justification before; now there is none. The NUT should follow the leadership of the other two unions.

BILL PRESENTED

Deregulation and Contracting Out

Mr. Secretary Heseltine, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Gummer, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. William Waldegrave, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mrs. Gillian Shephard and Mr. Tim Sainsbury, presented a Bill to amend, and make provision for the amendment of, statutory provisions and rules of law in order to remove or reduce certain burdens affecting persons in the carrying on of trades, businesses or professions or otherwise, and for other deregulatory purposes; to make further provision in connection with the licensing of operators of goods vehicles; to make provision for and in connection with the contracting out of certain functions vested in Ministers of the Crown, local authorities, certain governmental bodies and the holders of certain offices; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 33.]

Abolition of Service Charges in Restaurants

3.31 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the levying of service charges in restaurants; and for connected purposes.

The Bill will amend the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and prohibit the imposition of service charges to restaurant bills.

I wonder whether you, Madam Speaker, have ever had the experience that I have had. *[Laughter.]* One goes into a restaurant with friends and orders the meal. Perhaps one gets good service. Perhaps one does not. The bill then arrives. It includes a hefty service charge. One proffers one's credit card, and back comes the credit card voucher for one to sign, but with the total left blank. One inquires of the waiter whether service was included in the bill, and he answers, "Yes, but we don't get to see any of it."

My Bill is designed to address that problem, which besets we British and foreign visitors alike. The Bill will not discourage good service; it will encourage it. The Bill will not stop tipping: it will encourage it, but only as a reward for good service. Tipping for good service, not tipping for bad service, seems to me, dare I say, like getting back to basics.

I am well aware that, despite the Bill having the support of the Consumers Association, the Office of Fair Trading, trading standards officers and, last but by no means least, the Restaurateurs Association of Great Britain, there may be some lawyers in this place who will oppose it. Their argument, predictably, goes rather like this. Sure, a service charge is legally binding if it mentions the charge on the menu, but once one has sat down, started to munch on a roll and butter and look at the menu, if it mentions a service charge, one can always get up and leave—oh, come on!

Then they say that, if the service is so bad and if one does not want to pay the charge, one can always hire a lawyer and argue it in court. The lawyers would say that, would they not?

The Bill would bring to an end the battle of confusion, nerve and, frankly, sharp practice that so often causes heartburn and grief at the end of an otherwise mellifluous meal. The price of a meal would be clear on the menu, just like the price tag in a shop, with no extras added on later. That is vital, not only for us, but for the millions of foreign visitors to Britain each year who feel that they are simply being ripped off.

My Bill will end all that confusion. It will protect those who have gone for pleasant meals—in otherwise reputable restaurants—which have been soured by the addition of an unexpected 10, 12·5 or even 15 per cent. service charge at the end of the bill. It would end the optional service charge, which is not optional to any but the bravest of souls prepared to dispute the level of service received. It would cease the moral strife that haunts the diner who queries the suggested gratuity and is informed that it is used to pay staff wages. In what other industry would such an important overhead as staffing costs be left to chance payments by customers?

Making it absolutely clear that the price stated on the menu is inclusive of all charges should also stamp out what can only be described as blackmail—that open credit card slip. As the informed consumer knows, there is no need to leave a further tip or free will offering for staff if service is included—yet for some, and for many foreign visitors, it takes nerves of steel to argue the toss with the waiter or management.

Let there be no doubt that the service charge is the tip. If all prices were stated net, there would be no confusion. The mutual degradation of anxious waiter and befuddled diner would be ended.

I re-emphasise that I have no wish to stop free will gifts or tips but I want to end the informal pressure on people to pay a tip as an inevitable part of eating out, regardless of quality of service. I do not tip in pubs or fast food or cheap restaurants. Nor do I make a so-called free will offering to the stewardess on an airline, no matter what service she has given. Given that we do not tip in all those different circumstances, why should there be a virtual compulsion through service charges in restaurants?

The service charge is an anomaly left over from the second world war, when rationing and price controls led certain expensive restaurants to find ways around the restrictions. The law stipulates that all menu prices must be inclusive of value added tax. According to the Department of Trade and Industry code of practice on misleading price indications, any compulsory service charge should be included in the price for each item wherever practicable. In the four years or so that the code has been in existence, it has had little effect on the restaurant trade.

The House might find it hard to believe that in 1993, *The Good Food Guide* listed only 93 out of 1,400 restaurants that close credit cards by filling in the total, including the service charge. A survey by *Which?* in May 1992 showed that many restaurants made a compulsory service charge, leaving credit card slips open. Even worse, they presented credit card slips without the bill or anything else to remind the customer that service had already been included in the price of the meal.

That code of practice is simply not working, and discussions on its amendment have yet to have any impact. The code has little legal effect. Until it does, I suspect that the majority of restaurants will continue to avoid net prices on their menus, for the reason that it makes their prices appear cheaper and more competitive than other restaurants, which is most unfair.

A ban on additional service charges is supported not only by the many consumer organisations that I mentioned earlier but, I suspect, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor. I refer not to his dining habits but to the tax man, who should benefit from net prices and the removal of the supposedly optional charge that allows the restaurant to avoid VAT on that element.

As my colleagues know, I am not a regulator by nature —far from it—but tighter guidance is needed to ensure that the intentions behind the Consumer Protection Act 1987 stick. You will find this impossible to believe, Madam Speaker, but even the French have legislated to make all-inclusive restaurant prices obligatory. Now, every European Union member state except Britain and Greece has all-inclusive prices.

Recently, *The Good Food Guide* commented:

"The recession may have forced proprietors to reduce their headline prices to persuade customers through their doors, but some of them load the other costs to the point of virtual deceit. The public sometimes feels restaurants are combat zones.

My Bill will go some way towards ending that.

I realise that, in presenting this Bill, I face the gravest danger. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have

[Mr. Michael Fabricant]

drawn my attention to the risk of ground glass or worse. The Bill, however, has cross-party support, and it needs to be passed, for the sake of both equity and our tourist industry. I commend it to the House.

3.40 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I do not think that we should pass the Bill. Notwithstanding its superficial attraction, it should be seen against the backdrop of the current wage position: at present, we have no national minimum wage. It ill behoves the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) to bleat on about people who can pay for their meals with credit cards. Many people who work in restaurants are, unhappily, dependent on tips to obtain their wages.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): They are not getting them.

Mr. Mackinlay: No, they are not. Not only is there no minimum wage; such people have no access to industrial tribunals, and thus cannot complain about the unreasonable behaviour of their employers.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire mentioned the practice in France. In France, there is a basic minimum for people working in restaurants, and they are able to complain about unreasonable behaviour on the part of employers.

If the House passes the Bill, it will give satisfaction to those who can purchase meals with credit cards, but it will do nothing to improve the lot of restaurant workers receiving low wages, who often have no national insurance or pension rights, and are paid skivvy wages.

The House should concentrate on introducing employment protection, especially for people on low wages. We should ensure that such people have a right, and remedy, to complain about employers who withhold money to which they are entitled. The House should take such action, rather than placating people with bits of plastic in their wallets who can afford to pay more.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House proceeded to a Division, but no Member being willing to act as Teller for the Noes, MADAM SPEAKER *declared that the Ayes had it.*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Michael Fabricant, Mr. Tony Banks, Dr. John G. Blackburn, Mr. Robin Corbett, Mr. Quentin Davies, Mr. John Gorst, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Sir James Kilfedder, Sir Fergus Montgomery, Mr. Bill Olner, Dr. John Reid and Mr. John Sykes.

ABOLITION OF SERVICE CHARGES IN RESTAURANTS

Mr. Michael Fabricant accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the levying of service charges in restaurants; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 March, and to be printed. [Bill 34.]

Scott Inquiry

3.47 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to make a brief point of order which goes to the heart of what we try to do in the House. It is about ministerial responsibility.

Yesterday, at the Scott inquiry, the gist of what the Prime Minister had to say was that he could not possibly know all that was going on in the Department of which he was the head. Every time we work with Ministers in the House, at Question Time or in debates, we have to work on the assumption that Ministers are here speaking and responsible for the work of the Departments over which they preside.

If they are able to offer as a defence, "It is nothing to do with me; I could not possibly have known what was going on; far too much work is covered by my Department and far too many pieces of paper go through my office," that makes complete nonsense of the notion of ministerial accountability.

The House needs to know whether a Minister speaking from the Dispatch Box speaks with knowledge and authority, having been properly briefed by his Department, and whether he is accountable. In that sense, "accountable" means that, if things go wrong, Ministers will do the honourable thing and resign. Or will they always simply offer us the defence that they gave us a misleading answer or a duff performance, but that that is entirely explicable because, in modern government, it is impossible for Ministers to be responsible for their Departments. If that is the case——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a long point of order, and barely a matter for me. I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the response that I gave to a similar point of order yesterday, so that I do not have to be tedious and repetitious with the House. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will look at yesterday's *Hansard,* in which he will find my answer to a similar point of order.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I will take no further point of order. I have dealt with the matter.

Orders of the Day

Coal Industry Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have had to place a 10-minute limit on speeches between the hours of 6 and 8, because of the great interest in the Bill.

3.48 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

In our election manifesto, we pledged to privatise British Coal. Last spring, in our White Paper "Prospects for Coal", we renewed that pledge. Before I deal with the specific measures in the Bill, it is worth spending a few moments on the wider issues of nationalisation.

The British coal industry is one of the last major industrial sectors left in the public sector. Nationalisation of our industries was a central feature of post-war Labour Governments. It was resisted fiercely by the Conservative Opposition of the day, and there are few people left who would deny that, as a policy, it imposed intolerable economic and legislative burdens on our country and contributed to the decline of our regional economies.

The policy was designed to transfer the commanding heights of the economy to state control. The naive political rationalisation at the time was that control would be vested in the people. In reality, power rapidly shifted to monopoly providers and monopoly producer unions. What power the people possessed was exercised by civil servants, who rapidly became both protector and confidant of the industries' self-interest, and, worse, by the political convenience of the party in power.

The traditional—and, in the end, the only effective—disciplines of the marketplace were replaced by ill-disciplined compromises and cash-consuming delay. The objectives of enhanced efficiency, increased productivity and a high quality of service played little part in the day-to-day practices or assumptions.

Industrial management, hitherto widely dispersed throughout the regions of the United Kingdom, was replaced by top-heavy bureaucracies that were located largely in London. Perhaps most damaging of all, in virtually every case our key industries withdrew from or were denied access to the markets of the world. I say this to reinforce the case for the Bill, if such reinforcement were necessary. Today, the concept of state ownership is bankrupt. Across the world, country after country is turning to the discipline of the marketplace as each seeks to dispose of its nationalised industries.

Even the Labour party has lost the will to fight for this arcane concept of industrial organisation and management. Of course it parades and re-parades the weary arguments that a tiny body of its constituents, and of course its union paymasters, want to hear, but it knows that the tide of freedom that we have brought to the nationalised industries is now as irreversible here as it is in so many countries, under Governments ranging from the socialists of China to the right-wing Government in France.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the worries of many ex-coalminers and miners' widows is that the benefits and agreements that they had with the National Coal Board will not be continued after privatisation? Will he give a categorical assurance on the matter?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall deal with the specific objects of concern case by case, as I consider the detailed contents of the Bill.

Before I leave the overwhelming case in favour of privatisation at large, which rests behind the Bill, I must point out that, as hon. Members will know, the facts are stark. In 1979, the nationalised industries were costing the taxpayer £50 million per week in losses. Today, they pay £60 million per week in taxes on the profits that they earn as private sector companies and, most chilling of all for the Labour party, 6 million shareholders are willing to testify and to vote for the success that privatisation has brought.

What are the facts about the nationalisation of the mines? At the time of nationalisation in 1947, there were 720,000 mineworkers employed by the National Coal Board. By 1980, that figure was down to 230,000—a reduction on average of around 15,000 a year. The rundown was as much a characteristic of Labour as of Conservative Governments.

The number of operating pits also declined throughout that period. Opposition Members will recall, for example, that between 1964 and 1970, and between 1974 and 1979, the number of producing pits fell by 313. Indeed, since 1979, it is a Conservative Government who have injected by far the largest support for British Coal in the history of British Coal—nearly £20 billion.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): That was redundancy pay.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, the Conservative Government made very generous redundancy payments. However, the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to face up to the fact that £8 billion of that £20 billion was capital investment in the industry. So, since the war——

Mr. Campbell: I can give the Secretary of State one example of what happened in my colliery. A transport system, which cost £300,000, was bought, put in the timber yard, hapt up and kept there, and charged to that colliery when it closed. That is only one example. What happened at the other collieries in which the Government invested?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman can quote his £300,000 example, but does the House seriously believe that it stands up against the £8 billion that has flowed into capital investment in the Coal Board since 1979? The Opposition talk as though they cared about the industry, but they ran it down. There has never been such a large investment programme in the coal industry as under Conservative Governments since 1979.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that, at Parkside colliery in my constituency, a £6·5 million investment in a new face, which was in production for a fortnight before it was closed down under his regime, is now rotting in the ground?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman might ask himself whether the decision to invest such large sums of money was justified in the face of a falling market for the product. That is an example of precisely the lack of discipline that I have been referring to—a lack that was characteristic of nationalised industries throughout the post-war period.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): The accounts of the National Coal Board show that it repaid to the Government, at a very high interest rate, loans that it had received over some years. The money that the right hon. Gentleman was crediting the Government with investing in the industry was paid back before the so-called profit was decided. The Secretary of State can investigate that fact if he likes.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman must understand that most of the £20 billion invested in the National Coal Board since 1979 will be written off, which means that it will be charged in perpetuity to the taxpayer. I admire the fact, however, that he is now a director of a private sector coal company. I know that the House will wish him all the very best good fortune.

Mr. Clarke: I am not a director of a private company: the right hon. Gentleman has been misled. I am an adviser to a company which has the involvement of the Scottish trade union movement.

Mr. Heseltine: I would not wish to misrepresent the hon. Member. If his advice is successful, however, he might soon be a director of the company.

Since the war and nationalisation, the coal industry has lost its market for producing town gas, it no longer sells coal to the railways or mines coking coal, and it has lost the greater part of sales of coal for home heating and industrial use. During the debates of the past year or so, we have been all too familiar with the fact that British Coal is now very dependent on sales for electricity generation, and we are equally and starkly aware that it is coming under increasing pressure in that market as well.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): If there is no market whatsoever for coal, can the President please explain why five applications are being processed for opencast coal mining in my constituency, when the opencast coal will be dearer than that from Grimethorpe?

Mr. Heseltine: The explanation is entirely a matter for those people who have submitted the applications to carry out the mining. It seems extremely unlikely to me that people are bidding to take on onerous responsibilities for mining coal in an opencast field when they could get it cheaper from the deep-mined industry. However, that is a judgment for those people who are prepared to invest their money in the process.

The Government's position is clear. We have given an undertaking to ensure that the Coal Board offers to license the deep mines to the private sector, and I am glad that there are a number of cases in which agreements have been reached or the negotiations are well advanced. I much admire all those Opposition Members who are playing a role in facilitating negotiations and encouraging the prospects that those pits might find an alternative life in the private sector.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot give way to three people at once, but the lady must of course have preference.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the President tell us exactly why he is not prepared to set up a target for the amount of opencast mining, and why it is that in, north Staffordshire, Trentham and Silverdale have been closed, and we now expect even more opencast mining to go ahead? Why are not environmental issues at the heart of his energy policies?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Lady mentions a most important subject, and she must be aware that consultation is now under way on mineral planning guidance 3. It is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but it raises important issues of balancing the environmental and economic arguments that are—superficially at least—in conflict. I have great sympathy with the hon. Lady's arguments.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): The right hon. Gentleman has confused me. I agree with him that successive Governments, Labour and Tory, have invested heavily in the mining industry during the past 30 years. Indeed, with the closure of Easington colliery, tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money have been left in a flooded mine. Is it not obligatory for the President to underpin that £20 billion-worth of taxpayers' investment by assisting in working a market for the benefit of a British industry, providing British coal?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member has obviously missed the point: that, with the approval of the House, we offered to put more taxpayers' money behind the production of deep-mined coal if people would come forward and find an additional market for that coal. In some cases, negotiations have been concluded or are proceeding. It would be wrong for me to give artificial assurances that I can sustain economic activities for which there is no market justification.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Will the President explain the logic of taxpayers' money subsidising the acknowledgedly inefficient Spanish coal industry through the European Union?

Mr. Heseltine: I challenge that logic constantly. My department, as the custodian of much of the trading interest of this country, has the responsibility of constantly challenging the existence of subsidies. The aim is not for us to introduce them into our economy; it is for us to try to eliminate them from the rest of the European Union. That is the task in which we are engaged.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: Will the hon. Gentleman forgive me? Madam Speaker, you introduced a ten-minute limit, and I suspect that I am beginning to intrude into rather more speeches than I would wish to do. I must ask hon. Members to allow me get on to the detail of the Bill.

There is one last point that I wish to record about my judgments on the industry. I have not the slightest doubt that our coal industry would be in a much healthier position today if the adjustment which has taken place under every Government, and too late, had taken place in the post-war period of economic expansion, when the diversification of the economy could have proceeded faster and when the highly desirable employees of the coal industry could have found jobs in growth industries of that time.

I will go further. I have little doubt that, if the coal industry had had to face the challenge of the marketplace much earlier, it would have achieved productivity gains which recently, and under pressure, it has begun to achieve, but it would have achieved those productivity gains in time

to head off at least part of the dash for gas, and thus it would have secured for itself a larger share of the marketplace than is today realistic.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): If the President is arguing that a secure future for coal required privatisation some time ago, there have been 14 years of his government during which that could have happened. Is not the criticism the same—that a lack of strategic energy policy has been the consistent feature of every year of his Department and its predecessor since 1979? That is why coal is in difficulty; it has never known what place it would have and never been given any security as part of a diverse market supply, as the best resource that we have available.

Mr. Heseltine: That was an interesting intervention by the hon. Member from the Liberal party. I do not pretend to have been shadowing with great care Liberal policy statements for the earlier part of the past decade, but I do not remember, Madam Speaker—perhaps you do, and perhaps I owe the hon. Member an apology—the Liberals making a major demand in all those years that we should privatise the coal industry.

Indeed, if the Liberals had ever come forward with any firm demand at all, especially one that might contain any element of controversy, it would have come as a surprise to me. The Liberals would demand privatisation of the coal industry only in sections of industry, or of the electorate, where there was no coal industry, for fear that otherwise they might offend someone. That is a classic example of the Liberal Democrat party waiting until all the policy options have been closed, and then asking, "Why don't you do it some other way?"

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the President of the Board of Trade give way?

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot resist.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman has not been following Liberal policy closely enough. I know that he has been ill and has been missing, and that for a long time he was not a Cabinet Minister. However, if he would check the facts, he would find that, in true Liberal Democratic fashion, that party was in favour of privatisation before the general election, but is now against it.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman reveals the sort of inconsistency on doctrine that we have come to expect from the modern Labour party. I congratulate him on having read the documents. It shows that he is preoccupied with "back to basics", and has learnt to read effectively after all this time.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I took great note of the right hon. Gentleman's long diatribe against nationalisation. Is he prepared to tell the House how many private companies have made as many gains in productivity as the Coal Board has made over the past two years?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that British Steel is now a world-class company, that British Gas is trading in more than 45 foreign countries, that British Airways is now one of the most successful airlines in the world, and that our electricity, our power and our telecommunications industries are straddling the world in the best interests of Britain.

Why? It is because we privatised the companies that have made that possible. Let us remember that we did that in the teeth of the opposition of the Labour party. If it had had its way, we would still have huge bureaucracies of politicians and civil servants suffocating the entrepreneurial zeal that the Conservative party has let loose on the world market.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: For the last time.

Mr. Thompson: I have followed the right hon. Gentleman's argument closely for the last few minutes, and he rightly claims that £20 billion has been put into the industry in the period concerned—£8 billion in capital investment. But does he recall that the Conservative party has been in power for the past 15 years, and that he and his predecessors were responsible for policy? Surely policies could have changed over those 15 years so as to accommodate the situation that has developed now.

Mr. Heseltine: If I had to plead guilty to the hon. Gentleman's accusations, I would have to say that I wish that we had privatised the coal industry in the early 1980s. I must make that clear. However, the implication is that, in doing so, we would have gained the serried support of the Labour party, whereas actually it was encouraging the National Union of Mineworkers in any obdurate political action that it could devise to stop the modernisation of the industry. The coal industry has found itself at the end of the queue. More's the pity, and, I suspect, more's the price that the coal industry has paid as a result.

The Bill contains the Government's proposals for restructuring and privatising British Coal. It sets out the necessary provisions for safeguarding pension rights and concessionary fuel entitlements, and those affected by mining subsidence. It also reflects our determination to ensure that the high safety standards in the industry are maintained or improved in the light of the advice of the Health and Safety Commission.

We believe that a competitive energy market is the best guarantee of secure, diverse and sustainable energy supplies in the forms that people and companies want, and at competitive prices. Electricity and gas privatisation have changed the nature of the energy market from a producer-led to a consumer-led market. We have made it a priority to establish a range of substantial privately owned energy companies free to take strategic decisions within a proper framework of regulation. The time has come for the coal industry to enjoy the same freedom.

We examined the prospects for coal within the energy market very carefully during the coal review. On the basis of all the evidence that was presented to us, we had to conclude that there was every prospect that the market would continue to be difficult.

Despite that, it remains the case that coal accounts for over half of all fuel used for electricity generation. On any calculation, coal will continue to be one of the chief sources of energy for the electricity supply industry in the years ahead. The House will remember that we accepted the key recommendation of the Select Committee and have introduced a subsidy for additional sales for electricity generation from deep mined coal. However, the real test is the rate at which the industry can improve its competitiveness.

[Mr. Heseltine]

The industry, as Opposition Members have said, has made considerable strides in improving productivity over recent years. It is only by building on those gains that the industry will compete effectively in future. Privatisation will best ensure that prospect. Time and again, privatisation has demonstrated the ability of industries which had previously lagged behind their international competitors to catch up and, increasingly to set the pace. That is true whether one looks at the docks, at steel, or at a whole range of public utilities. There is every reason to expect that the coal industry will do the same.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the President give way?

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I think that I have given way enough.

Our intention is to offer British Coal's assets for sale in five regional businesses. Those will be based on Scotland, Wales, the north-east, and two parts of the central coalfield. Potential purchasers will be able to bid for one or more packages, and all bids will be considered on their merits. Our proposals will attreact new outside management, and they will give the industry's existing managers and employees the chance to make proposals to take over their own industry.

The Government have made it clear that we are prepared to offer financial support to help potential management and employee buy-out teams to carry their proposals forward.

Mr. William O'Brien: Will the President of the Board of Trade give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

On receiving Royal Assent, the Bill will end immediately the existing statutory restrictions that limit the scale of operations of private sector mines that can be licensed by British Coal. It will provide for a new Coal Authority to carry out those functions of British Coal which would not be appropriate for the private sector.

The new Coal Authority will be based in Nottinghamshire. Its main functions will be licensing of coal mining, owning and granting access to our coal reserves, carrying out British Coal's responsibilities for the physical legacy of past mining to the extent that they are not taken over by the private sector, and making available mining records and geological information.

The Coal Authority must be fully impartial in carrying out its licensing duties, so it will not, therefore, be allowed itself to participate in commercial mining. British Coal will become a licensee of the Coal Authority prior to privatisation. The Bill contins scheme-making powers, similar to those in previous privatisations, for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities of British Coal to other parties as necessary for the privatisation of the business. The Bill provides for the dissolution of British Coal in due course.

I turn now to the critical issue of safety. The coal industry in the United Kingdom has one of the best safety records in the world. I made it clear as soon as I arrived at the DTI that I would do nothing to prejudice that record. I repeat that pledge today. In 1992, we sought——

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the President give way?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member has had a go.

In 1992, we sought the advice of the Health and Safety Commission on the safety implications of privatisation. The commission's full and considered advice was received in October. The Government published that advice, and accepted it in full.

The essence of the commission's advice is that it should continue to be the health and safety regulatory body for the coal industry, that the Health and Safety Executive should be the enforcement authority, and that the framework of legislation must be sufficiently robust to command the continued confidence of the industry and to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained or improved.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: On that point——

Mr. Heseltine: The commission's advice is that there is already a comprehensive framework of law governing the mining industry, with a rigorous inspection and enforcement regime. The commission believes that the work that it has been doing since 1983 to modernise that framework will make an important contribution to ensuring that it is adequate to the demands of a privatised industry.

The commission has also taken steps to ensure that the best practice in British Coal's existing owners' instructions continues to be applied throughout the industry. The work to achieve that is now largely completed. Draft regulations were laid by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 1 October last year to give legal status to a number of the most important requirements of British Coal's safety instructions.

The commission has also recommended that there should continue to be a national rescue service. The commission will consult widely about the way forward. The Bill reflects the advice that we have received from the commission.

Another issue of fundamental concern to employees and former employees of British Coal is pension provision. I am determined that the pension entitlements of those who have given their working lives to the industry, and their dependants, should be fully respected and safeguarded in the process of privatisation. A consultation paper on proposals for British Coal pensions after privatisation was published in September last year. Comments were received from the trustees of the British Coal schemes, from the corporation, from industry unions and from more than 1,000 individuals.

After careful consideration of all the responses to the consultation paper, on 2 December we announced our decisions. All pensioners and deferred pensioners of the mineworkers' pension scheme and the staff superannuation scheme and all currently contributing members will be able to leave their past service entitlements in the schemes, which, on privatisation, will be closed to new members. New industry-wide pension schemes will be created for employees of British Coal and its subsidiaries who are transferred to employment in successor companies.

The Bill provides for the closed schemes to be given a Government solvency guarantee that will ensure that pensions and deferred pensions are increased annually after privatisation, in line with the retail price index by reference to their level at privatisation. In addition, beneficiaries will be able to benefit from any fund surpluses through pension payment increases over and above RPI levels. The new industry-wide schemes will provide the same package of

benefits as the corresponding main scheme. Employees transferred to the new schemes will be given protected person status under the Bill.

The Government believe that those proposals meet in full our commitment to protect pensions under the two existing schemes. The proposals will provide security for pension entitlements earned from service with British Coal and will provide protection for pension entitlements from future service with successor companies. The Bill provides the necessary statutory underpinning for all the safeguards proposed.

Next, I refer to concessionary fuel entitlements. I am again determined that they should be properly safeguarded. A consultation paper on this subject was published in October. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy yesterday announced our conclusions. Responsibility for meeting the entitlements of former employees and their dependants will be transferred to the Government. Successor companies will be responsible for the entitlements of British Coal employees who transfer to them.

I believe that our policies for the treatment of pensions and concessionary fuel fully meet the Government's commitment to safeguard entitlements, and are fair to beneficiaries and to taxpayers. They will provide welcome and essential reassurance to many mining families that their hard-earned entitlements will not be jeopardised.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No. I have given many times.

The Bill addresses the issues of subsidence. There must be proper protection for the rights of householders and others who may be affected by coal-mining subsidence. A large part of the Bill is devoted to establishing a strong regulatory regime for that purpose.

The Coal Authority will take over all British Coal's existing responsibilities for subsidence, except in clearly defined areas where licensees will be responsible. Householders will therefore be in no doubt against whom to claim. It is an enabling power. We have yet to take final decisions as to the extent of the areas for which licensees will be responsible. Obviously, that will need careful consideration, bearing in mind the interests of the industry, the taxpayer, and, of course, the claimants.

The Coal Authority is given a strong duty to ensure that licensees make proper financial provisions for meeting claims, and the power to require that security, possibly in the form of a trust, is provided.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the President give an assurance that the beneficiaries of concessionary coal will continue to receive coal if that is what they wish, and will not be forced to take cash in lieu?

Mr. Heseltine: The answer is yes. But as happens now, there will be arrangements for a financial exchange of those rights if it is agreed with the individuals concerned. The hon. Gentleman's point is well made.

After nearly 50 years in the public sector, the coal industry has acquired exactly the same myths as those that used to haunt other nationalised industries. It is commonly suggested that they can never match the efficiency of their competitors; that their future lies only in an endless continuation of taxpayers' subsidies of one sort or another; that somehow or other they cannot attract significantly worthy management for the task in their control; and that, in the end, only politicians are fit to take the strategic decisions affecting their future. Time and time again, all those myths have been exposed and exploded. In case after case, they are myths.

This Bill will give the coal industry the opportunity to demonstrate that it can compete, it can stand on its own feet, it can attract managers who are the best in the world, and it is fit and able to take control of its destiny. I do not have the slightest doubt that the industry will make good use of that opportunity.

I look forward to the day when private sector coal companies will join other privatised companies as free-standing, competitive enterprises, carrying a new entrepreneurial spirit into the marketplaces of the world. To enable that to happen, we will privatise the coal industry. We will set the industry free to meet the challenges of the marketplace, to innovate, to compete and to win its rightful share in the diversified energy market in the years ahead. That is the Government's policy, and I commend the Bill to the House.

4.21 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The President has presented the Bill to the House in a speech which began with a light essay in history in which he was willing—indeed, enthusiastic—to take interventions, followed by a presentation of the detail of the Bill in which, perhaps wisely, he appeared to be extremely reluctant to take interventions.

My hon. Friends who listened carefully to the speech noticed that there was a gap. We heard about the details of the device by which the Government will privatise the coal industry. We heard about the arrangements for the claims of subsidence. We heard how the Government propose to resolve the bill that will be left for the pensioners of the two coal industry pension funds. It was proper that the President went on at such length about the pension arrangements, as there are now 20 times as many people with a claim on the pension fund as there are left among the dwindling few people working in the pits.

There was a gap in the speech. Although the House heard all the details about how the Government propose to privatise the pits, we did not hear how many pits will be left in the coal industry when it is privatised. The President told us about the arrangements for concessionary coal, but he could not tell us how many pits will be there to dig the coal in the first place. He knows perfectly well how many pits will still be there at privatisation. If he does not know, he should take the Bill away and come back when he is able to answer that question.

On Friday, the Chief Secretary provided us with a timely warning of the threat of this great institution of Parliament being undermined by cynicism. I wholeheartedly agree that there is a danger of the House being undermined by cynicism. What undermines the House is the cynicism of Ministers who will not tell us what is common knowledge within their Departments. It is worse cynicism than that: it is the cynicism of Ministers who think that it is all right to brief the press privately on what they are not prepared to share with the House.

I give the example of *The Times* last Thursday. Someone told *The Times* how many pits will survive privatisation. *The Times* is quite confident that it knows

[Mr. Robin Cook]

how many pits will be closed in the future; the article has the confidence of being accompanied by a photograph of the President of the Board of Trade. It tells us that six pits will close next February. Whoever told *The Times* did a thorough job, because the article names seven pits out of which the six will be chosen.

The same story also appeared in *The Independent*, and the same seven pits are named. If all those pits go, there will be only two left of the famous 12 pits which we were told would be reprieved by the White Paper last March. That White Paper is now so discredited that it makes the Government's tax proposals at the election appear to be models of probity and candour.

A remarkable feature of the list is that most of the pits that are to be closed next month were not even on the President's list of the original 31 pits for closure. They are pits that received a clean bill of health for their financial viability, and where there is no pretence of coal reserves being exhausted. If those seven pits close, they will take with them the 114 years' working life of their coal reserves. That is the scale of the coal reserves which we will lose as a result of the vandalism of pit closures.

The Times obligingly tells us how the closures will be presented to us next month. Those pits, we are told, will be not closed but merged. The pits will be shut down, miners will be sacked and the shafts will be plugged. However, the pits will not be closed. They will become merger-seeking pits.

I would not want Ministers to be embarrassed as they sit on the Front Bench by appearing to be less well-informed than *The Times*. I therefore give them the chance to prove that they know as much as *The Times*. Will they tell the House whether it is true that six pits will shut next February? [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] If it is not true, I will give way also. Can Ministers deny it? Can they tell us how many pits will survive until privatisation? I will give way to anyone on the Government Front Bench who feels that he knows as much as appeared in *The Times*.

I must warn the President of the Board of Trade: if we are to be lectured on cynicism by Government Members, I believe that nothing would demonstrate greater cynicism than to invite Parliament in January to debate and give a Second Reading to a Bill to privatise 22 pits, to proceed to Committee to consider the Bill line by line and then to announce in February, "We are sorry, there are now only 15 pits." That is all that will be left.

If the number is not 15, I will give way. I will give way to anyone on the Government Benches who finds his tongue and who can tell us how many pits will be there, because they know. I would not wish them to think that we believe that they are ignorant or that, like the Prime Minister, they did not read the briefing note or, if they did read it, they did not take it in. We know that they know.

There were 50 pits in operation at the time of the general election. In the next month or two, there may be only 15. There were 44,000 miners employed at the time of the general election. After the next round of closures, there may be 10,300 miners left in the whole of Britain, from Longannet to Point of Ayr. In two years, the Government have closed two thirds of the remaining pits and destroyed three quarters of the remaining jobs.

After that smashing of the industry, how dare the Government pretend to us that privatisation is intended to strengthen the industry? It was to privatise the industry that the Government ran it down to a tiny profitable core. Privatisation brings a new threat of more closures. There is only one real asset which they have to privatise in the Bill, and that is the contracts of British Coal with the generators. The Bill may be selling the jobs of 10,000 miners and the local economy of whole communities. The one thing that the bidder will want to buy is the contract to supply the generators.

The contracts expire in March 1998. By the time privatisation is well down the road, there will be only three years left of those contracts. There is no guarantee that they will be renewed. If they are, there will certainly be another cut in the volume of coal unless the Government act to tackle the rigged market in which those contracts are given.

That is why the President of the Board of Trade has been unable to come to the House today with any expressions of interest from the big private corporations in mining. That is why Rio Tinto Zinc and Hanson are not named in the press reports of what will happen after privatisation. The President was unwise enough to say at a press conference on the day the Bill was published:

"the short duration of contracts with the electricity industry would not deter buyers."

He even mentioned Hanson as a possible buyer. Unfortunately for him, on the same day, the chief executive of Hanson ruled out making a bid on the pithy ground that

"short-term contracts are not our idea of fun."

The President looks like being stuck with bids from second-rank mining companies.

The danger is obvious to those of my hon. Friends with knowledge of the mining industry. It is that companies that must borrow to buy out British Coal will then run the pits with a single objective—to get their money back within the three years left in the contracts. My hon. Friends who have been down mines know that, once it has been decided to run down a pit, a lot of money can be made for a couple of years. One has simply to halt the development work that costs the money and rip out the coal that can be reached easily. The mining equivalent of looting leaves pits robbed of a long-term future.

If Ministers want to assure us that that will not be the outcome of privatisation, they can do so simply by plugging the most obvious hole in the Bill. The Bill provides the scheme by which the new coal authority will privatise the industry by granting licences to operate the present pits.

The clauses contain provisions for all sorts of tests to be made on operators' financial standing and credit rating, just to ensure that the Government get their money out of the measure. Clause 26 makes it perfectly clear what comes first when the coal authority judges an application for a licence—the financial terms on which a mere bid is made for that licence. Nowhere in the Bill is there a requirement on the applicant for a licence to submit a mining plan for a long-term future for the pits.

The test that we shall lay down as to whether privatisation will provide a long-term future for the coal industry will be contained in amendments in which we shall require those who apply for licences to submit a mining plan that will keep a deep-mine coal industry alive into the next century. If Ministers really believe the promises that they have made today that privatisation will provide a long-term future for the coal industry, they will welcome our amendments. They may even offer us drafting assistance to ensure that we get them right. But if

they resist the amendments, they will confirm what everyone in the industry knows—privatisation is pathetically irrelevant to the real pressures on the coal industry.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Does the hon. Gentleman really believe that, if he could have his way tonight and defeat the Bill, there would be a better and longer future for the coal industry in its present form, rather than if it were privatised so that it could compete and get a larger market?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman's intervention conveniently takes me on to what we must do if we are to give coal a long-term, healthier future than at present. The answer to his question is that, if the Government genuinely wanted a long-term future for the coal industry, they would tackle the rigged market that arises from their privatisation of the electricity industry.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is ducking the question.

Mr. Cook: I am not ducking the question. The Government seek to duck the mistakes that they created when they privatised the electricity industry—mistakes that have given rise to the present pressures on the coal industry.

The problem for the coal industry is that it has been squeezed out of a fair share of electricity generation. The President talked of the long-term decline in electricity generation from coal. As recently as 1988—even under this Government—the Central Electricity Generating Board was planning to expand, not contract, coal generation. It applied for consent to build two new coal-fired stations and had prepared plans for a third.

The coal for those three power stations is equal to the output of the half dozen pits that the Government intend to close next month. Those plans were knocked on the head by the privatisation of electricity, a privatisation that opened the door to the dash for gas.

Last week we gained a new ally in our attempts to expose the fact that the privatised electricity market is rigged. The director of business planning at National Power, the biggest privatised electricity company of all, revealed its breakdown of generation costs. That shows that electricity from new gas-fired power stations is one third more expensive than electricity from the coal-fired stations that are being shut to make room for them. That does not even take account of the bogus subsidy offered in the White Paper. I do not take account of it, because the generators have not taken a penny of it.

I put to the President the question which I have asked in every debate on coal in the past year and to which I have received no answer. How can the Government pretend that there is not a rigged market when its effect is to reduce the market for coal even though it produces the cheapest electricity for the consumer? They should present a Bill not to privatise coal or to waste our time on another piece of their dogma but to end that rigged market. That is the way to provide a real future for coal.

The White Paper promised to take some measures to tackle that rigged market—not many, but one or two. One of the factors squeezing coal out of the market is that one of its biggest rivals, the nuclear industry, gets £1 billion subsidy a year. Subsidy is being poured into the most expensive source of electricity. Last month, the chief executive of Scottish Power explained that electricity from nuclear power was now 50 per cent. more expensive than that from coal. However, so daft is the current market that nuclear power is being expanded and coal generation is being cut to make room for it.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In addition to my hon. Friend's comparison, will he comment on the fact that last week British Nuclear Fuels issued figures showing that the cost of decommissioning new nuclear power stations is less than $\frac{1}{100}$th of 1p per kWh? In that context, the justification for the levy against coal-fired generation is completely non-existent.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Select Committee recommended that the nuclear power levy should be ring-fenced so that it was used specifically for decommissioning and not to subsidise current operations. The Committee also recommended that the nuclear review be brought forward to 1993. The Government accepted that, and the White Paper said that that review would be brought forward to 1993. In October, the Minister of State said that the nuclear review would be announced before the end of the year.

I may not carry the Minister of State with me on many issues, but I think that he will agree that we are past the end of 1993 and into 1994. The end of 1993 saw the end of another Government commitment, leaving the question as to how they can find the time, the energy and the priority to produce this thick Bill to privatise coal but cannot get down to the review of one of its main rivals and the biggest subsidised element in the energy industry.

Why cannot the Government do something about French imports, for which we are paying more than 3p per kWh—50 per cent. more than it costs to produce electricity from our own coal?

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): We all know the answer to that.

Mr. Cook: Yes, we do. That is possible only because the Government extended the nuclear subsidy to French imports. Why are not they doing something to tackle that distortion of the rigged market instead of privatising coal? How can the privatisation of coal help in view of those blatant market distortions? Why should a privatised coal industry be any more successful than British Coal in selling coal in that rigged market? For that matter, why should a privatised coal industry be any more successful than British Coal in improving productivity? For the first time, the President acknowledged the remarkable productivity improvements under British Coal.

In the past 10 years, there has been a threefold increase in productivity and in the past year productivity has increased by more than one third. In nine of the past 10 months up to December, output per man shift broke all previous records. That is the achievement of the men down the pits who will be rewarded with closure next month —an achievement which outstrips that of any private industry. It is a public success story. Why can we not keep that success story in the public sector that made it possible in the first place?

One of the features that gives British Coal in the public sector an edge over private companies is that its gain in productivity did not go into private pockets or was not taken out in increased profits; it was passed on in reduced coal prices. In the 10 years to 1992, the price of coal came

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down in real terms by 36 per cent. Since then, the new contract with the new price has reduced the price of coal by 27 per cent. in cash terms. The Government tell us that containing inflation is their top priority. How many private sector industries could claim to achieve the reduction in price that British Coal has achieved over the past five years?

The figures from National Power to which I referred earlier show that electricity can be generated from coal at a cost of 2·1p per kWh. It is currently sold at 2·8p per kWh. That is a mark-up of 33 per cent.—a rip-off produced by the last privatisation that Energy Ministers presented to the House. It is a rip-off at the expense of the consumer and the coal industry.

The President had the nerve to tell the House that nationalisation had created monopoly power. Privatisation will create monopoly power and the abuse of monopoly power. If the President is serious about monopoly power, why is he coming to the House today, not to privatise the coal industry, which has no power, but to address the mistakes made in the last privatisation by tackling the monopoly power of the two giant generators and sending them before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to explain why they are keeping up their prices when the price of the main fuel has fallen so markedly?

The coal industry does not need privatisation to show it how to increase productivity or cut prices. Miners do not need privatisation and they do not want privatisation. How can privatisation improve the safety of the men who work 2,000 ft below the surface of the earth? When those men drop down in cages to work in that dangerous environment, they do not want to think that the people in charge up above are thinking first about the profits of the company. They come from coal communities and they remember when profit was the first priority of the pit owners.

The greatest achievement of the public coal industry was to make Britain's pits the safest in the world—an achievement that is most prized by the men who work in it. Australia has the next safest mining industry in the world and its fatal accident rate is double that of Britain. That is not due to the regulations that the President lays down. British Coal has achieved that safety record because throughout British Coal there is—and it is a story of achievement—a safety culture that permeates every coal-face.

The danger is that, by destroying the structure that created that culture, the Government will destroy the safety to which it gave rise. Why do they propose to tamper with that success story and put it at risk by destroying the structure of the industry that made it possible?

Privatisation will not improve the pensions of the men who have already been pensioned off. The trustees of the pension fund have registered 17 areas of concern about the Government proposals on pensions. They relate to the same issue.

Schedule 5, which deals with pensions, contains no fewer than 20 references to the powers of the Secretary of State. There has been an oversight here. It is about time that the President drew it to the attention of the parliamentary draftsmen that he is no longer Secretary of State but wishes legislation to refer to the powers of the President. Whatever name he chooses, for the first time a Secretary of State has sweeping powers over the miners' pension funds—powers to sack the trustees and powers to require them to use the national interest to override the interests of the miners.

The issue is not whether the pensions will be index-linked to inflation but how any increase in the value of funds will be divided between the Secretary of State and the miners who have created that fund by paying into it. The last person that the members of those pension fund schemes will accept as capable of giving them a fair division of the fund is the person who has taken away their jobs.

I come to the final reason why the privatisation of coal does not make sense. To Conservative Members this may be the clinching reason. The final reason why privatisation does not make sense is that the Treasury will not benefit.

We always knew that, when we opposed the privatisation of electricity, we were wasting our breath. There was a great deal of money to be made from it and the Treasury would steamroller it through whatever the arguments. When the Government discovered that they would not make money out of privatising the nuclear industry, they left it in the private sector.

There is never much money in a fast sell and the Government will not get much money from selling off the rump of the much-reduced coal industry. They will be lucky to get back one third of the money they have poured out in redundancy payments in the past year alone. Not only will the Treasury not get much money, but it will be left with the liabilities for subsidence, for example. The Treasury will get the worst possible deal. It will be left with historic liabilities from the old coalfields without any of the revenue from the current operating pits to help pay for it.

Privatisation is not needed to get the gains in productivity that the coal industry has achieved for itself. It will not resolve the real problems of the coal industry which arise from the privatisation of the electric industry. It will not even make the Government money, so why are they pressing ahead with the privatisation of coal?

It has nothing to do with what is good for the coal industry. That came out strongly in the ideological preamble to the President's speech. The privatisation of the coal industry has everything to do with what is bad about the Government's dogma.

Lord Parkinson first told us that coal would be privatised in a speech to the 1988 Conservative party conference. He described it as the ultimate privatisation. It was also Lord Parkinson who in October 1992 told us the real reason for the closure of 31 pits with when he told "The World at One" that we should never forget that the miners brought down a Conservative Government. The Government never forgot it and as they sink lower in the polls, caught in a web of their own deceits and buried in the rubble of the industries they have destroyed and the public services they have run down, they are determined to take the miners with them.

The Bill is rich in symbolism. I began by reminding the House that the Chief Secretary had given us a sermon on cynicism. The deepest hypocrisy of the Chief Secretary lecturing us on the cynicism undermining national institutions is the fact that he has devoted his entire political career to undermining the national institutions of the post-war settlement—institutions that for 30 years fostered political consensus in a stable society.

A prominent part of the post-war settlement was the nationalisation of the coal industry. For 30 years until the 1970s we had full employment, an excellent national

health service and an education service of which we could be proud. Part of that settlement was the nationalisation of the mining industry. It offered an alternative way of running an industry based on respect for the rights of men who worked underground at the coal face. It was an alternative way of running the industry motivated by the need of the nation for energy, not the desire of owners for profit. The Government cannot comprehend those values. That is why they want to destroy the coal industry. That is why they have found time for this pathetic, irrelevant little Bill.

Of course the Government will win the vote tonight. But the Conservative party is so terrorised by the packs snapping at every straggler that they will all be found huddled together for safety in the same Lobby. I must tell the President that, long after today's speeches are forgotten and he and I are remembered only by our children and their children, the public ownership of coal will be remembered as a brave attempt to provide decency and dignity at work in the foulest conditions, to give expression to the common purpose of the nation by asserting the right of the nation to own the sources of its energy. The Government's betrayal of that great industry and the final insult of this mean little Bill will be remembered as a display of dogma and vindictiveness. We will reject their betrayal of the coal industry tonight, and history will reject that betrayal throughout the century.

4.50 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Whatever else one might say about the speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), it cannot be construed by any stretch of the imagination as a welcome for the Coal Industry Bill. I am glad that, just before the Christmas recess last year, British Coal and its chairman, Neil Clarke, took a rather different line from that of the hon. Gentleman. Neil Clarke welcomed the introduction of legislation to return coal mining to the private sector. I echo his welcome unequivocally as one who represents the modern Selby complex of five integrated and interconnected mines employing some 3,500 people.

Neil Clarke observed realistically enough:

"The market realities will remain, whatever structure emerges from the privatisation process"

But he went on to say:

"Privatisation will help free the industry from some outdated restrictions. It will also allow the interests of coal mining in Britain and the people who work in it to be pursued separately from the interests of Government."

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alison: I shall make a little more progress and then I shall certainly give way to the hon. Lady.

That formal farewell wave by British Coal to the embrace of Government is worth dwelling on for a moment. No industry in Britain has demonstrated so vividly and starkly that state ownership is no panacea and cannot inoculate an industry, however venerable, however widespread, against the pervasive realities of costs, competitiveness and market alternatives.

As all hon. Members who are present will know, the coal industry has been clasped to the breast of Government for nearly half a century in Britain, and by an almost perverse reversal of nature, instead of a suckling infant becoming progressively bigger and stronger over those post-war decades, a viable adult hitched to the paps of Government in 1947 has become progressively weaker and more infantile. The figures of decline are simply astonishing: 718,400 National Coal Board employees in 1947 down to 250,000 by the time Mrs. Thatcher came into office in 1979, with output down from 200 million tonnes in 1947 to about 120 million tonnes today.

Ms Armstrong: I want to ask the right hon. Gentleman a specific question about the public responsibility arising from the consequences of coal mining, whoever owns the mines. It is about the responsibility to the land and to the environment, which will continue for generations and for many a long year beyond anything that we do today. Does he agree that that responsibility, for example, for ensuring that water continues to be pumped from the redundant mines, must lie with Government and that the Bill must address that fully so that in constituencies such as mine someone will accept responsibility for ensuring that the real danger of serious environmental damage is not allowed to arise?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Lady's intervention strikes an echo in my mind and, I am sure, in the minds of many of my hon. Friends. Indeed, that is why the Bill as drafted, postulating the existence and future of the Coal Authority with an indefinate lifespan and with many responsibilities already spelt out, which no doubt will be further spelt out in Committee. This is precisely the mechanism that will ensure that her misgivings are properly attended to.

Even at its lowest evaluation, privatisation could hardly preside over a more dismal decline in a state-owned industry than that which is now on record in the decline from the 718,400 employees in 1947 to the 31,700—a tiny fraction of the original body—that exists today. In my view, privatisation offers an attractive and reassuring prospect of future stability and profitability to the five mines, at least in the Selby complex, into which huge sums of capital have been poured by the Conservative Government.

Productivity at Selby is about four times the British Coal average—30 tonnes output per man shift compared with about the 5 to 8 tonnes national average. If it was run as an independent mining enterprise, Selby could produce and sell coal at prices per tonne that could comfortably beat off any foreign coal at present on offer at any British port, let alone inland. Selby sits cheek by jowl with three of the largest power stations in the kingdom—Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge. Furthermore, its productivity and output can only get better under privatisation. Hence, its prospects are brighter.

Mr. Etherington: The right hon. Gentleman made reference to the 50 years of close contact between the Government and the coal industry. He stated that he thought that privatisation would be much better. Would he care to refer to the 50 years prior to that, when we had a privatised coal industry which was a blight and disgrace on any civilised nation? Does he accept that we are likely to revert back to those standards when we go back to the same criteria for operating an industry, which will surely come when private enterprise takes over again?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman undermines his own argument. If he looks back over the span of nationalisation, going right back to vesting day in 1947, he will see that there was then, as I argued recently, a manpower

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dimension of 718,400 employees in the coal industry and an output of 200 million tonnes a year. That did not come just by flicking the fingers at the moment of nationalisation. It represents a long evolution of 50 years, which the hon. Gentleman attempts to discredit.

That was the treasure and the prize that was placed on the plate of Parliament to nationalise. If it had been such a discreditable, unconstructive and useless period, why was it that the point of nationalisation was the high point of output, quantity and quality in the coal industry? Since then, it has gone steadily and consistently down. That heritage is not to be discredited.

I was saying that the prospects already for Selby are very bright because of its astonishing capacity in terms of output per man shift. Even as one of British Coal's star performers at present, there are shortcomings in efficiency in the Selby complex, particularly in relation to the waste of materials and the somewhat cavalier attitude sometimes taken towards stock control. That shortcoming will be familiar to those whose employment has straddled both public and private sector industrial activity.

Experience of the electricity generating industry is a familiar guidepost in that respect. I received briefings on inefficiency and waste from miners who have worked overground and underground at the Selby complex, and believe that a yet better prospect for output, productivity and profitable coal sales will loom under privatisation.

I hope that an experienced, perhaps international mining or extraction company will perceive the jewel that glitters in the Selby coalfield and seek to bid for it. The hon. Member for Livingston mentioned National Power and PowerGen in particular. Local generators should not overlook the marvellous asset that lies so close to hand. National Power has just invested millions of pounds in a flue gas desulphurisation plant at Drax and is thus committed to coal for many years. It should certainly consider a bid for the hand, so to speak, of the Selby complex.

The closeness of that profitable mining operation to huge power stations suggests that one third of British Coal's entire prospective output of 30 million tonnes a year within the next few years could be produced at the Selby complex alone. That is a profitable and attractive basis not only for maintaining Selby's existing output but for increasing it. I believe that privatisation offers that.

I want my right hon. Friend the President to register one or two cautionary notes. The industry's effective restructuring will depend crucially on the skills and dedication of relatively few key miners and managers, whose services will be essential in putting privatisation in place.

In the worst scenario, one such miner or manager might deliberately forgo the option of early retirement or redundancy and suffer the loss of a huge redundancy payment out of his dedication to seeing the transition through to its conclusion—only to find that he had inadvertently done himself out of a subsequent long-term post in the new structure and had forgone his entitlement to the redundancy package to which he might have been eligible, had he chosen redundancy, and thus ends up with nothing.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will put such possibilities under a microscope. Without his action to safeguard prospects and future employment, the maintenance of essential morale and motivation at all levels will falter—particularly among those who will be responsible for seeing through the transition.

I am deeply concerned about one or two narrower but significant aspects, and echo points made to me this afternoon by representatives of the Country Landowners Association. A compulsory rights order is a form of compulsory purchase order that applies to leases, with reversions at the end. CROs are used by British Coal for the acquisition, for example, of temporary rights for opencast operations. CROs are a familiar phenomenon at present, but it seems inappropriate for the new private companies or licence holders to enjoy the almost absolute, draconian power that British Coal currently enjoys through the CRO machinery. In the new privatised environment, normal private treaty negotiations should be the order of the day between private licensed holders and private landowners and the CRO procedure made redundant.

I am concerned also about the future of working rights agreements, which are used and operated by British Coal but which are apparently destined for transfer intact and unmodified to the new private licence holders and owners. The unqualified transfer of WRAs would be inappropriate. Most were concluded by British Coal and private landowners under the somewhat coercive shadow of the possible use of compulsory rights orders, so WRAs were reached under modest duress. Most made only cursory provisions for current payments, terminal payments or indemnity payments to make good damage done when the agreements come to an end.

The cursory character of such agreements has not mattered much in the past because behind the National Coal Board or British Coal lay the vast resources of the Exchequer. Everyone knew that the various payments for which WRAs provided would ultimately be available. No such basic security will exist in respect of the private company heirs and successors to British Coal, which may find themselves in real financial difficulty at certain points in their operation. Current WRAs should be updated and revised, and any that apply to prospective operations should be surrendered. It would not be appropriate to carry through that mechanism into the new structure without modification and amendment. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give that some thought.

Landowners should have the right of notification when licence bidders apply to the authority, in the same way as they receive information when a local authority causes a planning application to be made public and drawn to the attention of all and sundry in the surrounding countryside. The same should apply with prospective licence holders, so that people on the ground know what is in prospect. Two thirds of the Country Landowners Association's members are owners of fewer than 100 acres—mostly farmers. It is essential that their modest inhibitions and doubts should come under close scrutiny by my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, probably in Committee, and that appropriate amendments be made.

Unlike the hon. Member for Livingston, and on behalf of the Selby complex—which has a glittering future—I warmly welcome the provisions that my right hon. Friend has introduced today. I hope that the Bill will mark a new era for many miners and many mines throughout the United Kingdom.

5.8 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I want to raise several matters of concern. It is a pity that the President of the Board of Trade is leaving the Chamber, because I wanted to refer to his typical performance this afternoon, which was long on rhetoric and short on detail. No doubt most Opposition Members will endeavour to extract that detail. I hope that the Minister who replies will take note of the comments by Opposition Members with many years' experience of the industry.

I need hardly make clear my personal view of the principle of the Bill. I am firmly opposed to privatisation. The Government have spent many months preparing the ground for privatisation, beginning the process back in October 1992 with a mass closure programme. They were determined then—as they still are—to reduce the industry to what they consider a manageable size: between 10 and 15 pits. They have effectively undermined the industry's safety structure with measures that they introduced while Parliament was in recess, showing their complete contempt for parliamentary democracy.

Those of us who have spent many years of our lives in the industry were horrified by the proposal to deregulate the industry in preparation for privatisation. The Government's plans prove that they are fundamentally concerned with ideology and their continuing grudge against the coal industry, rather than with what is best for the industry and the country as a whole.

As Ministers well know, the industry's problem is not the question of ownership, but the question of market share. It has lost its market share as a direct result of the Government's energy policy—or, rather, their lack of an energy policy. The Government failed to redress the imbalance that they had created, because it was all part of their master plan. They allowed the electricity companies to move away from coal, encouraged the dash for gas and sat back while regional electricity companies made long-term deals to ensure that they could control the supply of gas that they bought. The privatised companies will profit; the taxpayer and the consumer will lose.

As a direct result of the faults in the Government's thinking, pits have been closed on a massive scale—and there are more closures to come. There are now only 22 working collieries in British Coal, compared with 50 in October 1992, and recent newspaper reports suggest that the Government's axe is dangling over a further seven. No doubt Ministers are pleased that they seem to be meeting their original target, and do not care about the misery that they have brought to thousands of miners and their families.

Interested parties are worried chiefly about the number of holes in the Bill. We are being asked to vote for a measure that is only half complete. Vital concerns—concerns of great importance to mining communities such as those in north Doncaster—have yet to be resolved fully, or even addressed. The number of job losses is immense: 180,000 jobs have been lost since the strike of 1984-85. My area has just lost its last two pits, Bentley and Hatfield, which has meant the loss of more than 700 jobs. That does not include all the jobs lost through redundancy in previous months.

However, despite the appalling problems with which mining communities have been presented, the Bill is silent about the Government's plans for the future of British Coal Enterprise. Only passing mention is made of BCE, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of British Coal. It is important for the Government to make clear what they intend to do with BCE. The services that it provides are needed more than ever, given the increased number of pit closures: the Government must ensure that that source of help for men who have lost their jobs, and for local businesses, is maintained in the months and years ahead. I hope that Ministers will be able to give us more details about their intentions—if not today, in the near future.

The Bill is also relatively silent about the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, known as CISWO. Although it provides for the abolition of the Miners' Welfare Act 1952, it sets out no alternatives. I hope that the Minister will soon be able to dispel the uncertainty that still surrounds CISWO's future; I know that he has been examining the position, and I believe that we would all have liked to hear concrete proposals today.

CISWO plays an important role in mining communities. It provides recreational facilities such as welfare halls, playing fields and social clubs, as well as providing important social services such as convalescent homes. Its social work helps disabled miners and their families. If the Bill makes no provision for them, those services could well be lost to local communities. That would be a huge loss, which would place additional burdens both on local authorities such as Doncaster metropolitan borough council and on the mining communities themselves.

Many people would be affected by the loss of CISWO's services. The whole mining community can use its recreational facilities, and it estimates that more than half a million people may require its assistance. Those people's needs must be recognised. I call on the Minister to ensure that full provision is made for the continuation of CISWO's work, so that local authorities are not left to carry the financial can.

So far, CISWO has been financed by proceeds from the coal industry and miners' contributions. Adequate provision must be made to ensure that its services are maintained and that help is available to keep them going; otherwise, elderly and disabled people will suffer, and valuable facilities used by the whole community will be lost.

There is also concern about the pension fund changes announced by the Minister in December—in a pretty diabolical way, by means of a parliamentary answer. I understand that discussions about the operation of the funds following privatisation are still taking place; I hope, however, that the Minister will be able to respond to anxieties raised by the trustees of both pension schemes about the extent of the Secretary of State's powers over the funds. Pensioners are entitled to know that the money that they have worked hard to earn is safe, and that it will continue to pay them a decent pension in the years to come.

Pensioners are also entitled to know that the Government will guarantee to increase benefit levels if necessary. The Government's present proposals mean that, as a guarantor of the scheme, they should be able to cream off a large part of the surplus. Unless they can provide a cast-iron guarantee that pensions will be increased by more than the retail prices index, many pensioners will rightly feel that they are being ripped off.

The Bill is totally inadequate. It contains no plans for an overall energy policy, and no recognition of the fact that the private sector failed in the marketplace when it was last in control of the industry. The Government cannot even justify their proposals on the basis of their most popular

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argument—that nationalised industries are overstaffed and inefficient. Not even the Tories can say that about the present coal industry.

Only last week British Coal boasted about the latest productivity records. Miners broke the record of 10 tonnes per man shift for the first time in the industry's history. So the legislation is not about dealing with an inefficient industry. It is purely and simply about the Tory dogma of privatisation. In pursuit of it, the Tories have wreaked havoc in our communities.

Only this Tory Government could be stupid enough to destroy an industry that should be supplying our base energy needs. Their theory is simple: if it is public, it is no good, and do not let the facts get in the way of a good privatisation. These people are manic about privatisation no matter the cost in money or human misery. From public funds, the Government will gladly take care of the billions of pounds of liabilities and let their friends in the public sector cream off the millions of pounds of profits.

I stress that there is absolutely no justification for the privatisation. The Government know it, we know it, the miners know it and the public know it. The only things that could possibly come out of coal privatisation are higher electricity bills, the sterilisation of a magnificent national asset, a return to unsafe practices underground and the destruction of our coalfield communities.

5.20 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in the debate. Perhaps at the outset I should declare an interest. I am a partner in a large firm of solicitors and among our clients we have had many people who are affected in many different ways by the coal industry and will have a strong interest in the outcome of the Bill.

I have always been a strong supporter of privatisation. Everything that I have seen of the privatisation process so far has confirmed that belief. Companies have outstandingly improved their performance in the private sector simply because the basic management decisions are left to those who run the industry instead of managers being always second-guessed by the Government. I can see no reason why the coal industry should not also be the beneficiary of that process. I believe that the coal industry has suffered considerably because it was so far down the queue of privatisation in an energy industry most other members of which have already been able to reap the benefits of freedom.

I wish to raise four specific points which I imagine will affect many of my colleagues in the House as well as myself and my constituency. The first point is about coal-fired power stations. It would have been far better, had it been possible, for the coal industry to be privatised in the 1980s as a package of power stations and the coalfields supplying them. The great weakness that the coal industry has suffered in a competitive environment is that it can sell coal only to a relatively small handful of customers whereas it ought to be able to sell electricity competitively.

In the past two or three years, groups of people have looked at the prospects for putting power stations and coalfields together, but the idea has always foundered on the rock of PowerGen and National Power insisting on unreasonable prices for redundant coal-fired power stations. It should be put clearly on the record at this stage that that is unacceptable and uncompetitive. If it means a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, so be it.

The coal industry must have the opportunity of access to the provision of electricity so that we can expand and enhance the competitive energy environment in this country. If the course of privatisation had not been distorted by the miners' strike in the 1980s, such a system would already have been in place.

My second point is about the industrial health of individual miners. I understand that the Bill provides that those who have retired from the industry before privatisation and those who retire on privatisation will retain intact any claims directly or indirectly against the Government resulting from ill health perhaps derived from events early in their mining careers. Equally, I understand —the principle must be right, that those miners who transfer to the private sector will have their rights transferred with them primarily against the private sector company which employs them.

It is important that the Government give a clear undertaking that if, for example, a miner in his mid-40s who, in the early part of his career suffered the cause of an industrial injury which appears much later in his life, goes into the private sector and if that private company fails for some reason or another, perhaps in circumstances in which there are unsatisfactory insurance arrangements for the company's liability, his residual rights relating to his period of employment with British Coal will remain intact. It is vital in justice and equity that those rights should not be extinguished.

Thirdly, I wish to deal with the powers of compulsory purchase. It is one thing for the public sector to exercise compulsory purchase powers; it is another thing for those powers to be transferred to the private sector. My hon. Friend the Minister must make it clear that there will be no fundamental change in the way in which those powers are exercised as a consequence of the privatisation of the coal industry.

The whole issue of compulsory purchase for coal should be put on exactly the same footing as the gravel industry or any other opencasting or quarrying activity in the private sector. I know that my hon. Friend envisages a transition period, but I would require persuading that such a transition period, is necessary. If it is necessary, excessive use of compulsory purchase powers should not become a blight for many of our constituents during the interim period. In other words, I wish to see the public sector, through the coal authority, maintain tight control over the exercise of compulsory purchase powers and ensure that the exercise of those powers comes firmly within the general area of Government accountability.

The fourth point that I wish to raise is, for my constituency, the most important—the general issue of opencasting. It relates to part II of the Bill and its interaction with the consultation exercise now under way on mineral planning guidance 3. The interaction of the Bill with planning law will be of the gravest possible concern to many Members of Parliament and their constituents across areas where there have been coal workings in the past and which now face a huge rash of new opencast applications.

It must be clear that, in most circumstances, there is no longer any national priority to justify the extraction of opencast coal. It is the opposite. If we agree that there is a

need to maintain a strategic reserve of coal for the future for unforeseen circumstances, opencastable coal is the best way of preserving that strategic reserve while we use the already developed deep-mined coal.

I am not completely opposed to opencasting. Three separate issues have to be addressed which I should like to illustrate in the context of my constituency. Where there is dereliction, opencasting can be the best way of dealing with it. In my constituency we had a huge site at St. Aidan's which was flooded when the river wall between the River Aire and the Aire and Calder canal collapsed causing a massive problem in the constituency. There was widespread consultation on the methods of dealing with that problem, extensive involvement of the local community and the local authority granted planning consent for further opencasting with the support of all parties. A private Bill came before the House in the previous Session of Parliament.

That seems an entirely appropriate way in which opencasting can provide for dealing with dereliction and the enhancement of the countryside and the environment when that opencasting has been completed. In the interim, it will often provide a substantial financial gain to local community groups as part of the exercise. It has certainly done so in my constituency.

I also accept that, when a major new road programme runs across existing or past mine workings, there is a strong case—within the confines of that programme, in terms of the time allowed and of restricting work to the most limited area necessary—for allowing coal to be taken ahead of road building, so that the land can be graded and the road built more easily and expeditiously. The A1-M1 link road will go through my constituency and no doubt opencast coal mining applications will be made so that the route can be stabilised; I accept that that will be necessary.

However, nowadays, when environmental issues are far more important, it is not acceptable for opencast applications to be made for green-field sites, where there is no dereliction. Such applications are being made for the most sensitive areas of green belt in my constituency. There are a variety of important and exceptionally sensitive green belt areas around Garforth in my constituency, separating the Garforth community from the Leeds conurbation on one side and from Kippax village on the other. That is the core of planning, and I want it clearly spelled out that local planning authorities can reject unsuitable applications on environmental and planning grounds.

I have considered carefully part II of the Bill and the MPG3 consultation document which has been published by the Department of the Environment. I recognise that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot provide me with answers today because a consultation process is under way, which will expire in a couple of months. Having looked at the consultation document, I submit my speech as part of that consultation process. When one is attracting high-quality world-class investment in manufacturing industry, as is the case in Garforth, where there is a good environment and the planning ethos of the area has long since moved from its roots in the coal industry, it must be clear that there will be good and satisfactory grounds for rejecting opencast applications.

The consultation document refers to the role of unitary development plans. In West Yorkshire, we already have the benefit of unitary authorities, and in the Leeds area we are engaged in a major consultation exercise, which will shortly result in the commencement of public inquiries for our unitary development plan. I see that there is also scope within that plan for a minerals plan

From reading the documents, I do not know the extent to which the exercises can be put together. If the unitary development plan specifies that certain areas must be left as open land, to protect the separate identities of communities and the quality of the environment for developments in those communities, that should be honoured in the planning process and should not be overridden by opencast applications. That must be right, not merely from the point of view of people who live in the area but from that of the opencast industry, which does not want to incur the odium of public protest time and again and ought to focus clearly on those areas where opencast mining will be acceptable rather than those where it will not.

I am happy for the House to give the Bill a Second Reading and will watch with great interest how the debate develops in Committee and during the consultation process on MPG3. I hope that, by the time that the Bill returns to this Chamber on Report, the answers to those questions and to the three questions that I have asked earlier will be clearly answered. If my hon. Friend the Minister is to carry many of my colleagues with him on Report and Third Reading, we must be given clear answers on those issues.

5.34 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Tonight's debate is about the long-term future of our main non-renewable source of energy. The background to the debate—judging by what the President of the Board of Trade said, it is much delayed as far as the Tories are concerned—is that the coal industry has been in decline for 20 years. We all know that that is because of the decrease in sales to the electricity supply industry, which is its principal market.

The way in which the Government dealt with that industry, especially in the past 10 years, and the fact that it has moved to using gas-fired power stations has caused the gradual dying of the coal industry. The domination of electricity generation by the two companies that the Government set up—National Power and PowerGen—and the monopoly in distribution, which has been given to one regional electricity company in each area, have had the coal industry by the neck.

We could have had, and still could have, an energy-efficient and cleaner coal industry. Coal is a natural mineral resource, which remains a crowning national asset. If the Government had wanted to liberalise the market, they could have done so without jeopardising efficiency or the security of supply. Instead, because of the way in which the Government tackled the electricity industry several years ago, they have made it impossible for the coal industry to survive at a size at which it could otherwise have done.

The President of the Board of Trade, like his colleague the Prime Minister, has obviously not read the documents produced by the Liberal Democrats. That is a common Government failing. Perhaps they are also failing to read the opinion polls. If they had read both, they might be doing better.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has.

Mr. Hughes: Yes, he appears to have done so.

We have never opposed the privatisation of the coal industry. However, we have opposed and will oppose, which is why we will vote against the Bill tonight——

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): On one hand, and on the other.

Mr. Hughes: Not at all. We have been consistent throughout and have always made it clear that we cannot expect the coal industry to survive as one of the sources of energy supply if we rig the market to its disadvantage in advance. Unless coal is allowed to compete fairly, it will be fighting with one hand tied behind its back. The central issue is not whether coal should be in the public or the private sector.

What opportunity is there for the coal industry to sell its product? The market has not changed during the past 10 years from the perception of the Government. The President of the Board of Trade may tell us that one reason why coal has done badly is that it was not privatised several years ago, but that would be a bit rich from a Government who have privatised everything else and could have put coal on the agenda a decade ago.

What has happened? During the past few years the industry has died the death of about 50 cuts—27 mines have already closed, four are out for market testing and there are only 18 to go. The former Secretary of State for Energy called it the "ultimate privatisation". None of us realised that "ultimate privatisation" meant privatisation when everything else had gone and there was nothing left to privatise.

We have inherited as a race the black energy jewel of coal in our energy-diverse crown; yet, years before the sale, the Government took away the glass case of any protection. They then, in the disguise of the electricity generators, sent in people to smash, and now they will put up the industry for others to grab. What the Tories destroy they later sell off.

It should not, and need not, have been like that. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, correctly, that coal, without distorting subsidy to other sectors, is still cheaper than two of its main competitor industries. It is cheaper than nuclear power, which has had a persistent and consistent subsidy from the Government—the only reason why the Government did not privatise the nuclear industry was that they realised that no one would buy it—and it is cheaper than electricity derived from gas.

The figures were provided last week. The figures for electricity produced, as given by the bosses of National Power, are 2·7p per kWh in relation to gas and 2·1 per kWh in relation to coal. That difference in cost could have made up for the cost of fitting and running flue gas desulphurisation equipment at Drax. One could have used the differential money to do to the power stations what was necessary to improve them in environmental terms. Coal has never lost in terms of competitiveness, it has never lost in terms of its price advantage and it has never failed—the figures continue to improve—in its productivity. We have produced British coal increasingly effectively and efficiently.

The words used by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), in his personal statement came to mind when, in the past few days, I was thinking about the debate today. He said to the Prime Minister, in his first speech from the Back Benches:

> "I now wish to say one thing to him; it goes to the heart of the way in which the Government conduct themselves. There is something wrong with the way in which we make our decisions . . . As a result, there is too much short-termism . . . not enough shaping of events . . . We are . . . the trustees of the nation." —[*Official Report*, 9 June 1993; Vol. 226, c.282.]

Tonight, we are watching the final act of a policy that, above all, is a short-term policy. First, it was a short-term employment policy. Just when the country wanted, and needed as nothing else, more people to be employed, the Government stood by and allowed pit after pit to close and community after community effectively to be put out of work.

Secondly, it was a short-term economic policy because it was, and remains, in the economic interests of our nation that we produce cheap coal, not only so that we can buy it at home for the uses at home and do not have to import it and buy it from abroad, but so that we can sell it abroad too —we have some of the best coal in the world.

Thirdly, it was a short-term energy policy, because, if one cuts out of the alternatives that supply of which we have the largest reserves, if one takes away and closes pits that one then cannot reopen, one reduces the diversity and the security of supply that we may need when the dash for gas is no longer as economically advantageous as it is at the moment.

It is that neglect of long-termism—that adoption of short-termism—for which we criticise the Government's energy policy and for which, sadly, we have had to criticise the Government on so many other issues over the years.

Coal offered, and still offers, security, diversity and competitiveness of supply. It offers good productivity, good quality and good competitiveness. It lacked only a chance to have a fair crack of the whip. All of us who have been down pits—even those of us who have not been employed in pits—ought to pay tribute to those who have so well served the industry, fought for it and kept Britain served by the power from the industry. It is not their fault that there has been no national planning, no national strategy and no reconciliation of the interests of coal, gas, oil, potentially nuclear power—although my party opposes it—and renewable energy sources.

The issue has never been, "Who owns the pits?" The issue has always been, "Why rig the market?" The prospects for coal—the title of the Government's paper of a year ago—were determined when the Government fixed the structure for electricity at the very start of its term.

Whatever our view about how we got here, some questions are not answered by the Bill. There is no clear sign that the Government are committed to keeping coal as a national asset indefinitely, as we believe that they should. Coal should be a Crown asset for all time and only licences to extract and to mine should be given. The rights to ownership of the coal should never be given away.

Questions about the historic liabilities are also left unanswered. The Minister knows well that through, for example, subsidence claims, there are significant and costly liabilities that will cross over the transition from the public sector to the private sector. I gather that the claims in 1992-93 in relation to subsidence alone were about £46 million. Who will pay those claims? If the plan is for them to be transferred in part to the new owners, what is the prospect of the new owners buying if they have to inherit an unquantified amount of liability as part of the package?

There are worries—there have been interventions and contributions on the subject—about a range of environmental liabilities. The first of those worries is about contaminated mine water, the subject of an intervention by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) when the President opened the debate. The National Rivers Authority has told the Government that it has inadequate powers to deal with pollution from water from abandoned mines. There have been dramatic illustrations of that, and not only in coal mines—for example, Wheal Jane in Cornwall only a few months ago. The liability needs to be determined and, above all, the resources need to be put in. They need to be national resources and it is the responsibility of the Government to supply them.

There is no provision in the Bill for long-term liability for gas emissions, a common danger with our pits. The Minister for Energy said recently that the Government would ensure that all current responsibilities in respect of the physical legacy of historic mining would continue to be discharged, and that those that were not taken by successor bodies would fall to the public sector. Before the Bill can be approved, people need to know which fall where and which the Government will keep to themselves.

The most important environmental topic was the subject of the speech by the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) —opencast mining. If we are not careful, we shall not have given up the need for coal, but we shall have substituted for using deep-mined coal in mines that are already there, opencast mining in the countryside, where it is far less acceptable and often far less advantageous. There have been few guarantees that there will be protection for our communities from opencast mining. Opencast mining can be as much of a blight on our communities as ever were pits and spoil from deep-mined coal, and not just immediately but for a considerable period afterwards.

When he winds up, will the Minister be able to assure us that no approval will be given to the Government's mineral planning guidance as set out in MPG3 until the House has debated it after the present consultation period, and until there is cross-party assent in both Houses to a regime that will protect our green and pleasant land in Scotland, England and Wales from the ravages of opencast mining, and that will not allow exploitative applications? As the hon. Member for Elmet said, such applications are often approved only because local considerations are not allowed to apply, and the national interest, whatever it may be, is said to be overriding. That has been a blight on many of our communities. It is unacceptable, and needs to be changed. I hope that the Government will give specific guarantees.

By the Government's own definition, the Bill has been long delayed. The danger is that there will now be a quick sell-off of the small part of the industry that is left. It is rather as if the Government, having stood by while the industry was run down, are now washing their hands of it as they try to sell it off. There is a suspicion that that was the intentional plan all the time, and that the Government knew that they would not be able to sell the coal industry until it had been run down, so, willingly and knowingly, they acted as accomplices in that process. That is a tragedy, because it need not have happened.

The new general secretary of the TUC has said:

"History will charge this Government with the murder of the British coal mining industry. Now, in the ultimate insult, they are seeking to sell off the dismembered body".

It is odd that the "ultimate privatisation" is perceived by the great British public to be the "ultimate insult" to that great industry of ours. The Government are trying to walk quickly away from responsibility; they say that the marketplace can provide, but they have the responsibility for a national energy policy. For 14 years we have never seen it; for 14 years we have paid the price, and all that we can do with the Bill now is to hope that the House and another place will make the best of a thoroughly bad job.

5.52 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I strongly agree with the part of the speech by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that echoed the earlier contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), about the protection that needs to be provided and assured, in the Bill and in related legislation, in connection with opencast applications, especially in the countryside and in areas of outstanding natural beauty. It would be entirely unacceptable for the Government to be a party to closing down a large slice of such a major industry as the deep-mined coalfields of this country, only to spawn a mass of opencast workings on the surface. That is the last thing we need.

I warmly welcome the decision to privatise the coal industry. I believe it to be axiomatic that anything that the state can run, private industry could run better, more efficiently and more cheaply. However, I am bound to say that I regret the fact that once again we have too little, too late.

Privatisation should have been carried out sooner. Indeed, the President of the Board of Trade almost conceded as much in his opening speech. Certainly it should have been carried out before the industry was decimated in the wake of electricity privatisation. Now, there is little left to privatise; two thirds of the pits have gone since we first debated the subject at the beginning of this Parliament 15 or 16 months ago. Three quarters of the jobs in the industry have gone in that time, or are on the point of disappearing—30,000 jobs all told. I count that an unnecessary tragedy.

I trust that the Government will be successful in finding buyers for the residue of the industry. Above all, I hope that they can find buyers intent on operating the mines on a long-term basis, who are prepared to invest in them. We do not need the industry to be delivered in to the hands of the rape and pillage merchants, who will take out as much coal as is readily accessible but will make no investment in the future of the industry or of its work force.

The Government's determination to saddle new prospective owners with the responsibilty for past liabilities in respect of subsidence and of the health of the work force—no doubt one sees the hand of the Treasury there—appears to be a major disincentive, set against the relatively limited likely profits. On the face of it, it would appear unreasonable for the Government to seek to pass on to the new owners the responsibility for past damage done to the health of miners employed for many years, perhaps two decades or more, by British Coal. I should be grateful if the Minister for Energy, when he winds up, would deal with that matter.

For example, to take an extreme case, what would happen if, after a single year of working in the private sector, a miner or group of miners, having previously worked for 20 years for British Coal, developed

[Mr. Winston Churchill]

pneumoconiosis? Under the terms of the Bill, the new owner would have to bear the entire cost of compensating that individual, although the damage would almost certainly have been caused while the miner or miners concerned worked for British Coal, when, in earlier years, there was no provision for effective dust sampling, and it was not the norm for masks to be worn.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if the industry is to be privatised, the way forward on pneumoconiosis is for the Government to accept the no-fault liability scheme currently run by the industry, and to carry it over to the private sector?

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman almost takes the words out of my mouth. I was about to ask my hon. Friend the Minister and his ministerial colleagues whether they realised that such unquantified and unquantifiable liabilities are likely to act as a supreme disincentive.

Furthermore, to take up the point made by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), what would happen to such a miner if his new employer went into liquidation? That is quite possible, given the present turmoil in the coal market in this country, and the fact that not a tonne is now being purchased—indeed, I am not aware that any of the £500 million subsidy supposedly on offer from the Treasury has had to be ponied up so far. What protection would there then be for the miner with pneumoconiosis or any other industrial disease? That is clearly something that must be properly addressed.

I know that it is the view of my hon. Friend's Department that pneumoconiosis is no longer a significant problem in terms of the numbers of new cases that are appearing, and that therefore the cost burden will not be great. In those circumstances, would it not be more appropriate for the Coal Authority to shoulder responsibility for that serious, long-term industrial disease?

If those unquantifiable liabilities were removed, not only would that make the remaining mines more saleable, but it would be the miner's guarantee that his compensation would be assured in the event that he developed that much-feared industrial disease, which bears comparison only——

Mr. Jack Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member for Davyhulme, but I was also under the impression that it was a convention of the House that one did not read newspapers during a debate. I see that one hon. Member is doing so.

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Let me rule on one point of order before I take another. I had not noticed that any hon. Member had been reading a newspaper. If that was the case, I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will not continue to do so.

Mr. Moss: I am happy to clear up the situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was reading an article about the Drax clear-up, which is relevant to the debate.

Mr. Churchill: Not only would the removal of those unquantifiable liabilities make the mines more saleable, but it would be the miner's guarantee that his compensation would be assured if he were to develop pneumoconiosis. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends if they will look at that question again.

The most striking difference between the sale of British Coal's core mines and the sale of steam coal properties in the world's biggest free coal market, the United States, is the shortness of the coal contracts with the power stations available in the country to potential new operators. The one certainly dominating the scene is that only three years of contracts remain with the generators. Beyond that, there is only uncertainty. Even the generators believe that, of all the coal-fired stations, only Drax is likely to be on base-load operation by the turn of the century.

Of course, it is too late to extract longer contracts from the generators, but, even now, there are two things that the Government could do to encourage would-be purchasers of the remaining mines. First, they could insist on the completion of flue gas desulphurisation at Ferrybridge—a bargain made at the time of electricity privatisation with the industry and referred to many times by the noble Lord Wakeham. The industry should be held to that. Secondly, and even more importantly, the Government should require redundant coal-fired stations to be made available at reasonable prices to other operators, including the principal coal producers.

We know that the regulator is concerned to see redundant stations offered to other users. However, he does not believe that he has the powers to require it. It is clear that National Power bases its asking price on the loss of sales value for its best stations. That would have the effect of pricing, for example, a 1,000 MW station—even one that is 35 years old and without gas cleaning—at over £300 million, which would be indefensible in terms of investment by a future private operator.

That is in stark contrast to the sales on the real market. Recently, it was reported that PowerGen sold three stations to China for a mere £20 million.

Mr. O'Neill: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully, and I have some sympathy with it. Perhaps he might consider as a possible conclusion that the generators should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The only difficulty with that conclusion is that it would interrupt the Government's proposals to sell off the remaining tranche of shares of the two generators and would prejudice the sums that may be involved. If one has an abuse of monopoly power, it is logical to refer it to the MMC.

Mr. Churchill: I could not agree more. It is a matter of great regret that we in Britain appear to have a significantly less powerful regime against monopolies and the abuse of monopoly power than, for instance, the United States, which clearly acts to the detriment of consumers. The Government need to address that as a matter of urgency.

If the two generators were required to offer all the redundant coal plant at reasonable prices, it would boost the sales prospects of the remaining mines, provide the best guarantee that those who earn their living in the industry have the prospect of long-term employment, while at the same time providing consumers with much-needed competition in what is at present an over-restricted and an over-controlled market.

It is vital that the Government do not allow what is left of that once great industry to be blighted by an unwillingness on their part to address the abuses and

distortions that have arisen in the wake of electricity privatisation. While welcoming the Bill, I call on my right hon. and hon. Friends to fine-tune it during its passage through the House to ensure the success of privatisation and to offer the industry and those who work in it a clear and prosperous future in the private sector.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the House of Madam Speaker's ruling earlier today that speeches between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm will be limited to 10 minutes. We are now in that period.

6.7 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) clearly does not have the same enthusiastic view of public ownership as his revered grandfather. Apart from that, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join those of us who hope to serve on the Standing Committee, in which, perhaps with the assistance of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), we shall be able to fine-tune some aspects of the Bill, not least with regard to the latter points of his speech and the question of opencast mining, which cause some of us who live in the coalfields considerable anxiety.

On one side, we shall have the sites of destroyed pits, and on the other the devastation of a long period of opencasting, which no one in the local communities wanted. I hope that the consultation over the arrangements for opencast mines will not diminish the influence of local communities and their local authorities so that distant people can help rape what is left of our heritage.

It is a long time since nationalisation. It is appropriate to tell the House that, on vesting day in 1947, when I was a schoolboy, I went with my father and stood at the celebration of this decision by the greatest of post-war Governments. It was an interesting experience for a boy, because it was quiet, it was dignified and it was decent. There were some Tories there, but they were probably on the platform with one or two local dignitaries. I remember that because of the quiet satisfaction and decency of the occasion.

The other day, I stopped my car just to the north of the former pithead baths at Manvers colliery, exactly where I had stood with my father, and thought about what had happened since then. We have had 33 years of Conservative administration, and we, after being in office for only a minor part of the period that has elapsed since then, bear all the blame.

I know what the men were satisfied about and what they were celebrating. Each and every one of them would have known somebody or had relatives or neighbours who had been killed in the pit. Each of them would have known men who had been maimed. Each and every one of them would have known the short-cuts that had operated in the previous arrangements. They had seen waste and lost opportunities —so much so that, during the war, they had to have "Bevin boys" to make up for the inadequate provisions of the 1920s and 1930s.

The mine was taken into public ownership with good will. It was a very important decision. In the 1970s, the Labour Government—the hon. Member for Davyhulme took part in some of the debates, as I did—produced their "Plan for Coal". The Conservative party in opposition enthusiastically supported it, and, until recent years, boasted about it.

We then saw the Conservative Government turning their backs, saying what a pity it was that the miners had not improved productivity earlier. In fact, productivity has been improving at a rate of knots in the past six or seven years. I heard Lord Haslam castigate the Secretary of State only a few months ago for not understanding that fact.

We have many problems, but, with a 10-minute limit on speeches, I cannot refer to all of them, but I hope that I serve on the Committee and that Opposition Members will find time, without attempting to prolong the proceedings improperly or unreasonably, to consider matters such as the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation and concessionary pensions. We have heard little about the rake-off that the Government proposed to take from the surplus. I hope that we are also able to consider environmental responsibilities and health and safety matters.

Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are unable to speak in the House. From your experience of the mining industry, you must be deeply concerned about the paraplegic centre in Pontefract and the future of other such establishments. I hope that the Minister will assure us that there will be proper provision for such establishments.

Subsidence has been referred to. We will have to explore that and many other issues in depth, but I wish to discuss safety.

The other day, a learned judge—the Minister for Energy knows which case I am referring to—perceived

"a mining industry which, in future, may see privatisation and, thus, an end to much of the regulation that British Coal has put in place."

We have been told that it dismantled much of the safety structure, and the President of the Board of Trade boasted about that this afternoon. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman said that he would not have done anything to injure safety, except to do what has already been done, and that is to replace what existed before with all sorts of provisions, and then provide the let-out clause that appears on virtually every page of the regulations, stating that there will be priority for safety "in so far as it is practicable".

One thousand men a year were killed in the British mining industry before nationalisation. One thousand men a year was the average in the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s. As has been demonstrated, the average has been brought down to a tiny proportion, and it is at risk. There will be corner-cutting and short-sighted calculations. If not, the Secretary of State would have given a little more time to consider the disposal of the industry to one company which would have had the capacity to operate with scale, which would not have had to look over its shoulder at competitors operating on the lowest common denominator principle in safety and investment, and which would have been able to take a forward look.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) might think that all the Selby pits will be saved, but I doubt whether that will be the case.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hardy: No. I do not have time to give way.

I have one colliery left—Silverwood. It is a proud pit, with a superb record. My hon. Friends know that Silverwood has been one of the most successful collieries

[Mr. Hardy]

during the post-war period. It has made enormous profits. Only a little while ago, I spoke in the House about the proud achievements of that colliery when it had broken another record. A few months ago, I heard of investment at the pit, but subsequently learned that a development on which much money has been spent was stopped about three weeks before it started to yield.

That is the colliery to which British Coal used to send distinguished visitors. In Jubilee year, the Queen visited Silverwood colliery. A picture of the Queen at that pit was displayed in every colliery in Britain. Men from that pit have often featured in the honours list—one as recently as three weeks ago. They have been treated scurvily.

We now hear that the pit will not be closed abruptly, but will be whittled away, and that some men might be transferred to Maltby. The only problem is that people in Maltby tell me that they have been assured that Maltby's requirements do not need to be met by Silverwood men. What a way to treat people who have made such an enormous contribution. If they are treated like that by British Coal, how on earth will they be treated by private operators?

I again ask the Minister a question. I have asked four Ministers of the Crown this question, and I have not had a satisfactory answer. If the Minister is concerned about safety, will he guarantee that no overseas coal owner will be allowed to buy British mines if his record is as bad as some Opposition Members suspect some are? If coal owners abroad have unsatisfactory safety records, we do not want them here, because we value the lives and limbs of our constituents.

It is no good the Minister saying that that is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive, because the Health and Safety Executive does not decide who will buy the British coal industry. That is a ministerial responsibility, and the executive should not exercise it.

I should like to say much more about Silverwood. I find it far too distressing even to contemplate that men with such a proud record and splendid achievement should be treated as British Coal has treated them. The one thing that I regret about the leadership of British Coal is that they seem to have forgotten that they have been paid to lead their industry on behalf of the nation.

I suspect that, in recent years, they have largely led the industry in the direction in which they want it to go for their personal reasons, overlooking the fact that their position has been——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I call Mr. Peter Atkinson.

6.17 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy on bringing the Bill to the House. It has been a long time in coming, but it is better late than never.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) took us back in history to vesting day in 1947, when the nationalisation of the coal industry came into effect. Although the hon. Gentleman described that day very eloquently, sadly, when we look back at the era of nationalisation from a perspective of history, we see it as nothing more than an unremitting disaster.

A once great industry was reduced to a rump by years of protectionism and, I have to say, Government interference. This Government's bold decision—it was a bold decision—to liberalise the energy market in this country showed just how featherbedded, feeble and incompetent British Coal and the British coal industry had become. The result was an unpleasant reality with which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade had to deal, taking much flak in the process.

In 1947, when the hon. Member for Wentworth stood outside the gates of the colliery, Britain was the leading nation in mining technology. It was exporting tonnes of coal all around the world. Welsh steam coal probably fired nearly every locomotive in the world. We were world leaders. There were dozens of successful and profitable collieries in the north-east of England at the time.

For example, pits in my home county of Northumberland—as the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) knows, there were many pits in my home county—made a profit at that time. Private coal owners would not have kept the pits open if they had not made a profit.

I rember that Shilbottle colliery used to supply all the coal to Buckingham palace, because it was considered to be the finest household coal in the United Kingdom. Shilbottle coal was requested by the late King. The Queen burns house coal in many of her grates. Many people will now have to burn Polish coal, because British coal cannot provide house coal for our market.

Time and time again, we hear about the effectiveness of the United States system of pillar and stall mining. That method has been recommended to the Coal Board and many private operators as a way to mine coal economically. The technique was invented in the north-east of England. Originally, it was used in the Ellington and Wearmouth collieries. Wearmouth colliery is under threat at present. We will have to bring mining engineers from the United States in order to re-learn the skill of pillar and stall mining.

I am worried that those people who ran the National Coal Board and subsequently British Coal are now, through their plans for colliery closures, helping to shape the future of the privatised industry. It is totally wrong that a group of British Coal managers, who have an eye on future management buy-outs, should be shaping the industry in the way they see fit, while private companies are being frustrated in their efforts to take over pits which British Coal has closed and which are not wanted but which the private sector believes could have a good future.

I shall give an example. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) is not in his seat, because Wearmouth colliery is a classic example. A private company wants to buy that pit and re-employ some of the 650 men who lost their jobs. Wearmouth colliery is ideal, because there is plenty of good-quality coal which can be transported straight from the pithead to ore-carrying ships and exported.

To sell on the world market, coal must be priced at about £15 a tonne—that is before shipping costs of £5 or £7 a tonne are added. A pit near the coast with easily mined coal is highly competitive. Private coal companies that are interested in Wearmouth realise that they will be able to achieve the target of £15 a tonne and export coal to overseas markets from that colliery.

Mr. Jack Thompson: The hon. Gentleman's constituency is next to mine. Is he aware that Wearmouth colliery could achieve that target whether it is privatised or nationalised? It was able to achieve the target before it was closed, but it was still closed by British Coal, as part of the Government and British Coal exercise of "slimming down the industry", as it has been described.

Mr. Atkinson: The hon. Gentleman is totally wrong. The figures are only averages, because they vary from pit to pit. Even after making enormous steps forward in productivity, collieries have a long way to go to get down to the level of £15 a tonne. However, they can and will do so under private management. If British Coal had been able to do it years ago, it would have done so, but the management and protection of the business have always prevented it. It will be left to the private sector to achieve that possibility.

It is worth noting that, in the United States, deep-mined coal from mines exactly like Ellington colliery in Northumberland and Wearmouth colliery in Tyne and Wear can land coal on the surface for £7 a tonne in West Virginia. Such a target is ultimately achievable in British deep-mining collieries. *[Laughter.]* Labour Members may laugh about that, but if we can achieve that level of productivity in our mines, British Coal will have a future of bringing on new customers in the industrial sector as well as exporting coal around the world, especially to Germany, which spends about ten times that amount on mining one tonne of coal.

It is no wonder that British Coal managers do not want Wearmouth colliery to fall into competitors' hands. Despite making the pit available for leasing, they are making it almost impossible for a private company to take over the colliery.

There are two faces at Wearmouth. One of them is brand new—it has been under development for several months. New coal-cutting machinery imported from America was already at the face. That machinery has been removed and taken to Longannet colliery in Scotland, where puzzled managers have been told to use it come what may.

At the same time, expensive roof supports have been removed from the new face and replaced with temporary supports. The supports have been taken to Ellington colliery, where they are simply lying on the surface. Next week at Wearmouth, work will start on pulling the coal-cutting equipment from the existing face, and more roof supports will be removed.

Why is British Coal doing that? One thing that British Coal cannot be short of in this day and age is coal-cutting machinery, because it has been removed from several pits recently. Surely British Coal cannot be short of roof supports for the same reason. The reason is obvious: British Coal managers, who are looking towards a management buy-out, consider that Wearmouth colliery is a danger. Therefore, they will seek to frustrate a private company which wants to take it over, as they frustrated another company which wanted to take over Bevercotes colliery in Newark.

Hon. Members will watch carefully the way in which the Coal Board deals with the pits between now and the time that the Bill becomes law. The Coal Board retains a much greater responsibility than simply worrying about the management buy-outs which individual managers may be considering. It has a statutory responsibility to the mining industry as a whole. Once the Bill becomes law, it will then be held accountable for what it has done in the months leading up to privatisation.

I welcome this privatisation. Whatever the mockers on the other side of the House may say about it, it will give the British coal industry an opportunity to live once again, to compete in the world, to attract new customers, and to move to being one of the leading coal-producing nations once again.

6.26 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I listened with some anger to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) refer to the glories of mining of Tyneside and in north-east England in the days when it was privatised. I merely tell him that my father worked at the Rising Sun colliery at Wallsend. When he was 32 years of age, he drowned in a mining accident for which my mother received no compensation. My mother and three small children aged under six were left in abject poverty. My memories of the privately owned mining industry leave me with no pleasure whatever.

It is with some pleasure that I preface my speech by referring to early-day motion 359 entitled "Women Against Pit Closures Camp at Parkside Colliery". Unlike the Government, those brave women believe passionately in their menfolk and their pit. Tonight, they are holding a party to celebrate the first anniversary of their camp. It was an incredible achievement and experience for those women, who often suffered from foul weather. Severe gales, deep frosts and downpours of rain have often been their lot. Frankly, I do not believe that a group of men could have stuck it out for 24 hours a day for a whole year in the same way as those women. The women have made it clear that they will stay at Parkside colliery until it is reopened and producing coal. I salute them, and I am delighted to wish them a very happy birthday.

When I was elected to the House in February 1974, there were over 250,000 miners in this country working in more than 100 pits. There were innumerable collieries dotted all over north-west England. Today, there are 22 pits and about 20,000 miners—none in north-west England. Parkside, which was the last colliery in the Lancashire coalfield, closed one year ago. Since I was elected, a quarter of a million miners have been sacked and almost 100 mines have closed.

Two hundred thousand jobs have disappeared since the Tories were elected in 1979. The contraction of the industry is continuing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, it has been leaked that half a dozen collieries will close during the next few weeks. By the time the Bill reaches the statute book—if it reaches the statute book—we will be down to the 12 to 14 pits which were identified by the Rothschild report as ripe for privatisation.

Ministers of course are washing their hands, and claiming that the rundown of the industry is a result of market forces and that there is no point in digging coal if there is no one willing to buy it. It has been demonstrated many times in the House that that simply is not true. The market has been rigged against coal, and the main features of that rigged market are well known and have been well aired—the dash for gas, the nuclear power levy of a billion

[Mr. John Evans]

pounds-plus, the protected market share of the nuclear power industry and the continuing nonsense of the French interconnector.

There are questions of a possible conflict of interest for the senior management of British Coal, and whether they end up with an agreed market with some profitable collieries which they will look to purchase. Clause 1 of the Bill will establish the Coal Authority, which I have no doubt will be another quango stuffed with Tory grandees, including probably some from the other place.

The Bill instructs the authority to sell all surplus land. British Coal owns 250,000 acres of land throughout Great Britain, some of which I suspect may be valuable. I suspect that the Treasury will be looking for substantial returns from the sale of much of that land. I also believe that a number of proposed sales of land from British Coal to individuals have been stalled for a couple of years prior to privatisation.

A substantial amount of land is owned by British Coal in my constituency, particularly at Haydock. A number of small businesses have leased properties on the site of the old colliery workshop at Haydock. Many of those properties are in a poor condition, and British Coal has always refused to maintain them. One of the small businessmen at Haydock has tried for months to buy the freehold of the property that he is leasing to improve his factory, its output and the conditions of his workforce. However, it has been impossible for him to reach any agreement with British Coal.

wrote to the Minister for Energy last year about the situation. While he sympathised with me, as he often does, he went on to say in his letter of 31 August 1993:

"However, as I am sure you will appreciate, decisions on the appropriate disposal of individual sites are entirely a matter for British Coal."

When the authority is set up, I suspect that it will no longer be a matter for British Coal but for the Treasury. Certainly, I expect that the Treasury will be interested in the outcome of the sale of that land.

I want to turn to the issue of opencast mining. The north-west in general, and my constituency in particular, has lost deep mining, and people are greatly concerned about the opencast mining aspect of the Bill. Presumably British Coal's land bank is to be sold off to the highest bidder. Those who purchase the land will expect to be able to mine it, irrespective of the views of the local people who will be affected, because opencast mining is a highly profitable exercise.

In my constituency—particularly at Billinge and Garswood—there has been a number of applications for opencast mining during the past few years. That opencast mining would have gone literally to the precincts of those villages, and it would have had a dreadful impact on the lives of the people of those two communities. The villagers have resisted the propositions ferociously and the council has always backed them. I trust sincerely that that will continue in the future.

If an application were received for opencast mining in the St. Helens and Wigan area, the response of the people of those communities would be that if the nation requires coal, the place to get it is Parkside colliery. The colliery has millions of tonnes of coal lying there and millions of pounds' worth of valuable machinery with which coal can be extracted. An argument which is unacceptable to the people in my area is that the country requires the coal. If the country requires it, the place to go is Parkside.

Another issue to which I would like to refer briefly—because time is running out—is the issue of subsidence. Many hon. Members are concerned about the impact of subsidence on areas where mining will continue. My concern is about the areas where coal mining will no longer be going on. What happens to those areas?

Hon. Members who have dealt with British Coal over the years would be only too willing to say that they have not always had an easy ride. Often, it has been difficult to get British Coal to agree adequately to compensate individuals concerned. We must now deal with the Coal Authority. In the past, we have dealt with a north-west area board but I suspect that we will now have to deal with the coal authority in London. I suggest to the Minister that the north-west is entitled to an area office so that subsidence claims may be dealt with locally.

This is a bad Bill. I sincerely trust that, if it is not rejected tonight, major amendments will be imposed on Report.

6.37 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I start by apologising to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and hon. Friends on the Front Bench for my absence during the opening speeches. As they are probably aware, I was leading a deputation of people involved in the textile industry in West Yorkshire to the Department of Trade and Industry. As the discussions there took longer than was expected, I decided not to return to the House.

My interest in manufacturing, and particularly in the coal industry, is well known in the House. My more recent interests in the coal industry are listed in the Register of Members' Interests.

In my view, coal has a positive future. It will move back to the centre of the British energy supply industry in the long term if it is part of a well-thought energy policy. The Government must have such a policy to regain the country's confidence and they must support the remains of an important industry by retaining its ability to use the massive coal reserves. Within that policy, a free and competitive market will, with other forms of energy, ensure that there is a viable British coal industry.

Coal will be able to compete in terms of quality, price and service. However, at present the British coal industry is heading towards a crossroads. If the wrong turning is taken, the industry will disappear into the realms of industrial archaeology. With successful privatisation—I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that I support the privatisation aspects of the Bill—and restructuring, the industry will rejuvenate and grow. To achieve that, the industry must be imaginative and take note of past mistakes.

For centuries, coal has been the main energy source for Britain. Much of our industry today was founded on coal during the industrial revolution. The city of London was rebuilt after the great fire, and St. Paul's cathedral would not exist today but for a levy on all the coal which was consumed at that time in London. Yet despite massive reserves under Britain, we are running down our indigenous production and turning to gas, which everyone accepts has a limited life. That is contrary to all

international trends. World production levels have risen from below 2,800 million metric tonnes in 1980 to more than 3,500 million metric tonnes in 1992.

For more than a century, the industry has been the source of intense political, social and commercial controversy, often to its severe detriment. In the 1930s, the industry needed restructuring because there were too many pits, there was no investment and productivity was poor. Politicians from all sides of the political spectrum then began to consider nationalisation as a solution.

At that time, Harold Macmillan supported that route in his "Middle Way" publication, proposing

"an industrial structure with broad strategic control in the hands of the store and the tactical operation in the hands of private management".

That was an admirable strategy but we have never perfected it.

I have always believed that the state has a part to play in the energy market, which is currently rigged against coal. The announcement of the White Paper last year gave the Government an opportunity to resolve some of that rigging, but no such action was taken.

Nationalisation in 1947 brought about the required reshaping and reinvestment. In the 1950s and 1960s, the National Coal Board, led by men of vision, Lord Ezra and Lord Robens, perhaps with the help of the combative union co-operation of Lord Joe Gormley, made great strides to increase production and, more importantly, improve safety. We have heard quite a bit about safety this evening.

However, nothing stands still. The advent of cheap oil from newly discovered reserves, the development of nuclear energy to produce electricity, and the availability of vast supplies of natural gas revolutionised the energy market. We are still suffering the consequences—some of my hon. Friends will say that we are still enjoying the benefits.

State-run organisations have been shown to be almost incapable of redirecting and restructuring themselves. That was certainly true of the British coal industry. By the 1990s, even with the intervening industrial relations dramas of 1974 and 1984, the industry's structure was unsuited to the marketplace. Overheads were too high, there was too much bureaucracy and poor productivity, production costs were comparatively high, demand was falling and the market share had been reduced. It was a typical demise of a demand-driven rather than market-led industry.

Albeit with hindsight, I believe that the coal industry, with its diverse structure, difficulties in production and social importance to hundreds of communities around the country, should have been privatised before gas and electricity.

The Government's review of their pit closure programme, resulting from my right hon. Friend's devastating announcement in October 1992, has not saved many of the pits that were threatened with closure. However, there is an outside chance that new operators may wish to reopen some of the redundant pits if, when they are ready to be licensed, any of the machinery for extraction from those mines is left and if the bottom of the mines are not flooded.

By 1995, we shall be down to a small number of pits, despite massive increases in output per man from 504 tonnes in 1982-83 to 1,611 tonnes in 1992. I appreciate the fact that, with a falling market and increasing productivity, that has been one of the problems. Because the miners did everything that we asked them from the 1980s onwards, they have, ultimately, been their own worst enemy. But the cost of production is falling and the industry is becoming more competitive. We must ensure that our coal is competitive with imports because we have an ideal situation for substantial import substitution.

We have four basic markets for solid fuel: electricity generation; coking coal for the steel industry; and the domestic and industrial sectors. Obviously, generating demands have fallen because of competition from gas.

The steel industry still consumes 7 million to 8 million tonnes of coking coal a year and the domestic sector uses more than 5 million tonnes of solid fuel a year in nearly 3 million homes. If the Queen wants sensible coal in Buckingham palace, it can be supplied by British industry and our coal merchants, who are good at supplying what their customers demand.

By the end of this year, the market for coal is likely to be some 60 million tonnes. Imports now cover the shortfall of indigenous coal, with major imports coming from Poland, Colombia and South Africa where production costs are low. However, there is a market out there and the demand for coal exists. It is ironic that British Coal, while saying that there was no market for coal, doubled the imports for domestic and industrial coal and, the following week, closed down the very mines that could have supplied that coal. We should look at that carefully.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Minister and other hon. Members about opencast mining. It adds insult to injury to close pits in Yorkshire and then allow planning applications for the small amount of green field that is left. There will be huge opposition to any such proposals. Planning applications should be granted for derelict land but not for green field sites.

There is never enough time to say everything that one wishes to say in 10 minutes. But all is not lost for the coal industry. Costs are falling and coal is becoming more competitive in the marketplace. Private companies already want to license mines because they know that there is a market, whereas British Coal said that there was none. It is interesting to note that managers of British Coal now feel that they may wish to put in bids for the very coal market which they said did not exist. That suggests that there may be a market in the future.

Some 3,000 merchants sell coal products in this country and they engage in commercial activity through the Solid Fuel Association, selling the "real fire" image. Although many people like to see a real fire in the local pub and elsewhere, not all of us have the time to clean the grates every morning. However, we should try to ensure that coal consumers can consume British coal, mined in British mines by British people, rather than imported coal that is not always of the same quality.

Although I support the privatisation of the coal industry, because the industry has no future if it is left in the hands of British Coal, issues within the Bill will need to be discussed and considered carefully. One of those issues is CISWO—the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation —which has a role to play. Another is pensions——

Madam Speaker: Order. Mr. Michael Clapham.

6.47 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Privatisation of the industry makes no sense whatever, except in so far as it represents the

[Mr. Michael Clapham]

Government's hostility to the deep coal mining industry in the United Kingdom, the mining unions and mining communities.

The real issues concerns not ownership as such, but markets. The Government have failed to deal with that point. It is evident from the way in which the energy market was privatised in 1990 that the architects of that privatisation, Lord Parkinson and Lord Wakeham, rigged the market against the coal industry to cause its demise. Privatisation is the final part of that agenda.

The format for privatisation has not come about simply in the past couple of months. The Rothschild report has been in the public domain for the past four years. It suggested that the deep mined coal industry could be viable with 10 to 14 pits, which is the agenda towards which the Government have been working. Following the report, the industry was rapidly run down. In 1990 there were 73 collieries and 65,400 men. Within two years, that number was down to 50 collieries and just 42,000 men.

The White Paper, "Prospects for Coal", and the administration package are part of the agenda. The President of the Board of Trade gave the impression to the House when presenting his paper that he would save 12 of the 31 collieries earmarked for closure. The House should be aware that, of the 31 collieries, only four are now in operation. Of the 12 that were to be reprieved, only four are producing coal, and on 23 December *The Independent* reported that British Coal was considering closing the last four of those 12 collieries early in the new year. The work force has been cut dramatically since October 1992. By December 1993 it had been reduced from 42,000 to 14,700 men. If the other collieries are closed, that will add a further 3,000 to the 27,000 already lost.

The ripple has gone well beyond traditional mining communities. For example, giving evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, Mr. Andrew Glyn, an economist from Corpus Christi college Oxford, said that the knock-on effect of 23,300 redundancies in the industry would be a total of 78,900 jobs. That estimate was supported by Yamaichi, which estimated in evidence to the Select Committee that, for every job lost in the industry, three were lost elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), who is not in his place, spoke of world prices and the competitiveness of British coal. He and the House should be aware that world prices do not result from the interaction of the normal forces of supply and demand. Price follows the lowest common denominator, which at present tends to be South African coal which is cheap because it is produced involuntarily by cheap labour. All the other producers tend to follow that price.

Columbia uses child labour. On Wednesday I was privy to a screening arranged by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) of a BBC documentary which showed clearly that child labour is used in Colombian mines. It showed children under the age of 10 working in the most awful conditions. When the Minister replies to the debate he should make it plain that Britain will not import coal from countries that use child labour.

Some United Kingdom mines have been producing coal at below world market prices. In September, Bentley colliery was producing coal at 88p per gigajoule, but that colliery has been closed. Similarly Silverdale colliery, which was in deficit at the beginning of the year, turned the loss into a profit by September, the beginning of the second half of the financial year. Like the miners at Bentley colliery, however, those at Silverdale were treated to a colliery closure.

If it was used properly, the modified colliery review procedure would scrutinise some of those facts, but will that procedure continue? Will the current procedures for monitoring a colliery's performance be continued if the Bill becomes law and the industry has a private sector? Would the Minister be prepared to add a consultation clause to the Bill so that current consultation procedures will continue in the private sector?

The 27 collieries that have already closed have resulted in the sterilisation of 500 million tonnes of coal. That extremely valuable resource could be lost for ever, at massive cost to future generations. Britain has half western Europe's coal reserves—enough for 230 years at current extraction rates. Will the Minister ensure that no colliery is permanently closed, but that all are placed on a care and maintenance basis until he has at least had an opportunity to explore with the European Community whether funds can be made available to pay for keeping the pits on that basis so that, should the need arise, the pits can be reopened quickly?

The Bill contains no provision for continuing Government investment in research and development. In other nations the industry enjoys significant state support. The Australian coal industry gets a 150 per cent. tax rebate for all research and development, and last year the Federal Government of the United States spent $700 million on research and development. The Dutch electricity generating board has just opened a £600 million clean coal project, and is talking in terms of opening perhaps another six projects using such technology to generate electricity for about the next 20 years. Will investment in research and technology, and especially in clean coal technology, continue?

It has been said that privatisation is likely to lead to a bigger industry. I think that the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) genuinely believes that under private ownership the industry will become larger. How could that be when companies will be operating a handful of pits which will be vulnerable to failure, particularly that caused by bad geology? Of course, when cost targets are not reached, collieries will close.

Secondly, privatisation will be accompanied by a rundown in research and development, and that by the coal research establishment will no longer be carried out. Therefore, developments that would be good for coal are unlikely to be forthcoming.

Thirdly, we must bear in mind the volume of coal that will be sold to the electricity supply industry——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman's time is up.

6.56 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): It is a rather happy coincidence that I should follow the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) because, as he well knows, I was the hapless young Conservative who contested that seat in the 1987 general election. I stood against the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Allen McKay, and when the results were announced on the night of the election I found that I had run him a distant second.

In the course of working in that area I got to know it very well and I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's passion for the interests of miners and former miners in the constituency. Those passions are shared by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who made an impassioned speech earlier in the debate, and by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), who is seated on the Opposition Front Bench. I hope that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone will not impugn the motives of Conservative Members who welcome the Bill, because we greatly share the concerns that he so well expressed.

The Bill is long overdue and it is the only hope for securing the long-term interests of the coal industry which are so important to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, to mine and to those of his colleagues and mine.

It has been a wretched year for coal. The industry has faced closures which simply cannot fail to provoke the sympathies of every hon. Member. Productivity increases since the 1984 strike have been staggering, and every person in the industry deserves recognition for that success. However, the tragedy of the industry's decline must be recognised and we must try to contend with it in as practical a way as we can. The decline in volume has been going on for ages—for decades. It has been inevitable, and it is our duty to face the realities of that decline.

Labour Members would argue forcefully that that inevitability has been exacerbated by what they would describe as a rigged market. I do not share that view. Competitive purchasing by competing generators is not a rigged market. What lies behind the charge that the market is rigged is a request for the generators to pay an inflated price for coal which would otherwise be above world markets.

In the face of its historic decline, the Bill is designed to provide the best possible prospects for the future development and success of the coal industry. Conservative Members will agree that nationalisation is not and never has been the solution. Any study of all the nationalised industries since the war suggests that it is simply not the answer. In 1979, 10·5 per cent. of our entire gross domestic product was in the hands of nationalised industries. About one seventh of all fixed investment was poured into nationalised industries. Nationalised industry employed 2 million people, but it was going backwards and costing the Treasury billions of pounds.

One of the arguments in favour of nationalisation was that certain commercial concerns simply could not survive in the private sector and required to remain in the public sector, but if the last 14 years have proved anything, they have surely proved the fallacy of that view. All privatised industries have fared better than when they were in the public sector. Privatisation is not the product of blind ideology. It is indeed the product of our conviction that any industry will perform better in private hands, but it is also the product of clear evidence that that conviction is borne out by experience.

Other heavy industries have been privatised. We can cite examples of oil, gas and steel. They are all massive, heavy industries; they require high investment and heavy infrastructure and they have to survive in vicious global markets. We started by selling BP shares in 1979. It is a perfect example of the success of privatisation. The oil industry, in which I have worked, does not need to be nationalised. Shell, BP and other massive private concerns find oil, ship it, refine it, distribute it and finance it, all without help. British Gas does the same; it is a triumph of United Kingdom industry.

British Steel was once a white elephant costing the Treasury hundreds of millions of pounds. It is now the fourth largest company in the western world, producing 78 per cent. of all the crude steel in the United Kingdom. It has a turnover of £5 billion pounds and a couple of years ago made profits of £500 million pounds. Those examples should convince us that, in as much as there are serious long-term prospects for the coal industry in the United Kingdom, those prospects are best served by placing the

If it were just a matter of productivity, I would begin to see some of the reasons for which the Opposition have argued today for the continued public ownership of the coal industry. The productivity increases have been fantastic—almost unbelievable—but the principles which lie behind the Bill involve far more than productivity. The ownership of the industry, which the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone said was unimportant, is critical to the energy and principles which lie behind the purposes of the Bill.

If we change the ownership and place the industry in private hands, as we did for British Gas and other industries before it, we will change the whole climate of initiative, which could pervade the entire ethos of the workplace and the management. It will free the industry to take a more global outlook. It will free it from all the stop and go, the generosity and parsimony of Government finance. It will free the industry from Government interference.

I fervently believe that this is not the place to discuss the exact economics of any business, industry or competing commercial concern. The House can never know as much about the detail of running an industry as the people who are trying to run it. We should free those people to run the industry in the best interests of its profits and its employees.

Let me dwell on safety. Are oil and gas any less safe because they are in private hands? The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone nods his head, but I defy him to quote an example. In my experience of the oil and gas industry, I simply do not accept that.

The Bill will offer the industry for sale in five regional businesses. The employees will have a stake in it and there are already interested parties. It will set up a coal authority which, I am pleased to say, will be based in Nottinghamshire near my constituency and it will involve proper consideration for subsidence, the environment, pensions and the future prospects of the industry.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the threat of opencast mining. They do not need to convince me of that. When the Duke of Rutland lay down in front of the bulldozers to stop opencast mining in the vale of Belvoir, he did the right thing. If he were to do the same thing again, I would be chained next to him to stop the bulldozers digging up the most beautiful part of my constituency.

Mr. Skinner: I will be driving it.

Mr. Duncan: I am delighted that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will be driving the bulldozer—we know what a careful driver he is.

[Mr. Ducan]

Asfordby pit is in my constituency. I look forward to seeing it thrive and flourish. If oil and gas can survive and thrive in the private sector, so can coal. I welcome the Bill and look forward to supporting its Second Reading tonight.

7.5 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): I was in Bilsthorpe the other week, where a miner's wife told me that she was fed up with living in the shadow of uncertainty and with the knowledge that the Bill cast a blight over her future. Unfortunately, she had been taken in by the promises in the White Paper "Prospects for Coal" in March, but now she knows the truth. She knows that six collieries in Nottinghamshire have closed since March—Silverhill, Cotgrave, Clipstone, Bevercotes, Rufford and Calverton. That is 4,769 jobs lost since last March.

The miner's wife wants to know what will happen next. People in Nottinghamshire are practical and pragmatic. They can take the bad news, but they cannot take no news at all.

The Energy Minister ought to come clean tonight and confirm whether the coal industry in Nottinghamshire has a future and whether the rumours that Bilsthorpe and Annersley Bentinck are about to close are true. He should confirm whether there are plans to merge Ollerton with Thoresby and Welbeck with Manton.

When the review process begins in a few weeks' time when we move towards restructuring day, the woman in Bilsthorpe wants to know whether it is true that there will just be just three collieries left in Nottinghamshire, based on Welbeck, Thoresby and Harworth. She has a right to know, because her family, her community and her fathers before her have contributed to that industry.

She knows that, in 1980, there were 40,000 miners in Nottinghamshire, and that, if the closures go ahead, in a few months' time there will be only about 3,000 mining jobs in the county. In 14 years, nine out of every 10 mining jobs in Nottinghamshire will have gone. At the same time, Nottinghamshire miners, and miners throughout the country, have increased their productivity by up to 150 per cent. over the past five years. They are producing coal at half the cost of that in Germany. No other sector in British industry can match that record.

Is it any wonder that people in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country feel that promises made to them have been broken, and that they have been betrayed? Does not the Minister realise that people believe that the Government's plan is now to put the coffin lid on British Coal, hammer it down and bury it deep, and quickly?

Will the Minister say—he has been asked before—how many pits will remain on restructuring day, perhaps 1 January 1995, or will privatisation be on 1 April next year? Does he know? Will he say? Does he care? People in Nottinghamshire feel that the promises made last March and by Lady Thatcher's Government before that have been torn up. Perhaps he will tell us what his valuation of British Coal will be on privatisation. The value is clearly the remaining contract with the generators. Is it not true that that would give it a market price of perhaps £200 million? Perhaps he will confirm that.

Perhaps the Minister will talk about the substantial private sector interest that has been talked about in the Chamber tonight. Pits have closed unremittingly over the past year. Let me remind the House that not one colliery has opened under private ownership. Promises have been made, leases were about to be signed, but the pit wheel has yet to turn and produce one lump of private coal.

They have had their opportunities. I wish Richard Budge well in his chances to reopen Clipstone colliery. Hon. Members may recall that it closed last March, and that the north Nottinghamshire training and enterprise council was given £2·7 million to redeploy and retrain the miners there, and find new jobs for them.

Is it not a condemnation of the Government's energy policy that, in December, that same TEC voted Richard Budge £200,000 to open the pit again. Is that not a waste of money? It cost £2·7 million to close it down, yet now, as it is seen in the area, a grant of £200,000 has been given to reopen it.

That smacks of sharp practice. People want to know why British Coal is presently repairing the pit at Clipstone. Why is it spending £100,000 on the shaft so that Richard Budge can open it up, perhaps in March? They want to know why he is not footing the bill himself. He will not do so, because he is going to make a profit out of the pit.

That is what it is about. Richard Budge will make that profit off the backs of the miners, because it is clear that one of the ways that he intends to make a profit is to drive wages down. The rumours are loud. The papers seem quite clear—he intends to pay new miners at Clipstone 20 to 30 per cent. less than they would get under British Coal.

While we are moving towards privatisation, perhaps the Minister can tell us how the Bill deals with coal stocks. There are currently 47 million tonnes of coal stocks on the ground. How will he handle that? How will British Coal and the generators handle that problem? In particular, how will the market handle it in the run up to privatisation?

What will he do if Professor Littlechild, the regulator for the electricity industry, decides to intervene and report the generators to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Does he not think that that will put a spoke in the wheel of privatisation? Is it not time that perhaps regulators stopped acting like Lone Rangers and became policemen, looking after the real interests of consumers?

There are a great many issues in the Bill. My hon. Friends have talked about some that we shall pursue in Committee—for example, pensions. Miners know that there is a surplus. They want a share of it. They feel that they have contributed, and that it should not be ripped off by the Government.

The subsidence provisions can only be described as a minefield. The notion of areas of influence that the new private owners will take on board seem to me to be a recipe for disaster, because people who suffer mining subsidence want to know who is responsible. They want to go to one door. They do not want to go to the private owner and then to the Coal Authority. There should be one port of call on that issue—the Coal Authority.

I congratulate my colleague, Dennis Walker, the vice-chairman of Boughton parish council, for his work on subsidence in the Ollerton area. He would say that, although he has difficulties and arguments with British Coal staff, at the end of the day he gets a fair reception.

What will happen to those British Coal staff after privatisation? Who will be the experts? What about British Coal's property? It is perhaps the biggest property owner in the country. What will happen to the profits made marketing Babbington colliery? Who will own Hucknall golf course? What will happen to all those assets? Who

will raise the quality of the environment and look after the reclaimed tip heaps? Who will look at mine water discharge, about which the Bill says nothing?

British Coal Enterprise is hardly mentioned. Nottinghamshire and areas throughout the country face real difficulty. Those areas need help, new investment, new jobs and a new future. That is why it is important that British Coal Enterprise has a future. In Nottinghamshire at the moment there are just 22 vacancies for young people, with 212 youngsters chasing every vacancy. It is their future we are talking about. We need proper regeneration, and a new future for them and for coalfield areas.

7.16 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): The debate is essentially about the mechanism for the privatisation of the coal industry. The essential question is, does the Bill set out the most effective and efficient structure to effect the transfer from a state-owned monopoly to a privatised industry, to produce maximum benefits together with necessary controls and assurances?

The debate is not about the market for coal, the future of the deep-mined coal industry in this country, Government intervention in the energy market, or an overall energy policy, whatever that might mean. We have been through all that with the Select Committee report and the Government White Paper.

Opposition speakers are still putting yesterday's arguments. They are still going back over old ground. They are still fighting a rearguard action, on which many of their supporters cannot agree. On the one hand, the Labour party presses the Government to implement all the Select Committee's recommendations; on the other, it appears that Labour members of the Committee do not agree with all its recommendations, to which they signed up only last autumn.

The Labour party has repeatedly failed to secure a market for coal. The Labour Governments of 1964-70 and 1974-79 closed 313 pits—a loss of 205,700 jobs. More pits closed in those 11 years than in the 15 years of this Government. Not that they did not try to expand the market. Between 1974-77, they made a big commitment, but failed miserably. Output fell by 16 per cent., from 142 million tonnes to 119 million tonnes.

A former Labour Energy Minister accepts that Labour Governments misled themselves and the miners. The noble Lord Marsh said:

"We genuinely believed that with a benevolent mixture of good intentions and massive subsidies we could reverse the market trend.

My Lords, we completely misled ourselves and them . . . Every time they were betrayed, not by individuals, not by Ministers, but by the realities of the situation."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 October 1992; Vol. 539, c. 692.]

Despite being repeatedly challenged, Labour still avoids the key questions. Today, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) avoided them again. Labour refuses to say how much money it is prepared to commit to continue subsidising British Coal, or in which of the independent commercial contracts between private companies it would interfere to secure additional coal sales.

What would be the cost in compensation? Does Labour realise that that would set a massive precedent that would send reverberations through British industry? How many jobs in other industries is Labour prepared to destroy—in regional electricity companies; the two power generators; the nuclear, offshore oil and gas industries; and the construction industry?

The $64,000 question is, how many mines would Labour keep open? How many times must we keep asking the same question? How many pits would Labour retain, and for how long?

We heard again tonight the myth of coal reserves. Labour keeps saying that energy supplies that would keep us energy-sufficient for hundreds of years are being irrevocably lost. In the words of the Library research paper:

"Such a view is over-simplified."

That is charitable, for Labour's claim is certainly overstated, and definitely misleading. There are large reserves in theory, but new pits would not be sunk to exploit them, because of cost.

The Select Committee stated:

"In fact, the problem for British Coal is not the availability of reserves but the high investment costs of new pits . . . which are much higher than opencast costs elsewhere in the world."

The Committee produced revised figures:

"Taking all mines together, the ratio of reserves to production at present levels of output and assuming present prices is 21 years. Whether or not the number of British Coal's deep mines falls to 15 by 1997, British Coal's output is likely to decline rapidly in the early years of the next century as reserves are exhausted."

That output decline is fact, and inevitable in the free market.

Mining companies freed from state interference could perform much better, as the history of privatisation has repeatedly shown. Coal will join other energy industries privatised since 1979—North sea oil and gas, particularly BP and British Gas, and the electricity supply industry. All those privatisations were great successes, particularly for the consumer.

Since British Gas was privatised in 1986, domestic gas prices have fallen 20 per cent. and industrial prices 28 per cent. in real terms. There has been increased efficiency, and the customer-to-employee ratio has increased more than 30 per cent. Gas sales per employee have risen 18 per cent. All the regional electricity companies have announced domestic price freezes or cuts for this year. Real prices for domestic users have fallen 6·5 per cent. in the last two years.

Competition will be further pursued in both industries by references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, to ensure downward pressure on prices. Whichever way one looks at it, energy privatisation has been singularly successful, yet it was opposed by Opposition Members.

The Bill's key provisions must address certain critical issues and offer essential guarantees. The Bill must offer potential buyers a flexible system of purchase. I believe that that has been secured by the establishment of five regional businesses, with the option for potential purchasers to bid for one or all of them. The Bill must allow management and employee buy-outs. It must not just give clearance to bid but must offer active co-operation, support and Government funding to help in the preparation of bids. Some £200,000 is being allocated per team bid.

The Bill must place great emphasis on safety, and I believe that that is ensured by a full acceptance of recommendations in the Health and Safety Commission report, "The Framework for Health and Safety in Britain's

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

Coal Mines". Hon. Members on both sides of the House will widely welcome the fact that continuing responsibility for health and safety will remain with the commission.

It is essential that guarantees are given in respect of existing pension funds, to protect existing and future pensioners. It was said tonight that the Government or British Coal are preparing to rip off some surplus pension funds. Let us remember the deficits and underfunding that occurred a few years ago, and who made them up. If there is a surplus in future, it is only right and proper that some of it should be returned to the taxpayer.

The Bill should give the public full protection in cases of subsidence. It appears to contain the necessary provisions, including the general approach adopted by the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991, which enjoyed wide support on both sides of the House.

Privatisation of the coal industry is not just about raising money, saving revenue for the Treasury or interfering in the energy market to secure a larger share for coal. It is about freeing up an industry that has for long been restrained by the heavy and intrusive hand of successive Governments. It is about setting management free to think more laterally and to introduce innovation and initiatives that will secure new markets.

This country has some of the best deep mining expertise in the world. The future of the privatised industry does not lie just in British mines, because that expertise—as in the case of British Gas—could become a key international export. British Gas has shown the way in developing overseas interests, and I have no doubt that the privatised coal industry could emulate its record. I wish it Godspeed on that journey.

7.26 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) may be interested to know that I am a beneficiary of the mineworkers pension fund, as the recipient of 33p a week. I shall lose a lot of sleep tonight over the taxpayers' contribution to that 33p.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) is not in his place, after his reference to mining activities in the county in which I live and which I represent. I should like the hon. Gentleman to visit my constituency and talk to the miners there about the situation at Ellington and Wearmouth collieries in particular, which work coal reserves 10 km out under the North sea. My recollection is that west Virginia is somewhere in the centre of the United States of America.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned American machinery. I spent most of my life working as an engineer in the coal industry, converting and adapting American machines that did not meet British safety standards.

It is with great pride that I can claim membership of the National Union of Mineworkers for 51 years this month —although I assure my hon. Friends that that does not put me in the Zimmer brigade. I worked in the Northumberland coal industry 40 years before becoming a Member of Parliament. My constituency was once one of the largest coal mining communities in Britain, if not the world.

Earlier, the President of the Board of Trade referred to the mines closed under a Labour Government. There were 20 mines in my constituency at one time, but they have all closed—some recently—because their coal reserves were exhausted. The employment that they provided was replaced by work at companies attracted to the area by incentives offered at the time, such as Alcan Aluminium, Searle Pharmaceutical, Glaxo—renamed Synpac after being purchased by a Taiwanese company—and Robinson Chemicals. Others became established in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell), including Merck Sharp and Dohme and Boots, taking up the employment slack when mines were closed.

I may be unique in being the only Member of Parliament to have worked in the coal industry before its nationalisation. Believe it or not, I worked in the mines for three years before 1947. I see some astonished faces on the Conservative Benches, but I have worn well. Anyone who has worked in the industry will know that mining engineers do take the wear pretty well.

I cannot claim to have happy memories of those times, although it is fair to say that the Ashington coal company was probably one of the best of a bad lot, given the coal owners of the day. The arrangements in those pits were anything but ideal. Pay and conditions were poor, production was the god and safety was a secondary consideration. Miners' lives were completely dominated by the interests of the pit. Not only were miners hired and fired on the whim of management but if an employee lived in a company house as a tenant, any sons in the family were expected to work in one of the mines after leaving school. Some tenants were evicted for failing to comply with that requirement.

At that time, it was common practice to send for employees at any time of the day or night, seven days a week. Working conditions were often extremely unpleasant and dangerous. Dust, water and bad roof conditions had to be endured. Equipment—some of which miners had to purchase out of their wages—was primitive. Pithead baths, safety helmets, footwear, protective clothing and even the local hospital—now in the process of being closed—were mainly financed by miners' contributions. As I have said, that was one of the better mining companies of the time. I shudder to think what conditions were like in other coalfields.

Nationalisation not only brought vastly improved conditions for miners but recognised the value of coal as a national resource, following the need to rebuild our economy after the war. Since then, coal has consistently made a significant contribution to our energy needs. I am sure that Conservative Members will claim that, when the Bill is enacted, the circumstances will be different. Forty years on, a vast expansion of mining technology will prevent the return of such conditions. Time will tell, of course, but there is some evidence of the attitudes that are likely to prevail under privatisation.

I am in close touch with what is happening at Ellington colliery, in Northumberland. For some time, parts of its mining activity have been conducted on a contractual basis, involving the private sector. Initially, the private contractors were involved in the limited development that was taking place; now, large sections of support services are included—for instance, transport and engineering maintenance. Many ex-British Coal employees are being blackmailed into accepting work with the contractors. They are doing exactly the same job as before, earning a basic wage and receiving no sick pay or pensions. They are

given minimal holidays and there is scant regard for many of the safety regulations. That is probably a foretaste of miners' conditions under privatisation in the 1990s.

The Bill is the final piece that the Government are putting into place to remove any co-ordinated national influence on the vital energy industries. Oil, gas and electricity all now respond to market forces; coal will join them, and the withdrawal of Government influence from the critical role played by the energy industries in our economy will be complete.

Perhaps the Opposition should learn a lesson from the crafty way in which the Government began the whole process, especially in relation to the privatisation of the electricity industry—permitting, if not deliberately encouraging, the dash for gas, and appointing British Coal board members who felt little enthusiasm about working for a nationalised industry. That was followed by a policy of closing pits and writing off huge potential coal reserves, along with minimal investment in research and development relating not only to clean coal technology but to technology to produce oil and gas from coal—technology that is important for the future.

Let me give another example involving Ellington colliery. In the early 1980s, an area of coal reserves was identified to the north of the existing mine workings. To reach the coal, it was necessary to drive tunnels to, and then through, faulted strata. Tunnelling began in 1983, the year when I left the mine, and the work has still not been completed.

Almost throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the mine made substantial profits. Few of those profits went into this important development. Only after a meeting last year between the Minister, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and myself did things begin to move. The colliery restarted the development. The project is taking longer than the development of the Channel tunnel, and has made much less progress, but it is vital to the mine.

Even under privatisation, those future coal reserves should have been opened up, so that someone interested in buying the mine could at least have seen them. The tunnellers, however, are still trying to get through the fault —not because the operation involved is difficult but because of the lack of investment. None the less, it should be noted that Ministers sometimes respond to representations.

Too often, the miners have been blamed for the industry's problems when management has been the real culprit. Little criticism has been levelled at management. I do not support management buy-outs; I see little advantage in having an industry run by those who created many of its problems in the first place. I shall oppose the Bill, in the interests of not only the miners but the nation and the future generations who will pay the price for the employment of political dogma against national interests.

The Minister will visit my constituency on Monday and will talk to representatives of British Alcan Aluminium. Its power station in the area has power lines on British Coal land, and the extraction of sea water for cooling purposes also takes place on that land. The company clearly wants to be granted a privileged position, and to be allowed to purchase the land to protect its power station and its interests generally.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Charles Hendry.

7.36 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Like several of my hon. Friends, as a young politician I cut my teeth on an area known for its mining industry. As a 23-year-old, I had the privilege and pleasure of standing against the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who won with a huge majority. I well remember visiting the mining villages of Cowie and Airth in the constituency. I was viewed with some shock—I understand that I was the first Conservative ever seen there.

Mr. O'Neill: And the last.

Mr. Hendry: When the villagers got over the shock, they went out and re-elected the sitting Member of Parliament, giving him a vastly increased majority. The hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly right in saying that I was the last Conservative Member to visit the area.

Undeterred by my experience, I contested Mansfield in the 1987 election, with somewhat more success—it was the most marginal result in the country. I have one abiding memory of the constituency and the campaign. The night before polling day, I went into the Mansfield miners' welfare club, where the steward on the door immediately took the rosette off my lapel because he wanted to wear it. We had to send out for extra "Vote Hendry" badges. When the Labour candidate turned up, he was asked to leave, because he had supported the National Union of Mineworkers during the strike.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Another scab. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hendry: Inevitably, my interest in those constituencies means that I feel very sad about the way in which the mining industry has declined there. Both the pits based in Mansfield—Crown Farm and Sherwood—have now closed, although there is a glimmer of hope. The closures were referred to by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping), who is a doughty fighter for the mining industry—as, indeed was his predecessor, Mr. Andy Stewart, who was a great friend of the industry. The hon. Gentleman referred to the prospective purchase of Clipstone under licensing to Richard Budge and Company. I think that shows that, where the nationalised industry has failed to work, there is hope for pits in the private sector.

I believe that, in small communities that have grown up purely around the pits, those pits should be kept going wherever possible. It is difficult for such communities to attract new investment—particularly large inward investment, which will inevitably be made in areas with a larger population. That is the key issue which is exemplified by Clipstone. Can the mines be run better, more efficiently and more in the interests of their customers and their workers in the public sector or in the private sector?

I make no apology for being an absolute believer in the principle of privatisation. It means that people can plan ahead for the long term—I shall come back to that point in a moment. Privatisation stimulates enterprise and initiative. It gives managers the ability to do what they believe is right and frees them from the dead hand of Government. I say that with tremendous feeling, because a few years ago when, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), I was a special adviser at the Department of Trade and Industry, I experienced the involvement of the Government in another nationalised industry, the Post Office. Even with a benevolent

[Mr. Hendry]

Government who wished to interfere as little as possible, that interference made it more difficult for the industry to operate as it ought to.

I remember well a meeting between my Minister and the chairman of the Post Office to discuss a minor change in the pension plan arrangements for a director of the Post Office Board. As that change had a knock-on effect on public spending, it had to involve a Cabinet Minister and the chairman of that company. That is no way to run a company. It is no way for Ministers to spend their time. If we want industries to do their best, we need to ensure that they are taken away from that interference. Nationalised industries cannot compete effectively. They cannot provide the best service for their customers or the best and safest conditions for their workers.

I especially welcome two aspects of the Bill. The first is that management and employees will be encouraged to take part in buy-outs and the Government are making £200,000 available to help them to prepare their bids. I welcome that because I believe that it is right and essential that the expertise that exists in the industry should be retained and should not be passed over without employees having the chance to compete and bid for their pit against others from outside.

I welcome the interest that has been shown by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. I pay tribute to the members of that union for their courage as miners—every miner deserves our respect for the conditions in which they are prepared to work and earn their living—and more particularly for the courage that they showed in standing up to some of the worst aggression that we have seen in this country. They have earned the right to have a greater say in their industry and they have the knowledge to contribute to it. I am glad that the legislation will give them the chance to do so. I hope that in time the National Union of Mineworkers will decide to do so, too.

My second reason for welcoming the Bill is its commitment to safety. I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) talking about the family tragedy of the death of his father in the mining industry when he was a young boy. That was 50 years ago. Every industry that operated in bad conditions then has tightened up its working methods and improved its safety. That has happened through improvements in technology, greater safety requirements, more laws and public pressure. I am convinced that the commitment to safety enshrined in the Bill will ensure that levels of safety in the mining industry will continue to rise.

As the Member for High Peak, I have to say that the growth of safety standards owes much to the mines research establishment of the Health and Safety Executive in my constituency at Harpur Hill and the tremendous work that is done there to find out ever safer ways of mining. I am particularly encouraged by the fact that the Health and Safety Commission, which looks after the HSE, will be the sole regulatory body ensuring safety in the mines.

We must now free the mines so that they can compete effectively for the maximum market share. Tonight I have heard Labour Members say that they need to know now how many pits there will be. I am afraid that that simply shows how little they understand about the way industry works. If they had asked a few years ago how many cars Rover would produce in 1994, how many passengers British Airways would carry, what percentage of British Telecom public telephone boxes would be operational or what dividend would be payable to people in the National Freight Consortium who had become owners of their own company, the answers given by Ministers would have underestimated those companies' potential. Every privatised company has performed beyond expectations.

Moreover, the move towards privatisation will enable the mining industry to make the long-term investment decisions that it believes are right. It will make them because they are economic and sound and can be justified in the long term. That includes not only the development of pits but the long-term commitment to desulphurisation. Again, I declare a constituency interest. The lime for the desulphurisation process will come mostly from my constituency and that will ensure that many jobs are protected in High Peak. That demonstrates the way in which a dynamic mining industry has a knock-on effect and creates and maintains jobs elsewhere. All Conservative Members seek to encourage that. We support the Bill tonight because we believe that it contributes to that process.

The history of privatisation is one of remarkable and continuing success. Lossmakers of which we despaired which required ever more Government money have become world beaters. For too long, the mining industry in Britain has been deprived of the opportunity to be part of that success story. I welcome the Bill. I shall vote for it because at long last it gives the coal industry in Britain and the miners in that industry a chance to take part in that success story.

7.46 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): The debate today has shown the chasm that exists between the Government and the Labour party. I enjoyed listening to my hon. Friends —in particular my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Livingston (Mr. Cook) —give a stout defence of the principle of public ownership.

The Bill tackles the wrong issues at the wrong time in the wrong way. It will come as no surprise to Conservative Members that the Labour party opposes the privatisation in the Coal Industry Bill. It is a folly. To privatise the coal industry is wrong, but to do so at this time is simply criminal because it will undoubtedly have a great knock-on effect on my constituency and others represented by my hon. Friends.

The Government have been strangling coal for the past two years. This is the death knell. The background to the privatisation is a deliberate policy on the part of the Government. All the actions of the Government have been damaging to the long-term prospects of the industry. Their actions have damaged the morale of my constituency and the safeguarding of communities such as north Delyn, which has been damaged so heavily in the past two years by Government policies and which faces no future if privatisation goes through.

Government policy is a failure. We debate the issue at a time when none of the problems created by the privatisations of gas and electricity have gone away. The nuclear power industry is still subsidised by more than £1 billion a year and has a protected market share. The regional electricity companies are still buying power from new gas-fired power stations, which they now own, rather than from cheaper coal-fired power stations. As my hon.

Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) said, coal is still being imported which is mined by cheap labour in Colombia and other countries. The French interconnector is still being used and is subsidised by the United Kingdom's nuclear levy.

Privatisation at this point in time tackles the wrong issue. Who owns the industry is purely a dogmatic matter for members of the Government. They should be more worried about securing the future of the coal industry instead of settling old scores of 20 years ago, tilting at old windmills and putting forward dogmatic ideas for the future.

The generation of electricity will remain the main market of the coal industry whether it is in private or in public hands. The volume of coal has been fixed until 1999. If British Coal cannot survive and compete in that market, how on earth will private operators compete? British Coal is already making enormous strides to improve efficiency and productivity. At my own pit of Point of Ayr in north Wales much has been achieved in the past 18 months under the pressure of the need for a more efficient coal market. The colliery in my constituency now produces coal based on less than £1 per gigajoule. The miners in my constituency have bent over backwards to improve productivity. In 1987-88, they produced 3·1 tonnes of coal per man shift. Last year, when they were still threatened with closure and on the hit list, they produced 14·7 tonnes of coal per man shift.

The pit in my constituency needs help. It needs a market share and investment, but what it does not need—and what I have not heard anybody in my constituency say that it needs—is a transfer to private ownership. None of the miners in my constituency want that. Throughout the debate on this issue, I have not had a single letter from anybody in my constituency who wants that. Nobody but the Conservatives, who were roundly defeated in my constituency at the previous general election, want privatisation.

Would a private operator have had the millions of pounds necessary to invest to bring productivity in my local pit up to the new levels? I doubt it. Even if an operator had managed to stump up the £2 million needed to purchase the capital equipment installed in the past two years at the Point of Ayr, could it have afforded the weeks of disruption and training necessitated when the equipment was installed and the changeover made? I doubt it. If, in the brave new world of the free market, production was disrupted for any period, the operator could wake up to see markets vanish and profits disappearing.

Should we be selling the pit now after public sector investment has been made to create an efficient, productive market? There are no guarantees in the Bill for the future of the coal industry and it is likely only to accelerate the pit closure programme.

This very week, in British Coal's "Westminster Brief", the Minister is reported as saying:

"The political straitjacket of nationalisation has no place in the industry of the 21st Century. Only by allowing real competition in coal, only by letting real business considerations decide the future, can we hope to maintain a viable British Coal industry".

What do "real business considerations" mean in practice for my constituents?

How could private operators provide a better service at the pit in my constituency than British Coal? They could do it in several ways: they could lower the wages of the staff who work in that pit, and they will do so. They could provide less money for research and development, and they will do so. They could and will have the option of reducing safety measures. Nothing in the Bill will protect the pit's safety record.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hanson: No, I shall not let the Minister intervene because time is limited and we must make progress.

Private operators could lower safety regulations and they will do so. They could employ fewer miners and they will do so. Private industry will go for a quick kill. Privatisation will not lead to greater efficiency because we have already had that over the past three years under British Coal, particularly in my region.

The Bill is an admission of failure by the Government. Productivity could have been increased and any improvements could have been made while the coal industry was under public ownership. Their lack of responsibility and action should be condemned.

The Bill is full of contradictions that should be highlighted. The major one is that, instead of stabilising and strengthening the coal industry, the Bill will have the opposite effect. Some of its worst faults lie in the duties given to the coal authority to license private operators. Clause 2 establishes a general duty for the coal authority to promote the continuation of the coal industry in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the coal authority is charged with promoting competition among private operators. The dichotomy of protecting an industry while allowing competition should not escape hon. Members.

Clause 2 states that the Coal Authority should seek an economically viable coal industry "so far as practicable". What the hell, Minister, does that mean?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Member that he is addressing the Chair.

Mr. Hanson: I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What would the Minister say is the meaning of "so far as practicable"? The Coal Authority will be as much use as a chocolate fire guard. The coal industry will not in any shape or form be protected by a coal authority that seeks to protect both sides of the market.

Privatisation will be to the detriment of several other factors of key concern. We have already heard about mine safety. The Bill contains 20 lines on mine safety. Without a statutory duty on the coal authority and with no draft licences yet available, the ability of the coal authority to intervene is not sufficiently robust. I also remain unconvinced of the Government's reassurances on the mine rescue service.

We have heard about the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, which is to be abolished at a time when the work force increasingly need additional welfare services and when more than 500,000 people in our communities benefit from such provisions. We have heard about environmental liabilities. The Bill's provisions for dealing properly with environmental concerns are poor. Coal is a messy business—water pollution can and does occur. Gas emissions are not unknown, yet the Bill contains no commitment to cleaning them up or making polluters accept their responsibilities.

If the Bill is passed unamended, private mine operators will have few environmental liabilities and no good

[Mr. Hanson]

neighbour policy, as undertaken by British Coal. The public sector will, as always, pick up the bill for any environmental lapses by the private sector. British Coal Enterprise has not been mentioned, nor has subsidence. The question of pensions is skated over and massive powers are put in the hands of the Secretary of State. What happens to those constituents of mine who might face redundancy under privatisation? That issue has not been considered.

The Bill should be opposed because it is a travesty of justice. I am proud to support a publicly owned industry, which is in the best interests of those I represent.

7.56 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It has been an interesting debate, because some of the Tories who have spoken in favour of the Government and privatisation have not been altogether with it. I got the impression that the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peac[illegible]) was trying to explain that she supported hardly any aspect of the Bill, but that she would vote for the Government and privatisation even though her heart was not in it.

The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) told us frankly that he was in favour of privatisation. He is in favour of all sorts of privatisation, apart from that of his own houses. He is careful to keep them. I want to make it clear that, although I said that I would drive a bulldozer if he lay in front of it, I would not drive a bulldozer because I am in favour of opencast coal production.

Mr. Eggar: That is what you said.

Mr. Skinner: No. I would drive the bulldozer to ensure that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton got out of the way.

I should like to put opencast mining in its proper perspective. Last year, there were 18 million tonnes of opencast coal production at a time when pits were shutting. That is equivalent to about 15 coal mines in Britain. Under privatisation, the chances are that there could be 20 million tonnes or even more. We should therefore consider the matter from the viewpoint of the miners who will be thrown on the scrap heap, not to mention the massive environmental damage that will accrue in my constituency.

Opencast mining is easy; it is easy to rip off the turf. The Coal Board is shifting a village. About 200 houses are going to be moved from one village and put in another. That shows the money that can be made out of opencast mining. Everybody should understand that opencast mining means stripping the first 200 or 300 ft of ground, and the rest is sterilised for ever. A mine cannot be drifted once opencast has taken place. The reserves of coal that remain will have gone for good. That is why, apart from the environmental considerations, opencast mining is a dangerous practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens North (Mr. Evans) referred to the Lancashire coalfield. My guess is that there will be opencast production in all those coalfields if the operators can get away with it. The same will be true in Derbyshire. Not one pit is left in my constituency or in Chesterfield, although there is one combined operation, between north-east Derbyshire and south Yorkshire. When I was first elected president of the Derbyshire miners in 1964, there were more than 30 pits in the Derbyshire coalfield, even more in Nottingham and many more in Yorkshire.

I want to talk about shutting pits, because it needs to be put on the record. Yes, pits have been shut ever since Waleswood in 1949, two years after nationalisation, when there was a great outcry and the men stopped down the pit. Every single one was offered a job somewhere else. Do not get me wrong—I am not saying that it was a wonderful thing to shut those pits. I did not like the idea when Parkhouse colliery, where I worked, was shut in 1962 and 1963, but at least, when I asked about a job, I was offered six or seven at different collieries within a perimeter of about six miles.

Contrast that with what happens today. In 1993—and now in 1994—hardly any of the miners at the pits that have been shut have had the chance of a job. The Government talk about Labour Governments shutting pits. I did not like it, and I voted against, but we should set that against a background in which people had the chance to work in a neighbouring colliery or sometimes in another region.

It must also be set against the background that there were never more than 1·5 million people on the dole. We should always remember that, until 1979, there were never more than 1·5 million people without jobs in Britain. This Government have 4 million people out of work. It is not 2·7 million—what about all the miners from Sheffield who are on payment schemes? They are not included in the unemployment figures, but they should all be added on.

We all know that, if we went down any street and counted, we would see thousands—there must be scores of thousands of unemployed people in south Wales, Yorkshire and Durham, who are all on the schemes. They do not add to the unemployment figures—and what about all their children, who are also on slave labour schemes?

We do not want any lectures from this Tory Government or the President of the Board of Trade and his sidekicks when they talk of shutting pits. There is a qualitative difference between shutting a pit but giving someone the chance of a job somewhere else and doing so against a background of 4 million people on the scrap heap.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: I cannot give way to my hon. Friend, because many other hon. Friends would like to speak.

It has often been said before, but it needs stressing, that no other industry in Britain can claim that it has increased productivity by 35 per cent. during the past 12 months. What an idea—privatising an industry that has increased productivity by that amount. When I first went into the pit in 1949, output was 1 tonne per man shift throughout the industry, and it was hard work. Now, output is 10 tonnes for every miner in Britain, and in some coalfields it is as high as 40 tonnes per man, yet the Government have the gall to say that they need to privatise the mines.

We all know why. It is a conspiracy between this lousy Government and British Coal executives—the members of the board. The miners group met them in July 1992, when some of my hon. Friends were present. I confronted Clarke, the chairman, and asked if he would give us a guarantee that he would oppose privatisation, just as Ezra did before him. He said, "No, I can't give that guarantee." I asked them all, one by one, to stand up and be counted.

To his credit, Moses, with whom we had some great battles during the strike actually said, "Not me, Skinner. I

wouldn't join a privatised board. I was born and bred in this industry like thee, so don't say that to me." Then Clarke said, "Don't anyone else answer that question." He picked up his papers and told us, "We're not staying another minute."

From that moment, I knew that the idea of a privatised coal industry was linked to the board taking over when they had the chance. Of course the executives do not want 30 or 40 pits—Neil Clarke only wants a few. He wants to get hold of the 30 million tonnes for the power stations, and he does not want anyone else to compete with him.

When I heard that Tory, the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), talking about all the shenanigans at Wearmouth colliery and about shifting all that tackle—important engineering machinery—I knew why they were taking it away: because they did not want any private entrepreneur to run Wearmouth or any of the other collieries. They want that 30 million tonne captive market, and they do not want anyone to compete with them, so that they can make a massive killing.

By the end of the century, it could all be over. However, we must be optimistic. We socialists cannot afford to acknowledge that we will allow that to happen, because we clearly have an opportunity to win next time. This privatisation must be set against the background that the Tory Government will not last very long. We have a wimp of a Prime Minister and hardly any Tories were here to cheer on the President of the Board of Trade today. The fan club had gone. One of the most interesting features of this debate is that the right hon. Gentleman used to have phalanxes of Tories behind him, but they are no longer there. The game is up.

Tory Members are more concerned about returning to their constituencies to try to stem the tide that will surely engulf them in a Canadian-style obliteration at the next election. I can see it coming, and that is why we must prepare and know what we are going to do. We must therefore ensure that we do not allow this conspiracy to continue much longer.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North mentioned the women of Parkside, and I heard one or two sneers from the Tory benches. What were those women doing there, and why have they been sitting at the pithead? To try to stop British Coal filling in the shafts, because they are optimistic and, in all the gloom and despair, have been trying to stop British Coal pouring cement down the shafts, so that, when the Labour Government get in, we shall be able to start the process up again.

Make no mistake about it: the British coal industry is competitive. One cannot have a 350 per cent. increase since 1984 and not be in the frame for selling, which is why it is important that, when that political sea change takes place, we should take advantage of that competitiveness. We know why privatisation is on the cards—because Cecil Parkinson said so, and that must stick in the gullet of Tory wets. Is that not roughly the size of it? There was all the acclaim at the Tory conference, but it was symbolic, as their hearts are not really in it.

However, there is money involved. What are they going to do? They will get hold of the two pension funds, which have £14 billion in them. That is written into the Bill, although not precisely. They have written in that they will get hold of the surplus and use it—they might use it as bait to catch someone. Who knows, Neil Clarke might have another crack at the pension fund, or this Tory Government might use it to offset all the other difficulties that they have been running into.

But it is a scandal. It is corruption and sleaze if they get their hands on that pension fund, when it should go to the miners, their widows and all those who have contributed. There should be no talk of a pension holiday; the money should go to all those who have spilled their blood over the years.

The same is true of concessionary coal. There are no guarantees. The Government say that they will guarantee it to pensioners, but they are really saying that they will buy them out. As all my hon. Friends know, that is what is happening in the coalfields.

There is no guarantee for the working miners. For the information of Nottinghamshire miners—if they are not already aware of it—the new contractors, such as Budge, are already telling miners when they recruit them that they will give them a job, but instead of £5·50 per hour it will be £3·50. What is more, there is no concessionary coal and one takes it or leaves it. When 4 million people are out of work, it is a seller's market. That is the background. So anyone who listens to Ministers saying that concessionary coal will be preserved should forget it. That is the real scene.

The same is true of subsidence. It is not spelt out in the Bill. Literally thousands of people will suffer. It is easy to imagine the arguments that will take place about whether the subsidence at Clipstone or any of the other mines belongs to British Coal, which has just left the scene, or to Budge. Many people will lose as a result of subsidence. British Coal has not been the softest touch of all time, and we have a massive landslip at Bolsolver that will cost about £1·5 million to put right, but it will be even worse in the forthcoming period, if and when the Bill goes through.

Another problem, which has been mentioned before, is the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. If anyone thinks that it is all about football fields, they should forget it. CISWO is a bigger organisation than that. It is all about providing help for disabled miners and convalescent homes for disabled miners and their widows. Thousands of them go there every year. It is all about providing aids for the disabled which are not provided by the local authority. It is all about providing holidays for some of the disabled and mentally handicapped kids of miners.

So the CISWO operation is not simply about providing a cricket field and one or two other bits and bobs. It is a massive organisation. I hope that the Minister will tell us that CISWO will remain intact, because, once the Government start interfering with it, the whole thing will break down.

The same is true of Mines Rescue—what a wonderful organisation. Everyone has spoken about it over the years; about the fact that, when there is a disaster in the pit, or even the threat of one, Mines Rescue is on the scene—the professionals. They were the paramedics long before anyone else thought about it—paramedics underground. Mines Rescue will be dismantled. There is no reference in the Bill to its being saved.

The Bill has been brought into being to carry through the revenge against the miners, as a result of the Tories' dogma from yesteryear. It has no relevance to the present day. Everyone knows that the best privatisations have been and gone—all the big money that was whittled away and handed over to the richer in our society. All that has gone. This privatisation and that of British Rail does not add up

[Mr. Skinner]

to that type of money at all, like gas and electricity and rain. We are discussing a pettifogging privatisation that is based purely on dogma.

I have to say, in spite of all that, that we have to be ready for government. I say first—it has not been said yet today, but I had better put it on record—that we have to take coal back into public ownership. That is the view of all those in the miners group. It is the view of literally hundreds of Members of Parliament in every region of Britain. I do not say it with the idea that I am putting it in the manifesto, but I am trying to do so because I do not believe that we can resolve the key problems otherwise.

I do not believe that we can rescue the pensions unless we are in control of the industry. I do not believe that we can rescue CISWO unless we control it. I do not believe that we can sort out the problems of people who get concessionary coal unless we are in charge of the industry. What is more, we must curb those imports, and that can only be done by having a publicly owned industry, so that we can demand that those imports are curtailed; so that we can stop the French interconnector link, which is equivalent to about five pits; so that we can curb the opencasting. We need to be in control of our own affairs.

Some of my hon. Friends have mentioned that rail is on the agenda for the next Labour Government. I will run through the Lobbies to carry it through. I will go through the Lobby tonight—we all will—to vote against privatisation. It logically follows that we are not discussing a lot of money: we are discussing a minor privatisation that we could do without even paying them anything. I am not saying that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will go that far, but I just put it in their minds en passant.

We are discussing an important subject. It is about shaping the future. We have to be able to show people outside that we do not just vote against things here in the House of Commons, but that we are starting to formulate plans to mop up the massive unemployment figures that surround us every day. It is a prime example of having an energy policy which is co-ordinated among all the various sectors. In order to do so, we have to ensure that we take coal back into public ownership.

It has been a good debate. The Tories have packed up and run away. I will leave it now to my hon. Friends.

8.15 pm

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): It is perhaps the first time—at least in the past 150 years—that a Member for Easington has spoken in the Chamber without having a working colliery in his constituency. In the past 15 years, the massacre of an industry has taken place, for one reason and one reason alone, and that is to slim the industry down for privatisation. It is a disgrace that Tories, who have favoured the privatisation of the coal mining industry, the jewel in the crown, are so thin on the Benches this evening.

Tens of thousands of miners were working in the Easington constituency in 1951, thousands in the 1980s and nil in the 1990s. Perhaps in future we should consider employment trends in the region rather than unemployment trends, because recent European figures have shown that employment in Easington has dropped by more than one third in the past 25 years. Those are the figures from Europe, which cannot be massaged or changed by a Government who have been so clever in changing the method of assessing unemployment figures more than 25 times in the past 15 years.

Having understood that the industry is to be slimmed down for privatisation, Ministers must be asked why, out of £20 billion-worth of investment into the industry, at the flick of a switch more than £20 million-worth of expensive coal mining equipment and machinery has been left to flood at Easington colliery.

Those questions are perhaps worthy of some national public inquiry, because they do not affect Easington only, but many other collieries throughout the country, especially Wearmouth colliery, where about £10 million-worth of equipment has been stripped out in the past few months, perhaps to deter potential investors from moving in to exploit the many tens of millions of tonnes of coal that still lie under the sea.

I should have thought that a responsible Government, bragging about an expenditure of £20 billion during the past 15 years, would try to underpin the taxpayers' investment by encouraging a market to exploit the many hundreds of millions of tonnes of coal that lie in and beyond the coastline of Durham, that will be sterilised for ever, ever more. As has been said before, one cannot opencast mine coal reserves that lie under the sea, so they are lost to our generation and future generations for ever.

Questions must also be asked, with £20 billion-worth of investment, about what happens to the highly skilled and motivated work force, basically born and bred to work in a mine—educated to work in a coal mine. Those people now find themselves on the scrap heap. Dignified workers, who have always earned reasonable wages, and at times excellent wages, are now working as security guards for £1·10 an hour—or £1·20 an hour if one provides one's own guard dog. That is not a joke; that is what is happening in the north-east now.

We must deal with the awful incestuous relationship between the suppliers and the generators of electricity. The suppliers are now the generators, and people are paying through the nose for that relationship.

What will the legacy be in Easington and other coal mining areas when the last collieries close? In Easington, we can immediately point the finger at colliery housing. There are hundreds of colliery houses in and around the colliery. All my life, I have lived within 400 yd of a working pit, and we have tolerated the dust, the noise and the clamour because that was our work, and the pits were where we earned our wages.

Now that the colliery will no longer be there, what are we to do with the legacy? What are we to do with the modernised colliery houses grouped together, which need tremendous sums spending on them to provide a decent environment for the former mineworkers who now occupy them? The need comes at a time when local government finances are being squeezed, and there is less money for grants. Will the new Coal Authority take the responsibility for what is left of colliery housing, and for providing a decent environment for former mineworkers?

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) talked about the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, and said, "Don't mention parks." Fair enough; I shall not mention parks, although they exist, as do football fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, welfare halls, brass bands and other cultural and leisure facilities.

There are tens of millions of pounds in the coal industry benevolent fund—a fund that was paid for by miners out of their pay packets every week for the past 15 years.

Has the Minister thought about what will happen to that money? There are social workers too, who provide a vital service for retired aged or disabled mineworkers. Once again, the question arises at a time when local authority social services departments are being cut to the bone. The money in the fund was all provided by ourselves out of our pay notes week by week and year by year—ha'pennies from our grandfathers, pennies from our fathers and shillings from ourselves. There are vast sums of money lying there, and they must be protected and used for retired mineworkers in the future.

What about the legacy of methane gas? That problem existed in Blyth because of the closure of Bates colliery, and 12 boreholes had to be sunk in and around the town. A tremendous debate took place between Blyth council and the National Coal Board. The board said, "That is not our responsibility, it is the local authority's responsibility." But in the end British Coal relented, and took the responsibility for sinking the shafts.

Will the residual Coal Authority be responsible for maintaining the integrity of collieries in future, in case someone wants to take out a licence and operate them, perhaps in 18 months' time? If it will, I should like to know where the money will come from to make such an operation successful.

There is also the problem of mine water pollution. The Government should be careful, because mine water pollution from a colliery that closed about 20 years ago is now percolating through the garden of the Bishop of Durham. There are seven pumping stations in the county of Durham, pumping billions of gallons of water every year, and if someone does not take responsibility for continuing those operations, within six months of the pumps being switched off, there will be pollution in the River Wear at Bishop Auckland. Within 18 months, there will be pollution at Lumley water treatment works, and if that becomes contaminated, someone will have to pick up a bill for about £25 million.

I want to know what will happen in Durham. The Minister will have to give a categorical assurance that someone will be responsible for the pumping operations; otherwise, there will be orange polluted water in the river around the castle and the cathedral, at a world heritage site. There will be gross pollution in the River Wear. The people of Durham and Sunderland are sitting on an ecological time bomb, which could have an awful effect on the environment unless the Minister gives us categorical assurances tonight that the residual body will be given teeth and the money to tackle those problems.

That is extremely important, because major Japanese factories with investments of hundreds of millions of pounds have located in that area of the county of Durham because of the quality of the groundwater. Detailed surveys carried out by Durham county council show that, if pumping operations cease at the seven pumping stations, pollution will occur within months.

I ask the Minister to recognise publicly that that is a major issue in Durham, and that the situation is so serious that it is crucial to deal with it properly. Nothing must fall down the cracks during the process of transferring the environmental liabilities from British Coal. I am confident that anyone thinking about licensing or buying collieries in the north-east will not want to handle several million pounds' worth of pumping costs.

I also seek from the Minister a clear statement on the outcome of parallel work being undertaken by the Secretary of State for the Environment, especially in the context of the review of minerals planning guidance, in which the Government are apparently considering the framework of legal responsibility for pollution from abandoned mines. The scenario in Durham that I have painted must have parallels elsewhere in the country—although I believe that in Durham the position is more serious than elsewhere. I look forward to hearing some assurances when the Minister winds up the debate.

I shall vote against the Bill. I am sure that the relevant amendments will be tabled in Committee, and that the Bill will be opposed tooth and nail through all its stages.

8.28 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Mr. Deputy Mayor—I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just trying to promote you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the aspects of privatisation that worries me is safety in the privatised industry. Having worked down the mine for 27 years, and for 14 years at the coal face, I have a pretty good idea of what happens.

I have heard stories about small private mines and what happens at them. We all know that entrepreneurs will buy the collieries, but I hope that some of them are decent people. It remains to be seen. However, some of them are worthy of watching. We must watch them carefully because safety down the mines is paramount to people working there and their families above ground whose loved ones have been lost and buried and families have become fatherless.

If I may, I shall cite a couple of frightening stories of what safety means in a private mine. A few years ago, the mines inspectorate turned a blind eye, but it has a big role to play in the future of the coal industry. In one private mine, the haulage rope snapped and because a new one could not be afforded, a knot was tied in the old rope and the haulage system was started up and the rope was tied to a truck at the top of the bank. The knot did not hold and a man was killed.

Another instance which occurred in a private mine was nearer to my home. A private mine, which employed about 15 men, bought a cheap, large electricity socket to be used down the mine from a scrappy somewhere and plugged it into the system in the mine to get the machinery going. Lo and behold, within 12 hours, the plug caught fire and almost caused a fatality. Six or seven men almost lost their lives and one man was rushed to hospital, never to go back down the pit again.

We have heard a lot about the £20 billion that has been invested in the collieries over the years. I said to the President of the Board of Trade earlier that some gross indecencies have occurred over the spending of that money. I mentioned the transport system, which was put in the pit yards and left for over two years, accruing a bill for the colliery of £300,000. We only discovered that when we fought to save the colliery because the books had to be opened.

I could cite incidents, Mr. Deputy Mayor—sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am thinking of the council. It must be your dickey bow. I could cite incidents where the worth of

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

big machines, trying to be proved in the heading, have been pulled out into the roadways, pushed aside and covered up, and the cost of that machine has been left to the collieries. Wooden chocks and roof supports have been left on the face to rot, never to be recovered. That is where that £20 billion was lost. Pieces of machinery were never recovered and it was never attempted.

Opencast is a big subject in Northumberland, as it is in the whole country. I tabled a written question two months ago asking the Minister about the state of play regarding opencast in Northumberland and Durham and how many tonnes of coal were available. The answer was 16·5 million tonnes of coal at approved sites in Northumberland and Durham. That is the answer to the earlier question. We are not talking about entrepreneurs taking over mines, but about entrepreneurs taking over opencast.

Two or three Conservative Members spoke violently against opencast. They should not think for one minute that we will avoid opencast, because the whole purpose of the Bill is to move from deep coal mining to opencast. We have seen that happen in Northumberland. We even have the figure for Northumberland—16·5 million tonnes of coal. Anyone taking on the mines in Northumberland will get that coal, but the pits will shut.

We have seen what has happened in Wearmouth and we do not want that to happen in Northumberland. We have seen what has happened in the workshops and we do not want that to happen to the workshops in Northumberland. Ellington colliery is on the fringe. I hope that we can save it and that there is a future for it, because there is a lot of coal there. I have my doubts and I have voiced them not only to the entrepreneurs who will buy the pit, but to people in the industry. I believe that the entrepreneurs want opencast.

If the people of Northumberland and Durham want to see the end of the industry, they will see the beginning of a new one—opencast from one end of Durham to the other end of Northumberland; dug up every inch of way. That will include the constituency of the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson). He will have to face the wrath of his constituents. We should chuck him in and cement him up as well. The deadly side of opencast is the prospect for the people of Northumberland, because that is what the Bill means.

8.35 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): This is a great opportunity to say one or two words on the mining industry. Looking back over the years, considering the Reid report and the Samuel report, I never envisaged that it would come to the stage when the mining industry of the United Kingdom would be so attenuated. I can remember when production was about 44 cwt of coal output per man shift and now it has exceeded £10 milion tonnes per annum. The miners have done a great job over the years and I am sure that, in the segment where they will be operating, they will continue to do good work.

I have never been able to understand how people can work underground for their whole lives and then recommend to their sons that they should do that as well. However, those miners have been close to the ground of such matters; they have done a superb job and I am glad that the President of the Board of Trade has decided that the pension plans must be considered carefully and that the money which we have been pouring into industry for years —£20 billion, of which about £8 billion has gone into machinery—has been a fitting investment in an industry which has now reduced in size.

Mining is not the only industry which has fallen into disrepair over the years. The steel industry has been truncated. I remember that at one stage the production was to be about 35 million tonnes per annum in the United Kingdom and is now well down at about 12 million tonnes. We have seen one or two private sector companies almost eliminated because of the recession, and disrepair comes to many industries if there is not a market.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman said that seeing the mining industry come into disrepair makes him sad. I am sure that it does. Surely his memory does not stop at a particular time. Does he remember how bankrupt and how rotten the coal industry was in private hands? Does he remember how the royal commission in 1918 said that it could not leave the industry in the corrupt hands of the private coal owners and that it had to be nationalised? That took a long time, and into public ownership came a bankrupt industry that was in complete disrepair, because profits were being sucked out of it. Being a public industry turned it round and made it the efficient industry it is today.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the first step was the taking over of coal rights in 1938. It was not until 1947 that it was decided to nationalise the whole industry and to put it into Government hands. The state has controlled the industry for a long time.

Instead of growing from strength to strength, the industry has dwindled because the market has reduced. That is not the miners' responsibility. British coal was so costly that it could not sell abroad. British coal is probably the cheapest to produce in Europe, compared with German coal and so on. However, the Europeans will accept it only in very small quantities. We want coal to be imported because of the steel industry and other requirements. We find that it is essential to blend it. The state has not been successful in running mines.

The industry has absorbed £20 billion over the years, and it has not been a success. Is that a recommendation for the state to run an operation? Would it not be much wiser to put the industry into the private sector where there are high standards? The private sector has been transformed. It is much more caring, much more responsible and much more adept.

Let us consider Australia and the United States of America. Hanson Industries runs the Peabody company in the United States. It has some problems, I agree. Shell and one or two other companies still have interests in Australia. Many companies successfully operate out there. They are able to bring coal to the United Kingdom at very much lower prices. Of course, the coal industry is becoming more competitive, I hope that, over the years, with the change of ownership, it will be remarkably successful, but that will not be easy. My hon. Friend the Minister does not pretend that there will be an easy ride for it.

Let us consider the era of the Labour Government and remember when Lord Robens was in charge of the National Coal Board. He closed more pits than were ever closed by the Conservatives. As chairman of the National Coal Board, he was primarily concerned to make the industry viable. He faced exactly the same problem that we

have today—a declining market. In the early days, we used to produce gas from coal. That was stopped. Later, coal had a diminished market for electricity production. We now have the additional problem of gas turbines. They are remarkably successful and can be brought into operation very much faster than other methods.

Mr. Rogers: The record should be straight in respect of colliery closures under a Labour Government. In my constituency of Rhondda, at one time there were 63 coal mines. Most collieries were closed during the period of a Labour Government, but it was a process of rationalisation. Very small coal mines were integrated. In a dozen large collieries, the same coal take was worked. It was a process of rationalisation, not of trying to destroy an industry. The hon Gentleman completely distorts the statistics. That process happened in every coalfield in the United Kingdom.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman likes rationalisation and that it should be done gradually. In the Rhondda valley, much investment was brought in from abroad. In that area, or fairly near to it, Japanese investment produced wirelesses and other electronic equipment. Over time, certain industries were developed because others were retired. That is the ideal way to do things, but if the market is eroding at a fast pace, what are we to do?

If miners are prepared to produce coal in abundance and to build stocks to a gigantic height over the years and we then find that we cannot sell that coal either in Europe, elsewhere abroad or on the local market, what should we do? Should those miners produce still more coal which will remain totally unsaleable? Perhaps, in order to reach a viable size, the state industry will have to do what the private sector has done and cut itself to a suitable size at which it can operate.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: If we did the same as we do in the nuclear industry and subsidise coal stocks to the tune of £1 billion a year, we could sell it abroad more cheaply, just as our competitors in Australia, America and South Africa, who are subsidised, do.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman talks about subsidies. The industry has had enormous subsidies to the tune of £20 billion over the years. Those subsidies came from the taxpayer. The hon. Gentleman must take that point into account and be realistic. We do not like a local industry to be shut down or diminished, but that is sometimes inevitable because of the state of the market. However, the miners are not responsible for that; we should blame the management, that is British Coal or the National Coal Board, as it was. The experiment was tried for many years but it was not satisfactory. There is no way out of our plight.

Mr. Campbell: What about the nuclear levy?

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the nuclear levy. I was a member of the Committee which considered the electricity legislation. I argued strongly, with the support of the Labour party, that we should keep the nuclear industry in state hands because of the implications and repercussions that were likely to arise. It had to be made a viable industry. It was decided that the best way to do that would be to have a nuclear subsidy or a nuclear levy. That is set out in the Act. The chairman of the nuclear power body has recommended that, over the next two or three years, it is to be discontinued. Therefore, the industry will cease to be subsidised. It will be as competitive as any other section of private enterprise.

Over about three or four years, I would welcome the elimination of the so-called subsidy, but we should remember that money has to be put aside for the retiring of nuclear power plants. We live in a competitive world. Electricity is produced not only from coal. A little is produced from oil, and more and more is produced from natural gas, which seems to be the in thing these days. The various products must be competitive.

We are asking the private sector, "If you take over certain branches of the industry, can you compete successfully?" They say that they can. In the five areas in which licences are to be granted, some of the deep mines and some of the opencast systems should be linked. A combination of both would make them satisfactory.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) mentioned opencast mining. Opencast mining has produced about 60 million tonnes of coal. Much of the mining in the United States of America, Australia, South Africa and elsewhere is opencast. We must compete with that. Mining in the United Kingdom is principally underground, and it is very expensive.

With regard to opencast mining, hon. Members should remember that we have not only the precedent from abroad but the profitability of it. If we had opencast mining, we would be able to compete with South Africa, Australia and the United States. We would be able to compete with Peabody. Hon. Members should bear in mind the fact that opencast mining is not eliminated, although there will be continuous planning difficulties to get an operation going. In view of some of the restoration work that has been undertaken over the years, full congratulations must go to the companies involved for what they have done to reinstate the land.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman is talking about a subject which I have closely monitored in my constituency. Coal in opencast mines can be reached at any time in the next century because it can be dug up quite easily. But once mines are shut, millions of tonnes of coal disappear. If it is too expensive to open new mines, the coal will disappear, never to be mined again. The hon. Gentleman is advocating opencast mining and locking away millions of tonnes of coal underground.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. Of course, the coal is readily recoverable—the overburden is removed and the coal is taken out when it is needed. My primary aim is to keep miners in jobs. I am sure that a change of ownership would be much more successful because it would make the industry more prosperous.

I shall refer briefly to one or two points that I have in mind. These are problems largely for the Government. There are enormous stocks at the pithead and in the hands of the power-generating companies. When the new licensees take over, what will be the allocation for the liabilities of those stocks because they could be a burden on the market for many years? I agree with everything that has been said about the problem of pollution. The polluter pays, and it could be expensive. Will the licensees be responsible for such problems?

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

Anyone who takes over an area will be concerned about subsidence. Subsidence can occur at any time in any area. Some of the developments are near towns and villages and can be very expensive. During the passage of the Electricity Bill, I told the Government that one of the principal difficulties in having nuclear power in the privatisation programme would be the unlimited liability which could visit the companies. Will the licensees who are prepared to take over and receive grants be fully compensated for the subsidence which is likely to occur in 20, 30, 40 or 50 years?

Another point that I shall raise briefly is the size of the market which is left. Over the years, we have heard many analyses. A few years ago, Rothschild talked about production in the United Kingdom falling to about 30 million tonnes, and other estimates have been given. I hope that we will not take the mining industry down too far. If we do, it will cease to be as viable as we hope it will become, and it may become more economical to buy more coal of the right quality from abroad.

Now that we are fully participating in Europe, and as most EC countries do not have high-quality coal of their own, I hope that an earnest attempt will be made to pressure the Europeans to take some of our indigenous material. Who are the European producers? Coal is produced mostly in Germany, with small amounts produced in France and Spain. Most parts of Europe do not have coal, and we have the benefit of large quantities of it. I do not want to see resources wasted over the years. If we can get our costs right, and the Minister is determined to secure this, I hope that we will have a thriving industry in the future.

8.54 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The question we must ask is, why is the Bill being introduced? Is it being introduced because it will bring about greater efficiency? No. Productivity has increased by 500 per cent. since the industry was nationalised and rescued by public ownership in 1947. Let us remember that in 1947 private mine owners begged the Labour Government to take over the mines and nationalise them, as was done. Recently, productivity increases have been spectacular, so the Bill is nothing to do with efficiency.

Is the Bill being introduced to save taxpayers' money? No. If we examine its financial effects, we see that there is a continuing subsidy of at least £1 billion until the end of the century—£1 billion will be used to prop up this private industry. On top of that, the Government have provided grant aid totalling £3 billion. Also, literally billions of pounds have been spent on redundancy costs for miners who lost their jobs. The 26,000 miners who have lost their jobs since the President of the Board of Trade started to sentence the industry to death in October 1992 have cost the state £234 million in terms of unemployment benefit, lost revenue, and so on. The costs of subsidising a privatised mining regime are mounting.

There are other costs as well. Documents in the Library show that it costs £1 million a year, on average, to keep pits mothballed while awaiting privatisation. The new Coal Authority established in the Bill will not be cash-limited. That is made perfectly clear in schedule 1, which states:

> "The Secretary of State shall, in respect of each accounting year, pay to the Authority such amount as he may determine to be the amount required by the Authority for the carrying out during that year of its functions under this Act."

It is not cash-limited. Potentially, a large amount of money is being made available to the Coal Authority to prop up this privatised regime.

What we will see is a total cost to the taxpayer that is many times more than what the Select Committee on Trade and Industry said would be required to subsidise British Coal over a couple of years so that it could become fully competitive and compete on a level playing field with the rest of the world. Therefore, this is not about savings to the taxpayer.

Is it about a coherent energy policy? Of course not. If the coal industry is privatised, it will pursue its own narrow private interests, as the electricity industry has done since it was privatised. In turn, privatisation of the electricity industry has been responsible for the death of the coal industry over which the Government are presiding.

Privatisation of the energy industry has been responsible for the damaging effects on all our energy resources. About 15 years' worth of our precious gas reserves in the North sea oil shelf have been depleted as a result of gas-fired power stations and the dash for gas, which is totally unsuitable as a fuel for a power station base load. Our reserves have been wasted. The Government are depleting our precious natural gas reserves, which should be directed at domestic and industrial heating.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hain: No, I will not give way. Some of my hon. Friends want to speak and the hon. Gentleman has not been here for the whole evening, as many Opposition Members have.

The Bill is not about a coherent energy policy—that certainly would not come from the Government. They have allowed coal imports to rise by almost five times since 1983, from 4·5 million tonnes to 20 million tonnes a year. That is damaging to the balance of payments and causes difficulties for our economic policy.

The Bill is not about energy policy. Is it about protecting the environment? No, because one of the consequences of privatisation will be the acceleration of the dash for opencast mining at the expense of deep mining. We have seen all the destructive environmental consequences of that in recent years.

In my constituency, it is interesting to see the contrast between British Coal's applications for opencast work at Selar—one of the largest sites ever to be worked in Britain, at the top of the Neath valley—and the situation at Tower colliery, the last British Coal pit in south Wales. Tower has been slimmed down, ready for privatisation, and its production has been cut as opencast mining has been opened up. That gives some idea of the real priorities of the privatisation of coal.

The Bill is not about any of those things. It is really about giving freebies to the friends of the Government who want to set up companies to take advantage of the privatisation of coal. It is also about the long-standing vendetta of the Conservative party against the mineworkers and, in particular, their trade union. It is about the dogma that allows crucial and strategic industries which are vital to the nation's interests to be subordinated to the concerns of shareholders, rather than to act in the wider public interest.

The way it has been done is a scandal. The Government have pursued their strategy absolutely ruthlessly and have slimmed down the coal industry as a matter of deliberate policy to create a small industry for which the private sector would bid. I give the example of Blaenant, which was the last pit to close in Neath. My agent, Howard Davis, used to work there. The pit employed 600 men, and there is a familiar tale in what happened to it. For a long period, it was profitable. Then, 18 months before its closure, a new management team was brought in. That team set about destroying industrial relations and creating turmoil in the pit. It quickly slid from its profitable state to a deficit within six months of the team's taking over. That gave a good excuse for the pit to be closed.

An under-manager at Blaenant was so disgusted by what was happening that he walked off the site in disgust at his senior managers, a practice unknown in south Wales. The conditions that been created for the pit to close. How often have we heard that tale regarding pits across the country as the ruthless drive towards privatisation has been pursued?

The Bill means that we are now on the brink of one of the biggest scams of the century. The same managers who have run down the industry are now to bid for it, and they will reap the benefits as private managers and owners in a new private coal industry. The preparation for the privatisation of British Coal stinks to high heaven. We are seeing nothing short of a national scandal, where all the social costs of private mining are to be dumped on the state while the private owners skim the industry and make profits from it.

The Bill is about two things—protection of the past and planning for the future. So far as the past is concerned, I believe that the Bill does not give adequate protection for pensions, as was mentioned earlier in the debate. Representatives of the mineworkers pension scheme have made it perfectly clear that the Government have not satisfied them that they are interested in the future of miners' pensions. The issue of subsidence was addressed earlier, and that subject is treated absolutely cavalierly.

The pollution from old coal workings is also inadequately dealt with. For example, the Pellenna river, which flows through the former mining village of Tonmawr in my constituency, is a deep orange-brown colour. The river is literally disgorging into the surrounding rivers and the sea thousands, if not millions, of gallons of water which is heavily polluted with iron and sulphur. The pollution is ultimately seeping through into the water table. Lots of old mine workings are deeply polluted and there is no guarantee that the Bill will give local communities the protection that they need.

Another example was brought to light when representatives of Neath angling club approached me recently and took me down to the Neath river to show me a patch that was heavily polluted by an old Ynysarwed mine which closed in 1938. The pollution has just come out into the Neath river. I approached the National Rivers Authority, Welsh Water and British Coal, none of which wanted to know. If British Coal does not want to know about a private pit that closed in 1938, imagine a private regime wanting to take responsibility for that. Yet that case shows that pollution from a pit that closed almost 60 years ago can suddenly come out of the ground and infect the local environment.

The Bill provides protection for neither the environment nor the many thousands of individuals and families who have benefited over the decades from the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, the future of which is deeply threatened. A sword of Damocles hangs over it as a result of the Bill, which abolishes the Miners' Welfare Act 1952, through which CISWO was funded from within the industry. The Bill provides no alternative means of funding.

For how long will concessionary fuel continue to be provided? It is vital to the livelihood of many miners' widows and former miners' families, but it is not guaranteed in the long term.

I invite the Minister to come to my constituency, which has more private mines than any other constituency in the country. It has 36 drifts and levels employing from two to 140 men, totalling 450 miners. Ironically, that is double the number of miners now employed by British Coal in the whole of south Wales. I have strongly supported private licensed mines. I have appealed to the Welsh Office to give them grant aid and supported Ryans colliery's successful application to reopen the Vale of Neath railway line to transport coal by rail rather than clog up the roads. Under the Transport Act 1985, that mine received a grant of more than £6 million for that development.

Local private mines are an important part of the local economy, but almost all of them hark back to the turn of the century. In the past two years in my constituency, two miners have died and one narrowly escaped death and was paralysed from the waist down. Conditions are dreadful. Miners have no showers and, in Crugau colliery in particular, some are not even paid with proper payslips, which contravenes contracts under employment law. At Pentwyn colliery, miners who were working over the Christmas period according to their basic conditions of service were about to take the normal Christmas break to which they are entitled under law when the private owner simply sacked 20 of them. That is the kind of thing that will happen under privatisation.

Ponies are still used to bring the coal out of some of the collieries in my constituency. Forest colliery opposite my home in Resolven has two ponies called Amos and Prince, while Nant-y-Cafn colliery near Seven Sisters has a pony called Turbo. Pentwyn pit in Ystalyfera also has a pony. People do not believe that such conditions exist in 20th-century Britain. Those conditions of last century will come back with a vengeance if the Bill is enacted.

The safety problems in those pits are enormous. A survey by the Health and Safety Executive compares accidents in private pits with those in British Coal pits per thousand employees. A miner in a private pit is 23 times more likely to die than a British Coal miner. What reassurance can the Minister give on that? The Bill gives no reassurance. It is an exercise in going back to the future, as the finest deep-mine industry in the world is demolished, men's safety is threatened and lives are risked on the altar of the free market mania that has failed the rest of the British economy.

9.9 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I shall be brief because we are at the tail end of the debate. My hon. Friends have covered many issues, including the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, Mines Rescue, pensions and the importation of coal; therefore, I shall deal with just two matters.

[Mr. Eric Clarke]

I have written to the Minister about the composition of the Coal Authority, which will have many powers if privatisation goes ahead. In the context of controls on opencast extradition, will it give licences to all and sundry or will that be pre-empted by the overall sale of large packets or areas of land with opencast potential? With a nod and a wink, potential buyers will get a licence anyway. Will privatisation be a bonanza for the asset strippers or cherry pickers who will concentrate only on opencast mining?

The Minister will not have the answers to those questions. We all worry about who will make decisions. I hope that they will not be made by the people who run British Coal or by ex-members of the British Coal board of management. There are qualified people in the industry and in the mining communities. Ex-miners, mines inspectors and even academics, university professors of mining, would have some credibility.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, because I have just a short time in which to make my speech and other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was giving way.

Mr. Clarke: I said no; there was a misunderstanding.

I also wrote to the Minister about coal mine abandonment plans. I do not think that he is paying attention to me. Those plans are not being left in the areas where the extradition took place. In 1950, the Coal Board was given the right to take all the abandonment plans into the relevant areas. That was because the area representatives said that it would be handy to have these working plans of exhausted mines in one area to which there was access. They were in the Edinburgh area, but they are now in Midlothian, in my constituency. However, British Coal has now gathered them all together and taken them to Bretby.

It may be useful to have all the plans under one roof, but it is difficult for a mining surveyor or a private developer, who must examine such plans before development is allowed, to have access to them. I do not want those plans to end up under the jurisdiction of Group 4 or some such organisation, because if that happened people would have to pay to look at them. Half of them would probably go missing anyway—we know what happened to prisoners. Even academics who want to study the plans would not have access to them. Perhaps the Minister will consider that point.

I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland about the matter and he said that it had to do with British Coal. That is not the case, because these plans relate to the heritage of the Scots, the Welsh, the people of the north-east and others in Britain. The plans do not belong to British Coal. They belong to the people, and people should have access to them.

Anybody who knows the technicalities will appreciate that colour slides are not good enough. We have to look at the plans carefully because their age makes the shades appear to be on top of each other. Obviously, it is a complicated and difficult plan and it is possible to find things one was not looking for. I am asking the Minister whether the Coal Authority could be responsible for these matters and whether the position could be reversed so that the plans are sent back to Scotland or elsewhere.

Like many other people from Scotland, I feel that the Bill is a bit of a post mortem on the coal industry. A great industry has been decimated, and Conservative Members have voiced many inaccuracies today.

The miners were heroes in the first and second world wars. After the second world war, the coal industry gave up. The miners worked five-day weeks and 11-day fortnights. They produced coal for Britain and sold it to industry. They put British industry back on its feet. British Coal sold coal at a lower price. It imported United States coal and sold it at local prices to keep industry going. It could have used market forces to produce a surplus and it would not have had to take out the loans that were a millstone around its neck for many years.

I spent some time in the Library going through British Coal accounts dating back to 1979. There were many loans, and the interest on them was a millstone around the industry's neck. I know that, because every time we went to British Coal on an organised basis to negotiate wage increases, the management said that the company was not profitable because it had to pay back massive loans.

I will not bore hon. Members with the figures, but I can assure them that they go up and up. Page 8 of the NCB annual accounts for 1979-80 makes it quite clear that the national loans fund was on a 15-year term and that the borrowing was too inflexible to allow the nationalised industries to act commercially. We had blinkers, handcuffs and financial embargoes on the nationalised coal industry, which was not working properly.

Let us get the whole issue straight and put the blame where it belongs. Privatisation is a political decision, not an economic one. It is the politics and economics of madness to close down such an asset. *[Interruption.]* Yes, they are closing it down; it is a systematic closure. There is no argument about it. Hon. Members can go and see how many coal mines will be privatised.

Like many other people who spent their lives in the coal industry, I have nothing of which to be ashamed. It was an honest, hard-working and honourable job and the miners were the finest men I have had the honour to work beside. Many of them are retired now and remain in the communities. I am looking after their interests through the pension funds and elsewhere.

If the privatisation goes through and many other things happen, I want those people and their families to be protected.

9.8 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): In the 20 months since the general election, we have had many debates on coal, and many of them have followed the same track. We have had paving legislation, announcements on closures, calls for Government action, belated and irrelevant responses from the Government and disgraceful handling of safety arrangements. Now we reach what Conservative Members will regard as the final stage—the privatisation of coal and the Government's washing their hands of the whole issue.

In the immediate aftermath of the miners' strike, the Government ceded control of the coal industry to individuals in the corporation to lick it into shape in preparation for privatisation. Some said that the shape

would consist of 12 to 14 pits employing about 10,000 men. Others wanted to sell it into private hands—perhaps their own—and have as big an industry as possible. In the event, the debate turned out to be academic, because the structure of the privatised industry was determined by the availability of cheap gas and subsidised nuclear power from France. As well as that, the electricity industry was privatised.

I seem to have been living on a different planet from Conservative Members, some of whom tell us that the privatisation of gas and electricity was the greatest piece of privatisation ever, while the other half tell us that coal should have been privatised before the other two. The Government's ceding of control and responsibility for the generation of power in this country is highly irresponsible, but that battle in many respects has been lost and we must try to make the best of a bad job.

In the period since the end of the strike, we have seen increased production, the cutting of costs and the reduction of prices in the coal industry. In the first week back at work this year, a figure of 10·26 tonnes per man shift was achieved for the first time ever. Last April, the figure stood at 8·23 tonnes per man shift. As has been pointed out, the record has been broken nine times in the past 10 months. Indeed, at Whitemoor colliery in the Selby complex, some 280 men cut 42·8 tonnes per man shift.

In the northern group alone, up to November last year, four pits were producing at less than £1 per gigajoule. In my constituency, the Longannet mine has been successful in achieving figures for price and quality that have enabled it to sign a five-year agreement with Scottish Power to take 2 million tonnes per annum from the colliery. Those are not the achievements of an industry on its knees. Those figures for cost reduction and production are not evidence of an industry that has lost its way. They are testament to effective public ownership. They are a vindication of the motives of those who nationalised the industry in the first place.

The Attlee Government nearly half a century ago saw the appalling record of the private coal owners, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) pointed out to us from his personal experience of working in what are alleged to have been the glory days of private ownership of the British coal industry. We tend to forget that, in the days when it was nationalised, coal was used for heating in almost every home in the country, not merely the 2·5 million of today. It was the fuel source for our railway system and our ships. It provided the coke for the gas and steel industry. It fuelled our electricity generation.

With markets like those, it must have taken a particularly spectacular form of incompetence in the private owners not to be able to run their industry at a profit or in a manner that was safe and which afforded the work force—*[Interruption.]* Fifty years ago, Conservative Members were not arguing in favour of private ownership of the coal industry—they were advocating public ownership. Fifty years later, the performance of the coal industry is such that members of the Labour party—the advocates of public ownership—have nothing to be ashamed of.

There are other aspects of the coal industry. Indeed, the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) a few moments ago showed that the safety of private mines stands very bad comparison with the figures and conditions that prevail within British Coal today, especially if one considers that, in 1946, 1,000 miners a year lost their lives. Between 1933 and 1942, the fatal accident rate was 1·3 deaths per 1,000 miners. Within the first five years of public ownership, that was halved. Today, it is now 0·13—one tenth the rate of 50 years ago.

Safety in private mines, then as now, is far worse. The accident rate is five times as bad in the private service. When we hear about the accidents in mines and about how good the record is, it nevertheless requires us to pay tribute, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) did tonight, to the Mines Rescue service. Some of us remain to be convinced—we shall raise this in Committee—of that service's future. It is not a cheap operation—and it requires sacrifices not only by employees but by employers in allowing their staff time off work to attend training courses and to be available whenever a disaster occurs. There must be guarantees about the continuation of that rescue service.

Under past private ownership, low priority was given to safety, but labour relations were also deplorable. I refer not only to disputes but to the demeaning, casualised nature of employment mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck. Contractors picked and chose their men, and security of employment, holidays and even basic days off were never granted in any systematic fashion. At the end of the second world war, there were few sincere voices raised against nationalisation. The view held today is that, since the industry is small and output low, it should be left to the private sector. The message today was that it does not matter who owns the coal industry because it barely has a future and will never regain its role even in electricity regeneration.

There are, however, vast reserves of coal in the United Kingdom. Estimates range from 40-plus years to an optimistic 230 years. Whatever figure is used, it cannot be disputed that, at current European consumption levels, Britain has half Europe's coal reserves and the cheapest deep-mined coal in the European Union. That point was made by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who mentioned the possibility of exporting United Kingdom coal to the European Union.

Perhaps it would be more sensible to make an arrangement with the French whereby they conceded third party status and we could use the interconnector to export British-generated electricity to Italy and Germany. That would be a more satisfactory way of using our surplus coal supplies. However, there is broad agreement across the House that the United Kingdom must make use of its reserves.

We all agree also that security of energy supplies will depend on a variety of fuels, and that the organisation of that portfolio will depend on proper investment levels being sustained. The danger inherent in a small coal industry under several owners is that there is likely to be insufficient critical mass to sustain the industry.

We have already seen the impact on the mining machinery industry of the decline in the home market, which has severely prejudiced the prospects of companies in that sector competing in the international market for mining equipment. A small, privately owned industry would have great difficulty supporting research and development.

Will the Minister for Energy indicate Government thinking on the coal research establishment, which is partly funded by European money in the form of the return of part of the levy on coal produced in this country? It would be ridiculous if the price of British coal were to reflect a levy

[Mr. Martin O'Neill]

from which this country cannot benefit. The CRC is not mentioned in the Bill, but it ought to be considered. It is one of the main coal industry research bodies in the world, producing valuable research for not only the United Kingdom and Europe but companies worldwide. It is essential to the industry's long-term future that the centre is protected.

The prospect of a small, privatised coal industry has attracted little interest from international companies with the resources to fund research and development. It is feared that the private operators who are interested in entering the business will be too small or too heavily indebted to have the resources for research and development, and will merely pursue short-term profit by rape and pillage.

Hon. Members have asked about pay and conditions, safety and related procedures. No doubt we shall return to those matters in Committee and on Report. The Bill's implications for existing employees are, however, almost overtaken by the scale of the responsibilities to be shouldered by the Coal Authority and future owners. As drafted, the Bill gives little comfort to pensioners. Some members of the latest group of former workers have already been exposed to unscrupulous insurance salesmen, who have encouraged them to contract out of the industry and adopt other pension schemes.

The Bill does nothing to resolve disputes with trustees about the disposal of surpluses, especially in the staff scheme. The assurances that have been given have not allayed the anxieties of existing staff about the safety of their contributions. If the Government are not prepared to guarantee future employment or redundancy arrangements, surely they can promise to protect the pensions of the existing work force from unscrupulous private owners.

An integral part of a mining pensioner's package is the concessionary coal scheme, but no one is yet convinced of the Government's present and continuing commitment to that scheme. I understand that the Minister answered a question about it yesterday. The matter will be scrutinised closely if and when the Bill enters its Committee stage; I do not think that a one-paragraph answer was sufficient to allay any of our fears.

Those who do not know the industry and the communities that depend on it do not realise the significance of the concessionary coal scheme. It is worth between £650 and £850 a year to the 160,000 people who receive coal and smokeless fuel, and some £270 a year to the 40,000 who receive cash in lieu. The scheme costs about £150 million a year. A number of my hon. Friends have referred to the blatant attempt to buy out that entitlement, and the failure to spell out tax implications of such deals to the elderly pensioners involved. The unscrupulous approach adopted by some parts of British Coal in its attempt to shed the burden must be scrutinised far more closely. I hope that the Minister will at least begin to consider that aspect this evening.

Such problems affect all hon. Members with former miners in their constituencies. Because of the degree of interdependence in mining, and the failure of private owners and the social welfare system to look after the needy, miners have been required to provide for themselves in the past.

Mr. Etherington: Is it not incredible that the President of the Board of Trade did not refer once to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation? In 1921, following the report of the Sankey commission, the Government of the day introduced legislation that placed a levy on tonnage; that levy was worth more than the Coal Board is paying now. Is it not almost beyond belief that the right hon. Gentleman did not mention such an important aspect of the matter?

Mr. O'Neill: Having been in the House for 15 years, I am no longer surprised by anything that the President of the Board of Trade says or does not say. It is significant, however, that in 1952 the incoming Conservative Government—on the back of coal nationalisation—introduced the Miners' Welfare Bill, which created the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation as we know it today. It plays an invaluable part in the lives of communities associated with the mining industry. Apart from the welfare institutions and the clubs, its regional system of social workers complements the social services. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members who think that this is amusing should remember that, when the House faces further public expenditure cuts, it will be to voluntary organisations such as CISWO that people will have to turn in increasing numbers for the support that the social services, deprived of funds, cannot provide.

It has been suggested that in the next 25 years about half a million people will need the services of CISWO. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Minister to mention CISWO, even if the President of the Board of Trade does not consider it important enough to be included in his speech.

CISWO and British Coal Enterprise deserve a mention. Neither of them features anywhere in the Bill. Some of us have been sceptical about the contribution made by British Coal Enterprise, but we know that it has a loan fund of £50 million and a cumulative total of some £75 million in loans and grants. We do not want them to be jeopardised because we recognise that the level of unemployment in our areas is such that any help that we can get is welcome.

The Bill does not affect only individuals and the economies of the coalfield communities. Repeated reference has been made to the environmental consequences of mining. There has been discussion of the implications of stopping pumping in the north-east and Wales. There has been discussion of the significance of opencast mining and its irrelevance when we consider the importance of securing markets for deep-mined coal.

The Bill leaves many questions unanswered. We have yet to know the size of the industry that the Government propose to privatise. We do not know how many collieries will remain. We do not know whether proper security will be provided for the pensions and working arrangements of the people who will be left in the industry. But we know that the Government want to get shot of the industry. Indeed, when Lord Parkinson spoke in 1992 in the wake of the pit closures announcement, he made it clear that the closures were more about marking off the scores of the 1974 strike, which brought down the then Tory Government, than about a proper energy policy for Britain.

The Bill is not about a coal industry of the future. It is about a Conservative Government's revenge. The privatised remains of the coal industry, with contracts with the electricity generators of only three years, will not be attractive to the Peabodys or RTZs of this world. It could appeal only to companies such as Budge which operate rates of £3·50 an hour for a 10-hour day—a cut of 31 per

cent. in wages. That is what is being offered at the Clipstone mine. It could appeal only to those who operate under safety regulations which will be bereft of the contribution of the mining deputy and in which safety will be paramount only so long as it is practicable to make it so.

Following privatisation, at the end of the contract, when the bankers and the men from the City have walked away with their profits, all that will be left will be the coal miners of this country, the vast reserves of coal and, if we are lucky, supplies of over-priced gas. And there will be one more thing, Madam Speaker: there will be a Labour Government mindful of their responsibility to provide a national energy policy in which the public sector will once again play its part. Until then, we must oppose the Bill. If we are defeated tonight, we must fight for changes in the Bill to protect miners, their families, the environment and the energy supplies of this country. I urge all those who believe that there is a future for coal to join us in the Lobby tonight to keep the nation's resources in the hands of the people.

9.38 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): We have had a good debate, with 25 hon. Members speaking, and I shall do my best to answer as many of their questions as possible. Without wishing to offend my hon. Friends and Opposition Members, may I say that my image of the debate is of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He was in fine form.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It was a good speech.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. He reminded us that the Nye Bevan wing of the Labour party is still alive—just. His speech was fascinating. He did not speak to the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Skinner: There was no one there.

Mr. Eggar: He did not talk to the mining group of Labour Members of Parliament. No, he spoke directly to the Labour Front Bench and made an impassioned plea for the Labour party to prepare for government—but by doing what? By renationalising the British coal industry. The battle that he was fighting was not with his mining friends but with his Front Bench.

What was the best answer that the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) could come up with in response to that speech? He said, "Well, we might have a little bit of public sector involvement in the coal industry if we ever happen to get back into power." That was the best contribution that the Opposition spokesman could give the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Bolsover has a lot more work to do and I am delighted that he has some colleagues on his side, such as the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell). I am not sure about the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings)—I am not even sure about me —but I am looking forward to the battle developing on the Labour Benches in Committee.

I must begin by picking up on some of the comments about the safety regime.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Will my hon. Friend cast his mind back 10 years, when we should have introduced this Bill but did not do so because there would have been a synthetic national strike by all those companies and businesses that had been denationalised and which now realise that the miners are coming in too late?

Mr. Eggar: I agree. One of the tragedies that has befallen the mining industry is the way in which labour relations and the attitude of the Opposition have meant that the safety regime has come later to the private sector than to other parts of the energy industry.

I recognise that hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about safety issues. My right hon. Friend the President and I are absolutely determined that privatisation will not lead to a reduction in safety standards. Modern mining practice, new technology and a tough regulatory framework will ensure that the industry's safety record continues to be excellent.

I repeat that safety is, and will remain, the Government's paramount concern as we go through the privatisation process. No Conservative Member and no member of the Government will countenance any proposal that puts safety standards at risk. We therefore sought the advice of the Health and Safety Commission. That is why I announced in October that we would accept all the recommendations that the commission has made to us as we move towards privatisation.

Mr. Hardy: If the Minister is as concerned as he says —we shall no doubt explore that in Committee—will he explain why the Government allowed the phrase

"as far as may be practicable"

to be repeated in almost every page of the new regulations governing safety in mines? Does he accept that the repetition of that phrase causes enormous dismay and deepening anxiety in the mining industry because it obviously provides a let-out clause for every sharp practice that may occur?

Mr. Eggar: I utterly reject the hon. Gentleman's assertion. He knows perfectly well that the document to which he refers, the management and administration of safety and health at mines package, was put together by the Health and Safety Commission, which is a tripartite organisation and which, although I know that it was opposed by the union by which the hon. Gentleman is sponsored and with which he is associated, has generally been welcomed by other entities involved in safety.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way.

Several hon. Gentlemen, including the hon. Member for Clackmannan, have mentioned the mines rescue service. Having met some of the people who were associated with the work at the Bilsthorpe pit after the tragic accident there, I recognise that this is an important matter. The Health and Safety Commission has said that it intends to submit new regulations to the Secretary of State for Employment as soon as possible and extensive consultation will follow from that. That has already started.

The Health and Safety Commission's report states that a national rescue service, jointly operated by mine owners, appears to be the best way of meeting the fundamental rescue objectives after privatisation. I will take full account of that report when advancing our proposals for the industry.

A number of my hon. Friends and hon. Members have mentioned the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

[Mr. Eggar]

I agree with the hon. Member for Bolsover and others that CISWO plays an important role. As I think has been recognised by the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes), I have been in discussion with CISWO's trustees and executives, as have my officials. I intend to carry forward those discussions. I recognise the importance of the areas of activity that were identified by the hon. Member for Bolsover, and I will make proposals in due course.

Mr. O'Neill *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, because I am trying to respond to several points that were made in the debate.

Several hon. Gentlemen, including the hon. Members for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) and for Doncaster, North, mentioned the future of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. BCE's job creation activities will continue throughout the privatisation of British Coal and the Government will continue to support the funding of BCE's operations.

Mr. O'Neill *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. He did not leave me a lot of time.

My hon. Friends the Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned the possibility of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and, connected with that, the possibility of the disposal of power stations by the generators. As I think the House knows, the Director General of Electricity Supply is considering all those issues. It is for him to seek agreement with the generators or to recommend a reference to the MMC, and we await his recommendations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme mentioned flue gas desulphurisation fitting, specifically at Ferrybridge power station. I think that he is aware that we have given section 36 consent for work on FGD fitting to take place and, as the company knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has the power to direct Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to require the fitting of FGD in a specific case if he and the inspectorate consider it appropriate.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Secretary of State will indeed use those powers of direction?

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend will obviously need to consider the issue. The stance that the generator concerned will take is not yet clear. I was pointing out to my hon. Friend that the powers are there.

The hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) mentioned Alcan and the ownership of land around the Alcan plant. I know that the company is concerned about that matter. As he knows, I will visit the plant and hold discussions with management, and I am sure that that subject will come up.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet mentioned compulsory rights orders. We fully intend that procedures for compulsory access should be matters of the last resort. We are conscious of the need to balance the interest of the landowners and the need for compulsory access during what we recognise, under the terms of the Bill, is a temporary period of about five years.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan asked about the future of the coal research establishment and research and development funding. The Government are committed to expanding funding for clean coal technology. That was made clear in the White Paper, and the CRE is currently involved in many joint projects. We are aware of the issue that the hon. Gentleman raised about European funding, and we shall work closely with the CRE and with British Coal to find a way forward for that organisation.

Several of my hon. Friends, and Opposition Members too, asked about consultation on mineral planning guidance 3, and the relationship between that document and the compulsory rights orders. Of course, we are in consultation now on MPG3, and I shall ensure that the comments of my hon. Friends and of Opposition Members on opencast mining are conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

My hon. Friends the Members for Elmet and for Davyhulme asked about compensation claims for industrial diseases when employees transfer to private sector purchasers. I assure them that what they have said, both during the debate and previously, has been taken on board and that we are examining those matters closely.

Many hon. Members asked about pensions. The Government are determined to guarantee existing pension arrangements, and we also guarantee index linking. We have made it clear that beneficiaries should be able to benefit from any surplus on a 50:50 basis. We are taking part in discussions and shall shortly enter further discussions with the trustees about the balance between protecting the interests of taxpayers and protecting those of beneficiaries. I look forward to the discussion in Committee on concessionary fuel. As I said, we made an announcement following the consultations.

Tonight we have heard the usual arguments from Labour Members. Yet again the Labour party seems to be bound to fail to recognise the realities that face the coal industry and the fact that the best hope for its future lies in the private sector. The hon. Members for Livingston and for Clackmannan both brought up the myth that the Conservative party supported the nationalisation of coal in 1946. I went back to the *Hansard* report of the debate, so let me tell the House what Mr. Eden said at the time:

> "What this Bill proposes to do is to set up a State monopoly for the production of coal, and that is all. Are hon. Members opposite"——

Labour Members——

> "really certain that the bulk of their supporters are enthusiastic for such a monopoly; and are they sure that the evils of monopoly disappear, once it comes under the *aegis* of the State?"—[*Official Report*, 29 January 1946; Vol. 418, c. 718.]

Winding up for the Conservatives, Mr. Macmillan said —*[Interruption.]* Labour Members should listen; Mr. Macmillan said:

> "What about the relations between the National Union of Mineworkers and the Socialist machine? That is more than a friendship. It is a marriage which I am sure Transport House will be careful never to dissolve so long as the sums under the marriage settlement are regularly and punctually paid, whether they are voluntarily subscribed or compulsorily extorted."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1946; Vol. 418, c. 958.]

Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Eden got it right. The history of the British coal industry has been bedevilled by that incestuous relationship between the National Union of

Mineworkers and the Labour party. Even now Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen cannot shake off the shackles of that relationship.

Over the past 18 months or so, there has been an intense debate in the House and elsewhere about the future of our energy industries in general, and of the coal industry in particular. Many organisations have put forward their views in a constructive way. Most noticeable was the thorough and helpful report from the Trade and Industry Select Committee. We are also grateful to those who responded on the issues of pensions and concessionary fuel.

Throughout that time, there has been one voice missing from the debate. We have not had a single constructive idea, not a single policy, not a single commitment from Labour party. We are told by the press that the Labour party is now being pulled, kicking and screaming, into the late 20th century. When will the Labour party have the guts to say anything positive at all on energy? There are those who say that it is fear that stops the Labour party from coming out with its views on energy. It is fear, some say, of the hon. Member for Bolsover. It is fear, others say, of a union leader whose union has not negotiated with management on a single issue since 1984.

Mr. Hood: Whose fault is that?

Mr. Eggar: The union's, I suggest. Listen. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the ex-Leader of the Opposition, had it in for him. He summoned the courage in June to tell David Frost just what he thought of Mr. Scargill. *The Independent* headline heralded, "Kinnock says Scargill to blame over pit closures." The right hon. Gentleman said:

"The way in which his part in the leadership of the NUM conducted the argument did ensure, in my view, first of all that the prophecy of massive mine closures came true".

The question that the Labour party must answer is, if the Leader of the Opposition could say that in June 1993, where was such a statement during the strike of 1984-85? Why did not the Labour party make obvious then the position that was made obvious nine years later? Why did not it say something when it really mattered during that strike? The hon. Member for Bolsover may not have liked it, but perhaps the mining industry would have benefited from it.

Perhaps I am being too harsh. perhaps it is not mere fear from which Opposition Front Benchers suffer, but stubbornness. Perhaps the Labour party and the hon. Member for Livingston recognise the overriding advantage of a market-based energy policy but are simply too stubborn to admit it, are too stubborn to own up to it and are too stubborn to acknowledge the success that privatisation and competition have brought to other industries. Perhaps they are too stuck in the past and too stubborn to concede that the private sector offers the best and the only chance for coal.

I must give the hon. Member for Livingston his due. He did once have a definite view. He published a policy called "No Nukes", which stated that nuclear power was unneeded and uneconomic. That was in 1981. He once had a policy back in those heady days of 1981—but not now. He has not answered any of the questions that we have put to him from the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman must wait. I shall give him plenty of chance to answer once I have asked the questions. No, I am not giving way.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way. Is that right?

Mr. Eggar: Absolutely not. I will not give the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not persist if the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cook: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It may not be about a ruling of the Chair, but if it is the case that I should not rise when the Minister will not give way, the Minister should not ask questions and not be willing to face the answer to them.

Mr. Eggar: I am willing to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I have asked him a number of questions, going back debate after debate, and he has failed to answer a single question.

Mr. Cook: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: I will give way, but let me ask my questions. I want the answers to them. This is my——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) knows not to persist. The Minister is not giving way, apparently.

Mr. Cook: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Eggar *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am listening to a point of order.

Mr. Cook: The Minister distinctly said that he was willing to give way. That is why I rose again.

Mr. Eggar: I want answers to my questions. Is the Labour party going to pour taxpayers' money into keeping uneconomic pits open? Is it committed to renationalisation? Privatisation is the way forward.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 319, Noes 282.

Division No. 74] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Aitken, Jonathan	Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Alexander, Richard	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Baldry, Tony
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*	Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Amess, David	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Arbuthnot, James	Bates, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Batiste, Spencer
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Bellingham, Henry
Ashby, David	Bendall, Vivian
Aspinwall, Jack	Beresford, Sir Paul
Atkins, Robert	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Blackburn, Dr John G.

Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret

Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to Coal Industry Bill [Ways and Means] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House divided: Ayes 315, Noes 278.

Division No. 75] **[10.17 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael

Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John

Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Coal Industry Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Coal Industry Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying to the Coal Authority established by the Act amounts required by that Authority for carrying out its functions;

(b) expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in consequence of provision made by the Act for the acquisition of, or of rights to subscribe for, securities of successor companies;

(c) sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants to the British Coal Corporation and to successor companies which are wholly owned by the Crown;

(d) sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments for purposes connected with the supply of concessionary coal and the payment of sums in lieu of concessionary coal;

(e) sums required by the Secretary of State for making any payment of compensation for loss of office—

(i) to a person who ceases to hold office as a chairman or member of the Corporation, or

(ii) to the person who is the chairman of the Domestic Coal Consumers' Council when it ceases to exist;

(f) sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments in pursuance of arrangements entered into by him for securing that the assets of an existing pension scheme are sufficient for meeting pension obligations arising under the scheme;

(g) administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Treasury in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(h) sums required by any Minister of the Crown or Government department for meeting obligations arising in consequence of that Minister or department becoming entitled or subject, in accordance with a scheme under the Act, to any property, rights or liabilities;

(i) increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the extinguishment of liabilities of the British Coal Corporation in respect of—

(a) sums lent to that Corporation out of money provided by Parliament;

(b) sums which are to be taken as having been so lent; and

(c) interest in respect of any such sums;

(3) the issuing out of the National Loans Fund of sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to a successor company at a time when it is wholly owned by the Crown;

(4) the charging on and issuing out of the Consolidated Fund of sums required by the Treasury for fulfilling such guarantees given by them for the discharge of financial obligations in connection with sums borrowed by a successor company as are given in respect of such a company at a time when it is wholly owned by the Crown.

In this Resolution "successor company" means any company to whom property, rights or liabilities of the British Coal Corporation or any of its wholly-owned subsidiaries are transferred in accordance with a scheme under the Act and at a time when the company is wholly owned by the Crown.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.30 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): One has only to read the money resolution to realise what is wrong with the privatisation of the coal industry. The Government need not look far beyond the end of their noses—if, indeed, they need to look that far.

We need to take a long-term view of our energy needs. We should not consider coal, electricity, nuclear power or gas in isolation, but should take account of our long-term energy needs in their entirety. That is very far from what is suggested in the resolution. Britain requires an integrated energy policy. *[Interruption.]*

I was silent for a moment to give Government Front-Benchers a little time to cool down so that they can prepare themselves to listen to my important words, just in case they believe that they are able to reply to the strength of our arguments.

One of the most important questions is whether Government Front Benchers can cite any specialist from the energy world who says anything other than that, by the turn of the century, coal will once again be the main source of energy. Even if they cannot do so, the fact remains that the resolution would mean the running down of our coal resources. In other words, by the turn of the century we shall have made ourselves utterly dependent on foreign resources for our energy needs.

Such a situation is dangerous but not untypical of what is happening at the moment, or of the Government's policy. It is why, for example, we lost the race for the European bank. We lost the race because of our absurdities and our ridiculous posture at Maastricht. We also lost because London is a short-term financial sector, whereas Frankfurt has always made it clear that it is a long-term financial centre. Our continental partners rightly chose Frankfurt as the location for the bank, and their decision was important. That is not merely symbolic but at the heart of the Government's failure to take this country into the next century.

As many of my hon. Friends want to speak, I will briefly examine different aspects of Government policy. The gas industry was most unwilling to provide the electricity supply industry. That was the last thing it wanted, but it was prepared to make that provision at what it said was a commercial price. I thought that we had freed gas to operate in the marketplace, but a money resolution made the gas industry sell its product below the market price.

The money resolution before the House will sell off the coal industry to a company with remarkably limited objectives, which cannot possibly pursue what is really needed in energy policy.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): One problem with private coal mines is that they can rarely restore the environment properly at the end of their operations. Does my hon. Friend believe that the money resolution makes adequate provision to ensure adequate environmental restoration to British Coal standards?

Mr. Enright: That would be possible, if the motion contained a single enabling factor giving the companies the money and powers to restore clapped-out coal mines—of which there are many in my constituency—to their previous state.

The resolution provides no guarantee in respect of small social factors that still count in the local environment. It takes no account, for example, of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. The senior and junior Frickley bands really go back to basics, to coin a phrase. Those institutions take young people off the streets and give them something worth while to do, education and culture, and are enduring. I think also of Frickley Amateur Athletic, which is at the heart of football in that area.

How much money would be needed to keep two bands going? Remarkably little. I am sorry that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is not present. I also expected his

Parliamentary Private Secretary—the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth)—to be present in support of his boss. The hon. Member of City of Chester had enough money given to his company, Unicorn Heritage, to support a football team and two bands into the next century.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not try my patience too much. The money resolution does not go as wide as the hon. Gentleman might want, and I ask him to confine his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Enright: My complaint is that the money resolution does not cater for functions previously performed by British Coal in respect of bands, football teams, athletics, social welfare and pensions. It was apparently very easy for another Department to provide money that could be thrown down the drain and allow companies to go bankrupt. That money would have enabled two bands and one football team to continue for not 50 but 250 years, on the basis of the average amount that is currently given by British Coal as subvention, and should be given by the new body that is being established.

It is scandalous that two hon. Members who are so closely associated with the motion do not see fit to give that money to my people in Frickley, who have suffered directly as a result of the Bill and the motion. There is no doubt that people in South Elmsall, South Kirby, Hemsworth, Featherstone and Havercroft have suffered particularly from the restrictions imposed by the inadequate creature that we are discussing.

I feel very strongly about what the Government are doing. In their rush towards a crazed nationalisation that they have not justified—I appreciate that I cannot discuss it on this motion—they have taken no account of the lives that they have tossed aside, especially in constituencies such as mine. The smirking of public school Conservative Members is intolerable. I am not referring to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology; I applaud his jolly nice secondary modern-school background. I am referring to the Minister for Energy, whose school motto is "Manners makyth man".

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have that in Latin?

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Or Greek.

Mr. Enright: "Manners makyth man" is the actual wording of the motto. It does not translate into Latin or Greek; it is the creation of a good and eminent English writer.

The Minister displayed none of the virtues associated with "Manners makyth man". It means consideration for ordinary people—not just those who can take the money and make the profit, which is what the motion is all about, with no thought of protecting the five sites in my constituency—the only five green field sites—that will be opencast. Following the erection of the filthy muckstacks, we now have the craters; but we do not even have the consolation of seeing moon men land on them. We may have the consolation of seeing the junior Minister open those sites, but I warn him that that would be a dangerous task to undertake.

Another important aspect has not been dealt with properly. I refer to the scientific research undertaken by British Coal. It was very successful, relying on a tradition going back to Dr. Bronowski—who, although much maligned by the *Daily Express*, did superb work for British Coal very early on. The work on clean-coal technology, particularly that done at Grimethorpe, was a wonder, marvelled at by the rest of the world. The rest of the world bought it, and was grateful for it. What mention is it given in the motion? None at all.

There is a simple reason. British Coal closed down Grimethorpe. The reason why Grimethorpe was closed down was simple: it was successful. It was going to show how one could use coal effectively and cleanly. That technology was thrown away. The people who will benefit are the Swedes and the French. That shows precisely why we cannot trust energy policy to the Government, and why this pathetic creature that is called a money resolution will not and should not survive. It should be beaten. I urge the House to throw it out as the puny creature that it is.

10.44 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is always a pleasure, even a joy, to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). We felt at one stage that he was about to use a Latin phrase when he said, "Manners makyth man". When he was describing the Minister of State, I thought that he was going to say, "Profits makyth man" because to the Government profits are more important than manners. We have got used to that over the years.

I am glad to say that my hon. Friend excluded the Under-Secretary from the accusation of having a public school background. We all looked at my hon. Friend aghast, if that is the right word, when he seemed about to suggest that the former miner about whom we have heard so much, who has come such a long way from the Back Benches to the Front Benches and who will take the Bill through Committee, went to public school. My hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth pulled back and listed him as a former pupil of a secondary modern. I can feel a little superior, having gone to a grammar school; I got through the 11-plus.

I shall come back to the money resolution, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that it pleases your heart enormously that we stay on the script, the programme and the resolution before us.

We heard a lot today from the President of the Board of Trade in the first instance about a £20,000 million investment in the coal industry since 1979. Our figures alshow £12,000 million investment in deep mining since 1974. The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) said in an intervention that £8,000 million of that had gone into machinery. The question was asked in a sedentary intervention on our side how much of that had gone into redundancy. How much of that money was not investment but redundancy money to pay off the miners, get them out of the pits and soften up the industry?

When the President of the Board of Trade referred to the figure of £20,000 million, my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) intervened to ask how, if that investment had been made in the coal mining industry, the Government could walk away from collieries and leave them in a state of desuetude—if, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth, I may use a word that comes from the Latin. How could they leave them to flood? How could they invest so much money in plant and machinery and walk away from it?

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

The money resolution, the financial obligations in the resolution and the financial memorandum, which is part of the Bill, are not about money. They are about ideology. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who was so highly praised by Lord Lawson in his autobiography—Lord Lawson enjoyed his interventions —was right to say that the Bill and the money resolution are more to do with ideology than money.

If we were debating tonight the sale of British Petroleum shares, to add to the Government's piggy bank, we could say at least that there was merit in the Bill. If we were debating the sale of other assets of the state which Lord Stockton, to whom the Minister of State referred, called the family heirlooms or jewels—assets that would bring money into the coffers of the state and reduce the public sector borrowing requirement, we could say that at least there was merit in the Bill. There is no merit in the Bill or the money resolution, because the legislation is ideological.

The President of the Board of Trade said that privatisation of the coal industry was in the manifesto, and that the Government had a mandate for it. What we say is this: we had a mandate in 1945 and nothing has given this, or any, Conservative Government the right to reverse the mandates of previous Governments and take us back to a past that we heard about from my hon. Friends. The Minister does not need to grimace. He can intervene later if he wishes.

The mandate that the Government are trying to reverse is our mandate from many years ago, and they are doing so on ideological grounds. The financial memorandum to the Bill mentions the sum of about £70 million in respect to concessionary fuel for former British Coal employees. We believe that the figure should be £150 million.

On pensions, the memorandum states:

"The capital values of these liabilities are not expected to exceed £400 million and £45 million respectively."

A whole host of financial obligations will reduce the impact of the privatisation and show that the Bill is ideologically and politically correct from the Government's point of view, but has no merit in financial terms.

The money resolution is part of the sham of the Bill, which has nothing to do with raising money.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Before my hon. Friend concludes, will he look at paragraph (4) of the resolution regarding the sums required for the purposes of providing a pension guarantee? My hon. Friend is probably more of an expert than I in that area.

If there is an average retail price index of 4 or 4·5 per cent., in five out of every six years the pension fund could be expected to provide a surplus far in excess of the RPI. We have heard little from the Government today, or in the preceding weeks, but they are minded to take half the surplus of the pension fund. If that is the case, will my hon. Friend invite the Minister to tell us what the Government expect sub-paragraph (f) to cost and what they expect to get from their share of the miners pension fund during the next 10 or 12 years?

Mr. Bell: I thank my hon. Friend for intervening in that way. I and other hon. Members in the House appreciated his moving account of the vesting day of 1947 when he gave his first speech, as I also remember that day. We remember the great relief felt throughout the mining communities that the coal owners had gone. There was a blue flag on the masthead of our colliery and a cartoon at the time said, "Never come back." That message was directed to the coal owners. Opposition spokesmen stand at this Dispatch Box today with some sadness, with Members of Parliament for mining constituencies all around us, knowing that the coal owners will come back.

The President of the Board of Trade said that nationalisation had been a failure. It was Conservative Governments' refusal to accept it and to change the management of British Coal—in some cases, their activities were worse than the coal owners of old—that was the failure. That conspiracy between the National Coal Board, as it was then, and Conservative Governments has undone the mining industry.

To respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), that matter is a part of my speech. The financial memorandum contains this phrase:

"The Bill provides, in return for the guarantee, for surplus assets in the modified schemes to be available to the Secretary of State"—

who is acting in the guise of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury.

The President of the Board of Trade and the Minister, when he summed up, referred to the interests of taxpayers, but they have no interest in pension funds that were built up by mine workers over many years. We shall point that out in Committee, as we have done on the Floor of the House.

I know that other colleagues want to speak in the debate, which is important, so I shall be brief. The money resolution touches on many issues. I referred to pensions, and we have spoken to the trustees of the pension funds, who are not entirely happy with the Government's approach. They are also not entirely happy that the Minister wishes to appoint and dismiss members of the board and to handle the fund's surplus.

The Minister of State, in his usual glib fashion, was saying from the Dispatch Box that there would be all types of guarantees for people in the pension fund; there would be index-linked pensions and guarantees. Then he mentioned a 50:50 split of the surplus. We shall examine those matters carefully as we go along, when we consider the financial memorandum and the money resolution before the House.

Many of our colleagues spoke about water from the mines, especially in the north-east of England—the environmental liabilities. Where are the environmental liabilities in the money resolution and the financial memorandum? We shall consider that serious—as we see it—issue of pollution in the north, and the complications that that will pose for the privatisation of the industry. That is another subject to which we shall return with the Minister—I understand that he will serve on the Committee with us and that he will work with us in Committee.

Concessionary coal has also been mentioned. I mentioned earlier the reference in the financial memorandum to the sum of £70 million. We believe that £150 million is involved, and we say that the current proposals on the table fall short of providing concessionaries with security in their entitlement to concessionary fuel and cash in lieu. We shall return to that and the lack of

protection, as we see it, for the entitlement of workers who are currently employed in the industry. That worries us; it will worry the Committee, and we will take that forward.

We have also heard about the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation—CISWO. The interesting thing about CISWO is that the Minister did not quite know how to pronounce it. There was a great difficulty in the pronounciation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) says, it is pronounced "Siswo", not "Kiswo". We could have a lot of discussion about that. Nevertheless, it is a major subject that we shall consider.

We say that the Bill as a whole, with the money resolution, should seek to continue the work of CISWO and ensure that it is adequately funded. As yet, as we see it, there are no satisfactory proposals which would give CISWO or a successor organisation a secure enough future with adequate funding.

So the Minister can see—I am glad that he will be on the Committee—that, as we wend our way through the money resolution and through ways and means, and as we get through the Bill and into Committee, there will be enough sustenance for us. There will be enough fears to allay of pensioners, of people who receive concessionary fuel and of people who are worried about environmental liabilities.

We promise, not a long hot summer for the Minister, but a chilly, lengthy winter.

10.57 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I shall make a short contribution to the debate.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): More!

Mr. Dickens: No; I shall not go on all night.

The money resolution is central to the privatisation of the coal industry. One has to ask oneself why the coal industry needs to be privatised. If one thinks back to the days when the coal mining industry was nationalised, one has to remember that there were about 1,000 coal mines in the United Kingdom. Year after year, closure has followed closure. It is common knowledge that Lord Robens and the former Secretary of State for Energy, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), closed about one coal mine every 10 days. The right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Energy for the Labour party: we must not forget that.

We must not sit on the Conservative Benches taking lessons on why we should do this and why we should do that, without fighting back a little and reminding the coal mining industry why we need the money resolution. We need the resolution because, if we are to save the coal mining industry—hon. Members should remember that, even in the state in which it is today, it is still one of the largest coal mining industries in the world, and it will remain as such—we still need to safeguard the work force with a money resolution.

The successor companies must have the wherewithal to safeguard pension funds and to ensure that the obligations are met, so that miners receive their proper pensions, whoever owns the coal mines. We have to ensure that the concessionary fuel that mining families have enjoyed over the years is still paid to those families, or money in lieu. That is why the money resolution is central to the Bill. If they want to save the mining industry, the Opposition should not vote against it, or make difficulties in Committee. It is through the money resolution and in Committee that we shall safeguard the welfare of the work force in the mines.

It may surprise Labour Members to know that I come from mining stock. I had relatives down the Ripley and the Alfreton mines, in Derbyshire. I do not need lectures from the Opposition about the interests of the coal mining industry, because I speak for my own flesh and blood. No, I did not go to university, either. I went to a secondary modern school, and I am quite proud of it, although I also wish that I had had a university education, because I know that the lack of it shows at times—although not so clearly as it shows every day of the week in Labour Members.

The money resolution is central. We must ensure the continuation of the mining industry, because we must have a mix of fuel. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) talked about an energy policy, and we need oil, gas, nuclear power and coal—one could put those fuels in the reverse order if one liked. Never again must the United Kingdom be held to ransom by a year-long miners' strike that threatens to put out the lights and stop companies from running. Never again must we be placed in that position.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman takes off too far, I remind him that we are dealing with a money resolution. I should be grateful if he would return to that topic.

Mr. Dickens: I am grateful to you for having drawn that to my attention, Madam Deputy Speaker. You are right. Just by chance, I was about to finish my speech, because I know how many Labour Members want to speak.

Mr. Illsley: Has not the hon. Gentleman just let the cat out of the bag with his reference to the 1984 miners' strike? Obviously he intended to go on to refer to the 1974 strike, too. Is it not true that the privatisation of coal is related to those strikes, in that it is a way of getting back at the mining unions in revenge for those strikes, especially that of 1974?

Mr. Dickens: The hon. Gentleman probably knows more about that question than I do, because in earlier days he was an adviser to Arthur Scargill in Barnsley.

Mr. Enright: And a very good one, too. It was when Arthur Scargill lost my hon. Friend that he went astray.

Mr. Dickens: I am trying to be brief, but clearly Opposition Members are enjoying my contribution.

To answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), we are privatising the coal industry for one reason alone. Whatever party is in power, politicians, in the form of the Department of Trade and Industry, are the worst people to help run industry. The sooner we get politicians off the back of industry the better. The DTI has done a reasonable job until now, but I am sure that private industry will do a good job in one respect.

The mining industry is in a mess today because of its pitiful marketing of coal. It is no good digging coal if one cannot sell it. Private industry, with its management techniques and marketing skills, is far better able to market coal across Europe and to provide the coal mining industry with a future. As I finish my speech, all that I ask Labour Members to remember is that the future of the United Kingdom coal mining industry is in their hands today. If they want a future, they must allow it to carry on.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's peroration, but it is not relevant.

11.3 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It would be useful if, when hon. Members discussed the money resolution, they showed some sign of having read it. It is a funny old money resolution, because in some ways it says too much and is too open ended, yet in other ways it says too little.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) pointed out some of the omissions in the motion, perhaps I ought to illustrate some of the ways in which the motion opens issues up too much and how they should be defined more clearly. It has been talked about it as a funny old money motion. A lot of funny old money is likely to be made out of the privatisation of mining, because the country has massive coal reserves. We are blocking off certain coal reserves off the Durham coast, but otherwise the coal reserves of deep-mined coal will remain underground for a future of opencast development.

If we shift pricing policy and alter the fuel market, vast amounts of profit will be made from the coal mining industry.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I bring to your attention the conference being held in the corner, which is distracting me? I cannot hear what my hon. Friend is saying.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that that point will be well taken.

Mr. Barnes: The point might have been well taken if it had been heard by the people responsible.

There is a great deal of money to be made out of coal in the country, despite the fact that we are now considering the privatisation of a relatively small industry, which has been allowed to shrink considerably. Nevertheless, there are massive coal reserves, from the Leeds area to Nottingham and Derby, cutting through my constituency, to be obtained by opencast methods. Whether it is in a former mining area or in areas which were mined in the past century, almost any piece of land that has not been built on will become open to that potential.

There is something missing to enable our consideration of the money motion. Nothing in the motion or the Bill tells us what size the coal industry will be after privatisation. We should have figures that are relevant to its size, because of the open-ended provisions in the motion. The motion outlines the Coal Authority's rights of acquisition, its rights of obtaining security, the operations of successor companies, and the compensation to people being moved from positions on the board. However, for us to be able to make some assessment of all that, we should be able to understand what is being proposed and planned for the future of the industry. It is a peculiar motion.

Even if Opposition Members accept that we have lost the Second Reading, that measures are to go into Committee, and even in the light of the fact that the money resolution is attached to that Bill, it has massive shortcomings. The motion should be rejected on its own demerits, as well as on the demerits of its being part and parcel of a Bill which is anti-social and will kill off the coal industry in Derbyshire, in Durham and in many other parts of the country.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend is making an important point. I am pleased to see that the President of the Board of Trade has joined us as we come to the end of discussing the money resolution. Perhaps he can tell us what paragraph 1(e)(i) means, which uses the words:

"to a person who ceases to hold office as a chairman or member of the corporation".

Is it not the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade to tell the House what sums of money are involved in that so-called compensation?

How much are we talking about? Neil Clarke has been as good to the coal industry as Rachman was to housing policy in Westminster city council. Now we have a provision that will pay him hundreds of thousands of pounds in compensation. The President of the Board of Trade should say exactly how much we are going to use to pay off the chairman, who has ruined the coal industry, as a backhander for his services.

Mr. Barnes: I agree. If we consider paragraph (1)(a) to (i), we will find similar questions to ask.

It is interesting that the Minister has not sought to speak. He could have jumped up at the beginning of the debate and explained what the missing points are about. Ideally, there should not be missing points. We should be able to read the motion, see the detail and the implications involved, and do our own accountancy in order to make up our minds before we vote.

In the absence of that, and in a very short time, the Minister should explain exactly what the motion is about. He should also take up the points that were made on Second Reading about the environment, safety and so on, and tell us how they relate to the measure and whether our concerns will be answered by the resolution.

11.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): In some respects, this has been a rather amusing debate. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) told us that, because the Labour party nationalised the coal industry in 1947 and it was in its election manifesto, and therefore a mandate, we should not seek to change it. I take a little more comfort from a more recent document, the previous Conservative manifesto, which said that we would privatise British Coal. That commitment has far more standing than one given in 1945.

Mr. Hood: As we are discussing manifestos, would the Minister like to tell us about his party's commitment not to increase taxes?

Mr. McLoughlin: That point has been perfectly covered on numerous occasions. I am speaking to the motion and about a certain commitment about which I was asked tonight.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), in a most incredible speech, almost accused me of having gone to a public school. That has never happened to me before. He asked for an assurance that the bands in his constituency will be around for the next 250 years. Not many politicians—not even the hon. Gentleman—would make a commitment relating to the next 250 years. That was a strange request. It shows the farce which the debate has come to.

Mr. Enright: I did indeed do that. I shall give the precise figures. The mover of the motion has a

Parliamentary Private Secretary who took enough money out of the Government to subsidise, for 250 years at current prices, the shortfall for the two bands of Frickley and Frickley Athletic. It was a simple mathematical point that I was making.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is a spurious point, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. If that is his argument, it just shows how devoid the Opposition are of sensible arguments on the issue.

I was asked several questions about concessionary fuel by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough. That is a matter in which I have a particular interest. My mother has been receiving concessionary fuel as the beneficiary of my father, who worked in the coal industry for 30 years. Concessionary fuel and the rights and entitlements of beneficiaries are very important.

Yesterday, in announcing our conclusions on the consultation paper, my hon. Friend the Minister of State made the Government's position clear. If Labour Members vote against this resolution, they will be voting against the Government having the opportunity to provide the funds for concessionary coal.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose——*

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sorry—I have literally a couple of minutes left. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find time to come back to this point.

As we have seen from the exchanges tonight, it is an important matter which undoubtedly will be debated in Committee. I have made my position clear on the importance of that subject. Clearly, if Labour Members vote against this money resolution, they will be voting against the provision of concessionary coal——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 122.

Division No. 76] **[11.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Mar[illegible]land, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth

Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackay and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Betts, Clive
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Enright, Derek
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Raynsford, Nick
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Clapham and
Mr. Bill Etherington.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Coal Industry Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying to the Coal Authority established by the Act amounts required by that Authority for carrying out its functions;

(b) expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in consequence of provision made by the Act for the acquisition of, or of rights to subscribe for, securities of successor companies;

(c) sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants to the British Coal Corporation and to successor companies which are wholly owned by the Crown;

(d) sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments for purposes connected with the supply of concessionary coal and the payment of sums in lieu of concessionary coal;

(e) sums required by the Secretary of State for making any payment of compensation for loss of office—

(i) to a person who ceases to hold office as a chairman or member of the Corporation, or

(ii) to the person who is the chairman of the Domestic Coal Consumers' Council when it ceases to exist;

(f) sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments in pursuance of arrangements entered into by him for securing that the assets of an existing pension scheme are sufficient for meeting pension obligations arising under the scheme;

(g) administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Treasury in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(h) sums required by any Minister of the Crown or Government department for meeting obligations arising in consequence of that Minister or department becoming entitled or subject, in accordance with a scheme under the Act, to any property, rights or liabilities;

(i) increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the extinguishment of liabilities of the British Coal Corporation in respect of—

(a) sums lent to that Corporation out of money provided by Parliament;

(b) sums which are to be taken as having been so lent; and
(c) interest in respect of any such sums;

(3) the issuing out of the National Loans Fund of sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to a successor company at a time when it is wholly owned by the Crown;

(4) the charging on and issuing out of the Consolidated Fund of sums required by the Treasury for fulfilling such guarantees given by them for the discharge of financial obligations in connection with sums borrowed by a successor company as are given in respect of such a company at a time when it is wholly owned by the Crown.

In this Resolution "successor company" means any company to whom property, rights or liabilities of the British Coal Corporation or any of its wholly-owned subsidiaries are transferred in accordance with a scheme under the Act and at a time when the company is wholly owned by the Crown.

Coal Industry Bill *[Ways and Means]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Coal Industry Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the making by the Coal Authority established by the Act of charges for things done in the exercise and performance of its powers and duties;
(b) the imposition of charges to corporation tax by provisions relating to the taxation of persons to and from whom property, rights and liabilities are transferred in accordance with schemes under the Act; and
(c) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call hon. Members, may I make it clear that the Ways and Means motion deals with specific charges. It is not an excuse for a re-run of the provisions of the Bill.

11.29 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I take on board your warning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Paragraph (a) of the motion states:

"the making by the Coal Authority established by the Act of charges for things done in the exercise and performance of its powers and duties;". *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but there is still a general buzz of conversation, which is not confined to hon. Members from one party. It is discourteous to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful for your assistance, Madam Deputy Speaker, in subduing a crowded House.

I should like to speak about the Coal Authority that will be established by the Bill and about the charges for the exercise of its powers and duties. Surprisingly, some powers have been left out of the authority's remit. The timing of the Bill and the associated legislation is deplorable. In the previous debate, the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) spoke about an industry in the grasp of politicians, and said that politicians should not involve themselves in the running of an industry. To some extent, I agree with him, and ask why politicians have retained an interest in the running of the nuclear power industry by way of subsidy to that industry. That subsidy is not available to coal.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The hon. Gentleman invites me to explain. He was a member of the Select Committee on Energy and knows that the suggestion that the nuclear industry should be privatised could not be made bankable because the generators could not explain the costs of decommissioning. If that had been explained, privatisation would have been a bankable matter and could have gone ahead.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Gentleman is right: he and I served on that Select Committee. When we examined the evidence that the Department of Energy was willing to present—that which was not comercially confidential—we realised that the nuclear power industry had been uneconomic for many years. The price of coal to the generators had not increased since 1985, and it was apparent that coal had subsidised nuclear power for many years. The industry suffered greatly as a consequence, but

[Mr. Illsley]

I shall not debate the nuclear power industry, not only because it is outside the terms of the motion, but because I am aware of sedentary admonition from some of my hon. Friends.

The coal industry has been run down from 1985. Prices have not been increased and in the past two years the industry has been run down even more rapidly, and that has led to the Bill and the associated legislation. Over the past 18 months the President of the Board of Trade has announced the closure of 30 pits, and in the months ahead there are likely to be many more. Press releases in the past few days have shown that seven collieries are scheduled to close.

It is ludicrous to debate this legislation at a time when the coal industry is in turmoil. Nobody can say how many collieries will be left this time next year or whether any will be left. Established coal contracts are for about half the tonnage agreed in previous years. We now have a much reduced market and a large number of colliery closures. The Bill, the resolution and the Coal Authority are not strong enough to deal with what is happening now. It is the wrong time to be considering the privatisation of the industry which is in such turmoil that we should take the Bill, the Ways and Means resolution, the money resolution and the rest and rethink the idea of coal privatisation.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the intervention takes place, may I point out that we are dealing specifically with the Ways and Means resolution, and that any remarks must be related to that? I am sure that considerable ingenuity will be exercised by hon. Members.

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend will understand what you are saying, Madam Deputy Speaker. All that will happen when the Bill goes through Committee will relate to the Coal Authority. The Coal Authority will be responsible for the charges and for the exercise and performance of its powers and duties. I am sure that, as my hon. Friend makes his speech, he will think about the significance of the Coal Authority.

Mr. Illsley: I shall move on to the powers and duties in relation to the Ways and Means resolution. I was slightly distracted by the argument about nuclear power.

The resolution is untimely in creating the coal authority when the industry is in a state of uncertainty. No one can envisage exactly how the industry will fair over the forthcoming few months and whether the Coal Authority will have any collieries over which to preside when the Bill receives Royal Assent.

The Coal Authority, to which the resolution refers, takes over certain liabilities from British Coal and from the Government. It also takes over some of the outstanding liabilities. One of the arguments on which I shall expand in a few moments relates to the liabilities that the Government will leave to a privatised industry. They will make it unattractive to anyone wanting to buy into the industry and will add costs to any private operator.

Those liabilities and costs could be detrimental to the industry when it is privatised and should be accepted by the coal authority and the Government to make sure that, when the industry is privatised, there will be no danger that it will die because no private operator will take on its liabilities.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, which covers the sale of assets by British Coal. When estimating the amount of liability which British Coal has now, it would be worth while my hon. Friend casting his mind over the assets which will yield revenue that is authorised by the Ways and Means resolution.

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The main revenue-raising power for the coal authority will be licensing. I intend to make some remarks in due course relating to the conditions that the authority will place on licences to the private sector. The strength of that licensing regime will be crucial to certain aspects of the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: If I could just make a further inquiry on my hon. Friend's speech, one wonders whether the Ways and Means resolution is necessary. The section of the Bill relating to manpower or staff envisages at least 100 people being employed by the Coal Authority. One wonders what revenue is envisaged as a result of the licensing activities of the Coal Authority which provides revenue authorised by the Ways and Means resolution. It seems to me that the licensing revenue may be so trivial and set against the liabilities that it makes the Ways and Means resolution otiose.

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. The financial memorandum to the Bill refers to the Coal Authority's costs, but states:

> "Accurate assessments of the Coal Industry's costs—including staffing and subsidence costs—and income are not possible at this stage."

Even the Government are not able to give us an idea of the income that will be generated through the authority's licensing operations.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale) *rose*——

Mr. Illsley: Will my hon. Friend bear with me for a moment?

Even now, the authority's income is not included in the Bill because the Government have been unable to estimate it. One hopes that by the time the Bill is discussed in Committee, such points will be highlighted. The omission lends credibility to my argument that, if we cannot determine the authority's income and what the licensing regime will be, we should not be debating the Bill, the money resolution or the Ways and Means motion now, because they are premature.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): My hon. Friend makes a serious point. In Committee, the Minister will have a great many questions to answer.

My hon. Friend referred, among other things, to the Coal Authority's licensing fees, but no one seems to have considered the costs that it will incur. Until recently, the mines drainage unit was based in my area. The unit was then closed and the responsibility was passed to Silverwood colliery. Silverwood is to close, so who will take on the drainage function? In my constituency, there are four seams of outcrop which are very close to the surface and which have been known to engage in spontaneous combustion. Would my hon. Friend care to ask the Minister how many staff there will be in South Yorkshire to exercise the authority's responsibility in that respect?

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. He and I have already discussed what would happen if there were fires—underground fires or, as he fears, outcropping fires—without the mines rescue resources to deal with them. Clearly, as outlined in the motion, the Coal Authority takes responsibility for licensing and charges and will have within its remit the income from the sale of land.

One issue that must be debated thoroughly is how the authority will dispose of the land and what regulations will be in place to ensure the safety of that land which is disposed of and which is a fire hazard, such as that mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). Will the sale include a covenant to ensure that the private operator purchasing such a plot of land will have the responsibility of dealing with any emergency?

I again cite the financial memorandum, which states that the costs and income of the Coal Authority cannot be assessed "at this stage". The Bill is therefore premature.

Mr. Dickens: For the privatisation to be successful, the successor companies will want to know the ground rules, which have to be set out most carefully. In addition to acquiring any of the industry's assets, the companies will have a duty to acquire the liabilities which will include having to deal with spontaneous combustion and subsidence. The Government have to lay down the ground rules sensibly to make the privatisation attractive; if not, the industry will not be privatised.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Gentleman makes a very fair point; one that I should like to stress. He is saying that, unless the Ways and Means resolution gives sufficient finance to the Coal Authority to exercise its powers and duties, the privatisation is unlikely to be a success because the successor companies will not accept such liabilities. My point is that the ways and means given to the authority have to be sufficient to enable it to discharge its functions. Not only that but under the resolution, the Government will have to give the authority wider powers to deal with matters scheduled to be transferred to the successor companies. In my view, the Government must accept through the Coal Authority more duties than at present—and the costs that go with them.

A major obstacle to successful privatisation are the liabilities left to successor companies—and which in this case will not pass to the Coal Authority, as most people expected.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I am not clear in my mind whether the resolution gives the Coal Authority the power to reimburse the Government for the sums of up to £200,000 that will be made available to groups wishing to exercise their right to apply for a licence.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It could be a royal exhibition grant.

Mr. O'Neill: It could, but there are not many exhibitions in Barnsley on the scale that the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) had in mind.

The Coal Authority will receive applications from groups that have received money from the Government, not British Coal, for the purpose of putting together the business plan that will form the core of a licence. That is apparently being done to encourage management buy-outs and worker participation. Does my hon. Friend believe that, under the terms of the Ways and Means resolution, the authority will have the necessary powers and duties to provide that money, or will that be the responsibility of the Government or British Coal?

Mr. Illsley: The conflict that arises is whether the Coal Authority is likely to have returned to it the funding that the Government will give out in the form of loans to successor companies. My hon. Friend will have read the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Coal Industry Bill, which states:

"The Bill enables the Secretary of State to grant loans of up to £3,000 million to successor companies".

My hon. Friend mentioned a figure of £200,000. That relates to individual grants to groups contemplating a buy-out. The total sum involved will be £3 billion. Will the Coal Authority have sufficient teeth to recoup that Government expenditure, and will it have any licensing teeth in respect of the liabilities in the Ways and Means resolution.

If one considers the outstanding liabilities, one can see how many powers have been allocated to the authority and judge how successful it will be after privatisation. The resolution makes reference to the powers, duties and money given to the authority, which is another quango.

One of the first references in the Bill is to the salaries of the people who will serve on the Coal Authority. We cannot determine the authority's income, the charges that it will levy or the licensing regime that it will operate—but the measure is quick to point out that the members of the authority will receive sufficient salaries and expenses to enable them to do their work.

Under the Coal Industry Bill, the authority will be responsible for licensing not only deep-mine operations but opencast mining. Applications for opencast mining are still to be encouraged as part of the Coal Authority's duties. At the same time, the industry is being totally run down and subjected to colliery closure after colliery closure.

Last year, just under 18 million tonnes of coal was opencast in this country; total contract tonnage for the generators was 30 million. Almost two thirds of our coal is now being obtained through opencast for power generation, which is the last market available to British Coal. We are allowing opencast to undercut British Coal: we have allowed that cheaper mining method to pose a problem in the search for future markets. Yet the number of opencast applications continues to increase, despite public opposition to the process.

The motion refers to "powers and duties". Where is a duty placed on the Coal Authority to protect the environment? Opencast mining causes pollution—dust, noise, fumes and heavy traffic, for instance. Will the Coal Authority be given any environmental duty under the licensing regime? We know that it will have power to grant licences, but will it have the power to tell any private operator to whom it gives such a licence that the licence will be conditional on an adequate environmental protection regime, thus ensuring that the countryside in opencast areas is left in a decent state when the operation is finished?

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): My hon. Friend has raised a number of important points about the Coal Authority's functions. Has he noted paragraph 1(4) of schedule 1, which lists the circumstances in which the Secretary of State can remove a member of the authority? Under paragraph 1(4)(c), he can remove a member of the authority if he considers that person

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

"unable or unfit to carry out the functions of a member".

Does that condition worry my hon. Friend, who has made some important points about opencast and environmental considerations? Might not a member of the authority who was opposed to opencast mining, and the environmental conditions that it creates, lose his position? Should we not consider such issues?

Mr. Illsley *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker Order. Before the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) replies, may I issue a small warning? We are dealing with the question of charges, and hon. Members' remarks must relate to that subject. Hon. Members cannot engage in a general debate about the duties of the Coal Authority without relating it to charges.

Mr. Illsley: I accept your warning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has made an important point, which will presumably be taken up on Committee: it may well be beyond the scope of the motion. Clearly, fitness for membership of the authority should be paralleled by the fitness of successor companies to be considered for licences, and that should be defined in the schedule.

All the powers and duties of the Coal Authority will, of course, be subject to either charges of income. They will all be related to the licensing regime.

I mentioned opencasting earlier. The charges are relevant to opencasting in that presumably the Coal Authority will obtain income from the scale of land to various successor companies and from charging under the licensing regime. It will charge the opencasting companies for the benefit of obtaining a licence.

The Coal Authority will pass responsibility for health and safety to the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission. Health and safety should be a responsibility of the Coal Authority. There is little reference to health and safety in the Bill. Clause 4 is about 20 lines long. Previous legislation contained an all-important clause stating that British Coal had responsibility for the health and safety of its work force. As I understand it, the Bill and the Ways and Means motion do not place a duty on any successor company. There is no requirement that any successor company should take steps to safeguard the health and safety of its employees.

The licensees to whom authority is given to win coal should have an obligation placed on them, and be charged for it by the Coal Authority, to ensure the health and safety of their employees. Whether the companies are engaged in opencast mining or deep mining, they should be responsible for the health and safety of their work force.

Several hon. Members have raised fears about health and safety and the inadequacy of the Bill's health and safety provisions. I do not intend to follow that line of argument. I simply wish to make the point that the Coal Authority should have a duty on health and safety and should have the power to charge and fine companies or refer them to the Health and Safety Executive if they are in breach of the normal health and safety guidelines. That brings me to what powers the Coal Authority has to levy charges and the conditions that it can place in the licences.

We are discussing the Coal Authority again under the Ways and Means motion yet we have not seen the contents of the licences that will be awarded by that authority to the successor companies. We have no idea what could be in the licences. That gives cause for concern. When we have discussed the Bill, the resolutions and all the rest of it, we might still not know what conditions the Coal Authority can place in a licence, what charges it can make and what income it will derive from licensing operations.

Britain's record in health and safety could be jeopardised. I see the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) falling asleep at what I am saying. As a former member of the Energy Select Committee, I am sure that he cares about health and safety in the mining industry. He should perhaps listen more intently to the fears of Opposition Members.

One of the powers and duties of the Coal Authority, which has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), is the operation of a mines rescue service. The point relates particularly to charges and duties. There is little in the Bill or the information on the Coal Authority about a mines rescue service. That liability will be passed to the successor companies. If the Coal Authority has responsibility for a mines rescue service, it will have to levy a charge against the successor companies.

Returning to the comments of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), are the successor companies willing to take on the financing and operation of a mines rescue service and have that charge levied against them by the Coal Authority? Will they be willing to accept that, or are they likely to say that they want little to do with the service and do not see why they should pay for it because that duty should be placed on the Government as a residual liability?

The Government have not dealt with residual liabilities in the motion. The mines rescue service has considerable expertise, equipment, land and buildings. Obviously a great deal of thought—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a semi-private conversation between a Back-Bench Member on one side and a Minister on the other.

Mr. Illsley: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

A considerable amount of planning has to go into the mines rescue service. One of the latest rescue centres was established by British Coal to service the Selby coalfield. Obviously, with five packages as disparate as Scotland, Wales and the central areas of England, the successor companies will want to contribute as little as possible in charges to the Coal Authority for a mines rescue service. They will want the minimum service that they can get away with, because they will not want to contribute to the cost.

Where will the centres be based if they are to service an industry that is spread across the length and breadth of the north of England? How are the charges to be levied? Will it be a condition of the licence that successor companies will be required to contribute to the rescue service and, if so, in what proportions? Will the service be Government-funded?

The Government should retain the rescue service as a residual liability. It is just another example of a liability that should have been allocated to the Coal Authority. We should be discussing that authority's detailed provisions for health and safety and the mines rescue service. The

authority will grant a licence to the successor company. Will the rescue service and health and safety be conditions of that licence? Will a duty be placed on the Coal Authority to remove a licence if a successor does not meet an accepted standard of health and safety provision, or its contributions towards a mines rescue service?

Mr. O'Neill: My hon. Friend's argument is of special relevance to the colliery in my constituency. Any charge imposed by the Coal Authority on a Scottish coal operation would be disproportionate.

As you well know, Madam Deputy Speaker, a mines rescue service is a complicated business, as it requires a continuous shift system and therefore needs four or five times as many people to run it. The facility also needs to be fairly close to the coalfield. In Scotland, the difficulty is that for the foreseeable future there is likely to be only one complex of mines. There is a small offshoot at Monktonhall. At present British Coal pays for that and Monktonhall miners co-operative does not contribute to it.

When the new coal authority grants a licence, if the charge is to be sufficient to meet the cost of such a scheme it will have to be disproportionately expensive for the Scottish mining operation because the scheme would be smaller than one for the centre of northern England, where the Yorkshire mines will be located. The costs of a rescue scheme are of great significance to licensing in different parts of the country.

Mr. Illsley: That is a telling point about Scotland, and the same will apply to Wales. If the Coal Authority is to consider a mines rescue service when issuing licences, the successor companies will look long and hard at the situation in Scotland and Wales. If the Coal Authority is to take account, under the licensing regime, of a mines rescue service and, as a consequence, has to ensure that a part of that service will operate in Scotland and in Wales, obviously, as a result of the disproportionate number of collieries in Scotland and Wales compared with the central region, the successor companies in the central region will be required to pay the lion's share of maintaining a service that will operate in outlying areas.

That is a cost which the successor companies will be unwilling to meet, because they will be paying, in the central region, for a mines rescue service that is to operate in Scotland and peripheral areas. I am sure that those companies will regard that as a disproportionate cost placed on their company after privatisation.

As my hon. Friend the member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) points out, the licensing regime under the resolution and the charging by the coal authority is crucial in all those respects. Without having sight of the licences, we cannot know the conditions that will be placed on the successor companies in such a crucial sector as mines rescue. How are we to maintain a mines rescue service under that system? Will the successor companies be willing to be charged by the Coal Authority for the provision of that services?

A further liability is subsidence. The Coal Authority will not be given sufficient duties or powers in relation to subsidence. Earlier, the President of the Board of Trade said that subsidence liability would be passed to the Coal Authority, except in certain circumstances in which subsidence damage or compensation for subsidence damage can be allocated to a specific successor company. The President of the Board of Trade said in his speech that that would enable members of the public to determine exactly who is responsible for subsidence damage to their properties or their land and to take the appropriate action.

I put it to the Minister that that is an absolute nonsense. There is no way that a member of the public will get a straight answer from the successor companies operating in the industry in relation to subsidence. It is difficult enough now under British Coal. Obviously, members of the public will chase from one company to another as each company denies responsibility for the subsidence damage to their property. How is the average member of the public to prove responsibility for subsidence damage?

Mr. Hood: That is one of the parts of the Bill that puzzle me. It says:

"It is estimated that subsidence will initially cost the Authority £35-40 million per annum, but that this is expected to fall to under £20 million in the last year of the century."

I assume that my hon. Friend's experience is the same as mine. The cost of subsidence has not been decreasing, and it will continue to increase for a considerable time after the end of the century. That seems to be an estimate by an organisation which is not identified in the Bill and which I suspect from the rhetoric in the Bill has no expertise or understanding of the problem of subsidence. Is that not another nonsense? The true calculations have not been put into the Government's assumptions of actual costs.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. My experience of the Bill also takes into account the report of the Energy Select Committee in relation to subsidence and the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991. It was apparent from those deliberations that the general public do not get the fairest deal when it comes to subsidence damage. Matters will only be made worse because of the Government's intention to place the responsibility for subsidence damage on successor companies and only partly on the coal authority. As a result, the Coal Authority will have to mop up all the residual liabilities when members of the public cannot obtain adequate compensation from the colliery company responsible in their particular region.

The question is why, under the licensing and charging regime, the Coal Authority has not been given total responsibility for subsidence damage. It would be far simpler for that authority to be vested with the power to grant compensation for subsidence, and subsequently to charge the money back to the successor companies that it determined were responsible for the damage. That would give members of the public direct access to one body, a one-stop shop where they could go to pursue a claim. The successor companies would know that the coal authority would charge the compensation back to them as part of the licensing regime, and that would be far simpler than the procedure envisaged in the resolution.

It is sad that certain sections of the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991 are to be deleted. I served on the Committee on that Act when it was a Bill. It is now likely that the coal authority will place no responsibility on successor companies to notify individual areas, and the owners of houses and other properties, of local mining orperations and the consequent likelihood of their properties being subject to subsidence damage. The Bill will remove that responsibility.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend will recall that, during proceedings on the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991, our

[Mr. Hardy]

former colleague and good friend Allen McKay, who was then the Member of Parliament for Barnsley, West and Penistone, and whose constituency—a mining area since ancient times—adjoined mine, told the House about an occasion not long before he became a Member of Parliament when he was a voluntary fireman. He attended an incident in which some land had collapsed in order to rescue two cows that had fallen down a long-disused mine.

This is a true story, Madam Deputy Speaker, and is entirely relevant to the point that my hon. Friend was making. Conservative Members will recall Allen McKay, and he informed the House—*[Interruption.]* We are entitled to ask the Minister to take the matter seriously. My former hon. Friend asked the House who would be responsible for the subsidence, for the expenditure of the voluntary and professional firemen who had to attend, and to the farmer for all the inconvenience that he had suffered, and for the suffering, injury or even loss of the two cows? Does my hon. Friend think that such calculations crossed the Government's mind as they prepared to establish the authority?

Mr. Illsley: Certainly some calculations have crossed the Government's mind—mainly concerning how much responsibility should be passed to the successor companies. To minimise that responsibility they have decided to do away with some sections of the 1991 Act in so far as they relate to notification of individuals and to the responsibility of the industry to maintain plans in connection with subsidence damage. Without such notification, individuals will not be appraised of their rights under the subsidence legislation. The change is being made to reduce the costs of the industry after privatisation. The Act is less than three years old, so we have debated the subject recently and decided that that duty should be placed on the industry; yet the Government now seek to remove it.

The original provisions had the blessing of the all-party Select Committee on Energy, which debated subsidence damage as a precursor to the Act, and there was all-party agreement to its report, which said that there should be the duty of notification. I am surprised that the Government are seeking to reduce the effectiveness of the 1991 Act. The new subsidence proposals are totally unacceptable. They will be ignored by private sector companies and the rights of members of the public in relation to subsidence damage will be severely diminished as companies try to avoid their responsibilities for such damage, which is especially severe in the Nottinghamshire area.

Will the Minister tell us why no successor body to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation—CISWO—has been delineated? The coal Authority has not been given any powers in relation to welfare. The Minister and I have discussed welfare and he has taken the view that an industry such as mining has no need for welfare provision. He would make the point that welfare provision does not apply in any other area other than the armed forces. The mining industry has been a dangerous industry, it is a dangerous industry and there will always be requirements for welfare. The Bill scraps the Miners Welfare Act 1952 and makes no provision for a successor body.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to pull up the hon. Gentleman, but he must relate what he is now saying more closely to the charges. If he can do that, fine. We cannot have a general debate, in which I think he is now engaging.

Mr. Hood: I am sure that my hon. Friend is going to keep in order and I hope that my question is as well. Is it not the case that CISWO provides social care for 11,000 miners, retired miners and paraplegics at a cost of £2·5 million a year? If that care is not provided for in the Bill, either the 11,000 miners who have been receiving that care will lose out, or there will be a burden on local authority community care and it will cost a lot more than £2·5 million.

Mr. Illsley: The industry requires welfare provision. The point that I wish to make in relation to the motion is that the Bill removes the Miners Welfare Act 1952 and leaves a void. The only successor body under the whole privatisation scenario would be the Coal Authority. That cost of £2·5 million per annum, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) referred, should be charged through the Coal Authority either to the successor companies or to some other bodies which are created to provide welfare.

Obviously, the best way in which the coal industry social welfare organisation could have moved forward would have been to leave it alone, to leave the Act of 1952 in place and not meddle with it. Once the Government begin to consider a successor to the Act of 1952, the only available option is the Coal Authority, and we shall unravel a whole host of difficulties in the provision of welfare.

Will the Minister consider specifically making the Coal Authority the body responsible for welfare and giving it power to recharge the relatively modest cost for the provision of welfare—some £2·5 million—back through the industry to maintain that welfare? The other side of the coin is that if we are left with a void in relation to welfare provisions nobody will pick it up. The successor companies will go to the Coal Authority which wishes to charge them for welfare and why they should pay for the welfare of their work force when they do not see that as an appropriate cost to their business.

All year, we have heard of the costs to industry of social provision, but here we have a clear case where social welfare provision should be retained. As I have said, there are 500,000 beneficiaries of that provision and 72,000 people in receipt of benefit for pneumoconiosis—a prescribed disease in the mining industry. That is where the need for welfare arises. The coal industry is unique in terms of its dangers and its susceptibility to industrial illness and injury. There is a requirement for welfare, and it should be taken on by the Government.

I hope that amendments are moved in Committee to enable the Coal Authority to become the responsible body for that welfare provision. There will be considerable disappointment in mining areas if welfare provision is not accounted for. Obviously, local authorities will be mentioned as taking up the responsibility for welfare. They do not have the resources to do so. Therefore, they cannot charge the Coal Authority for that provision. The Coal Authority will not have a duty to a local authority for the provision of welfare.

There are two other matters to which I wish to refer in relation to the Coal Authority. The penultimate one——

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): The hon. Gentleman should not cut short his speech.

Mr. Illsley: It is not a long speech—or, rather, it would not have been.

My penultimate point is about pensions, the Coal Authority and why the Coal Authority will not be allowed to take on responsibility for pensions after privatisation. As the Minister knows, pensions are dealt with by the British Coal pensions and insurance centre in Sheffield, and there is a question about its future role in the provision of pensions and benefits. The coal industry insures its own risks. British Coal does not have an insurance policy. It has to insure itself against whatever risk—for example, civil liability, personal injury—and there are substantial claims against it. The pension schemes relate to a fund of £14 billion.

Where is the safeguard through the Coal Authority in respect of pension schemes? It is suggested that the £14 billion be allocated to the Government and that they will take responsibility for allocating pensions in future, on the basis that 50 per cent. of the surplus will be allocated immediately to the Government. But what will happen to current workers? Their existing pension entitlement will end, their pension scheme will be wound up, and they will begin another pension scheme, perhaps with a private pension fund.

Where are the safeguards for serving mineworkers pension provision? The mineworkers pension scheme is quite good. When it came to opting out a few years ago under the 1986 legislation, many private pension companies were unwilling to accept mine workers transferring because the benefits under private provision were not as good as under the mineworkers pension scheme. In particular, the mineworkers pension scheme contained provision for widows' benefit. The private pension industry was unwilling to make a similar commitment, and transfers to private pension funds were not as good as under the mineworkers pension scheme. Therefore there were few transfers to private pension plans.

We have the same problem now with privatisation. A very good scheme, which is in surplus, and which has employees taking a contributions holiday to the tune of £800 million, is to be wound up. What is the logic in winding up the mineworkers pension scheme, and forcing every serving mineworker to take on a new scheme? Surely there is a vehicle—the Coal Authority—which can take responsibility for the provision of pensions, or license the existing pension organisation and charge the successor company.

The Coal Authority has licensed its pension provision to the pensions organisation, the pensions organisation administers the pension scheme on behalf of the successor companies and charges them for that service. I am convinced that the successor companies will welcome that with open arms. How many companies will welcome with open arms the idea that they must start a pension scheme for new employees which perhaps will be more poorly funded than the existing mine workers' pension scheme and which will provide poorer benefits? The answer is that the Government want the £14 billion.

It is simple: £14 billion goes into the Government's coffers and they are home and dry. The idea is that the Government will take the £14 billion from the mineworkers pension fund and the British Coal superannuation scheme and then pay the pensions as they fall due. At a time when we have a £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement, £14 billion is a handy little nest egg that the Government have stumbled upon. It looks attractive. Obviously, the Government will turn logic on its head and stop the pension scheme from operating simply to get their hands on the £14 billion. That is scandalous.

What has happened to pension schemes over the past three or four years? Who has been castigated for stealing pension fund moneys? Who gets all the blame for nicking pension funds? This is a classic example of £14 billion going the same way as the Maxwell pensions. The future pension entitlements of 500,000 beneficiaries could well be jeopardised by the ending of the mineworkers pension scheme. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): My hon. Friend has mentioned that the closed pension scheme proposed by the Government will take 50 per cent. of any surplus for the benefit of the Treasury, leaving only 50 per cent. for existing beneficiaries. The 50 per cent. offered by the Government compares poorly with the Coal Board's record of offering 70 per cent. to beneficiaries. Does my hon. Friend accept that the Coal Board, which is by no means the most generous employer, could manage to do a little better than the Government's proposals?

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend is right. One has only to look at the existing mineworkers pension scheme. Over the past few years, British Coal has taken various contribution holidays amounting to £800 million, yet the scheme still has a viable fund of £14 billion to meet pension commitments. As I recall, the scheme has never been in deficit to the extent that the employer has had to make good the deficit.

The pension scheme is in excellent shape, yet the Government want not only to take the £14 billion fund. They automatically want 50 per cent. of any surplus. As my hon. Friend says, they want the cake, and they want to eat it as well. They want every last pound from the scheme. That is detrimental to the scheme and threatens the beneficiaries of it.

I shall refer to the duties of the coal authority.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is this the penultimate point?

Mr. Illsley: This is the penultimate point, and it relates to concessionary coal. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] If Tory Members do not interrupt me, I shall conclude my remarks more quickly.

The Government have said that concessionary coal is a liability that can be passed on to the successor companies. We must ask how the successor companies will be made responsible for concessionary coal. How will they be obliged to meet their commitments to beneficiaries under the concessionary coal scheme? The Government have chosen to pass the concessionary coal scheme on to the successor companies rather than allow the Coal Authority to be responsible for it.

That plan would be far more sensible than what is envisaged. It would be far easier for the Coal Authority to take on board the arrangements for concessionary coal and to charge the successor companies for the provision of that service to serving mineworkers and to beneficiaries. Of course, if people were attracted to cash in lieu as an alternative to concessionary coal it becomes far easier, as that is only a money transaction. The provision of coal could be through the companies and could be charged back to the Coal Authority.

Many concessionaires and beneficiaries are worried that their historic right to concessionary fuel will be affected by

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the Government's proposals. The transfer of rights contained in the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 is unlikely to be sufficient to enable beneficiaries to continue their concessionary coal entitlement because any company can place its employees on a new contract which does not allow for concessionary fuel. That fuel could be lost to serving mineworkers.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does my hon. Friend agree that a better way of protecting the existing beneficiaries of the concessionary coal scheme and of providing for the workers in the privatised industry would be to have the Coal Authority preside over the 1983 concessionary fuel agreement? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that would protect both the current beneficiaries and the future work force?

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend and I have studied the 1983 agreement long and hard. There is no reason why the Coal Authority could not have the duty to take responsibility for the concessionary coal scheme and to charge the successor companies for dealing with that scheme.

I will conclude my remarks on concessionary coal by referring to another aspect which worries a great number of serving mineworkers. Contractors within the coal industry do not receive concessionary coal, and it is open to the successor companies as part of their licensing arrangements that their employers are sub-contracted to them. In that way, the successor companies can avoid the liability for concessionary coal.

There are a number of other matters on which I had hoped to touch, and I will refer to them briefly.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend makes a valid point as he comes to the end of his excellent speech. Is he aware that the example he has given is happening now in the industry? Private mining companies have taken over other companies have had to take over the historical liabilities of the scheme. Those companies are now saying—quite openly, and without any threat from the Government—that they are taking away the concessionary fuel agreement. If that is happening now before privatisation, can anyone be surprised that miners who work in British Coal pits now fear that the same may happen to their concessionary fuel agreement?

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. In advance of legislation to define a particular industry, companies are ignoring the provisions of a Bill. The same thing happened with regard to Sunday trading; I will make only a passing reference to the subject, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Employees have been placed on six-day working contracts regardless of the contents of the Bill.

I will draw my remarks to a close, as I have discussed concessionary coal. However, there are other worries which are not addressed in the Bill or by the Ways and Means resolution in relation to the coal authority. I have mentioned the insurance claims of British Coal. Will the successor companies insure their own risks or take out insurance? What will be the level of premiums? Will they be judged like other companies for employer's liability insurance? That is a big area, in view of the number of accidents which have to be compensated for in the industry.

I have been involved in that side of the industry and I am well aware that there are claims within my area of Yorkshire which go as far back as 1982. Those claims amount to around £3 million or £4 million pounds per annum in terms of compensation paid. Should the Coal Authority take responsibility for that area?

There are outstanding compensation claims. The successor companies will not welcome with open arms the liability for historical compensation claims, many of which will not be settled before the privatisation legislation is in force. Noise-induced deafness is currently soaking up much of British Coal's resources. There are also other residual compensation claims. Those points must be addressed and must be the responsibility of the Coal Authority.

Insufficient residual liabilities are to be passed to the Coal Authority to protect the public from such dangers as subsidence or for the industry to be viable after privatisation. The privatisation is untimely, unnecessary and incomplete. The Bill and the motion are confused. There are insufficient safeguards and the Bill is hurried. There are major omissions which hon. Members must consider in Standing Committee in the coming months. There will be a bleak future for pensioners and beneficiaries of the pension scheme. Above all, the future for serving mineworkers is bleak.

12.35 am

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I will be brief, as I spoke earlier. However, I want to raise one or two points that I did not have time to mention then. I hope that the Minister will pay attention to my points and, if he cannot reply to them tonight, reply to them at an early and I recognise that the matter is very narrow. Paragraph *(a)* of the resolution refers to

"the making of the Coal Authority . . . of charges for things done in the exercise and performance of its powers and duties."—*[Interruption.]* I recognise that the House is a trifle excited about possible developments, but when the Minister's adviser has finished telling him about the latest dramatic developments, I hope that the Minister will pay particular attention to my points.

Mr. Hood: Perhaps I can be helpful. I am also interested in what is happening between the Government Whip and the Minister. I heard a whisper when I was outside the Chamber a moment ago to the effect that there is a security alert outside St. Stephen's entrance. An unidentified car has been left there and the police are genuinely concerned that there might be a bomb in it. The police are worried about the possibility of a Division, as that would attract hon. Members to the House. I am sure that hon. Members will feel obliged to continue to examine the Ways and Means motion until the security alert is cleared. I am sure that that is what the Government Whip was telling the Minister.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend has done the House a great service by bringing us up to date with the latest development in the insanities of life in this city. I hope that the car belongs to a representative of one of the foreign mining firms with a bad safety record who might have heard our strictures and gone away.

In an earlier intervention, I mentioned the experience regaled to us by our former good colleague and friend, Allen McKay. When we debated subsidence a few years ago, he told us about his experience as a volunteer fireman

when he rescued two cows which had fallen into an old mine working. My serious questions on the resolution relate to the fact that my constituency, like the neighbouring constituencies of some of my colleagues, lies in the very heart of the old south Yorkshire coalfield.

There has been mining in our constituencies for 300 or 400 years. The first fatality in the mining industry in my constituency occurred around 1660. The industry is an ancient industry because several seams of coal outcrop and can be found easily in close proximity to Wath upon Dearne, where I live in my constituency in the heart of South Yorkshire. The Warren house seam, which comprises part of the coal being mined today in the Selby coalfield, outcrops at Warren house, which is about one mile from my home. It is close to the Abdy seam, which outcrops 18 in below the surface at the point where the Warren house colliery, which closed many years ago, had its first shaft. The seams bear the names of the localities where they outcrop. Within about a mile of my home there is the Newhill seam, the Meltonfield seam, the Warren House seam and the Abdy seam, all of them outcrops.

A few years ago, there was a fire in the Abdy seam and the mines drainage unit, based at the Westfield colliery site at Parkgate, had enough men to deal with it. As the industry contracted, the mines drainage unit was closed and responsibility was placed on Silverwood colliery, to which I referred in an earlier debate. That colliery may be whittled away; if it is, who will bear the responsibility and have the capacity to respond to an event such as the Abdy seam fire?

That is one of the problems that arise from contraction. Another difficulty is that we are dealing with an old industry whose problems may have their roots in events that occurred a century or more ago. Will manning in the authority be sufficient to understand and appraise such problems, and will it have the resources to organise a response to them?

Using the mines drainage unit, British Coal could respond rapidly to such problems, but many pits have closed or are to close. However, the problems arising from heritage remain. I represent an area in the heart of one of the older coalfields. Can I be assured that the problems arising from the legacy of past mining will be met by public provisions or by the authority under its obligations when that authority may have no capacity to do so?

When I was a student, I was researching the history of mining and happened to be taking photographs with a little box Brownie camera in pursuit of my thesis. In Rawmarsh, which is just a couple of miles from my home, I saw that the land had fallen in at a place where a bell-pit had operated, probably in the late 17th century. No one could prove that date because the records of a mine's workings were not collected then. Some of the mining operations in my constituency are not on official records. I shall give an illustration that is covered by the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I do not think that places of work are covered by the resolution.

Mr. Hardy: Paragraph (a) refers to

"the making by the Coal Authority . . . of charges for things done in the exercise and performance of its powers and duties".

I shall illustrate what I mean. About 2,000 yd from my home is the site of what was the Rockingham porcelain manufactory. The Fitzwilliam estate, which owned the whole area, was a kind landlord to the Rockingham manufacturers, the Brameld brothers. They were given permission to mine coal in that vicinity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all very interesting, but it does not have a great deal to do with the subject of the debate. The hon. Gentleman should confine his remarks to the resolution.

Mr. Hardy: I shall try to make the matter clear. The Coal Authority would be empowered to charge for the exercise of its responsibilities, but who will pay the charges if the pit that is responsible for the problem ceased to exist 150 or 200 years ago? *[Interruption.]* I should like to finish this point which you were correct to require me to explain, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If the pit closed 150 years ago, who will pay the charge? Who will ascertain the degree of responsibility? The problem will exist, so who will be identifiable as the person or body responsible? I do not propose to go further, but the Minister will understand that the questions that my hon. Friends and I have raised tonight will have to be answered in Standing Committee, otherwise we shall be placing an impossible responsibility on the British Coal authority and asking it to perform tasks which are completely insoluble.

Mr. Etherington *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Hardy: Yes.

Mr. Etherington: My hon. Friend raised a vital point when he used the term "heritage" in referring to the liabilities that have been created in mining areas. He spoke about the problems of pumping and of old pits that have closed. He will obviously be aware that the position will be particularly grim in areas where no pits remain. Does he agree that it is important that the powers and duties taken on by the Coal Authority should involve the responsibility for dewatering areas where a rise in the mine water could lead to pollution and other environmental problems? It is extremely unfair that the areas which——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman making a speech or an intervention? I understood it to be the latter, and interventions are supposed to be brief.

Mr. Etherington: I was following the spirit of the interventions which have been made tonight, but I accept your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost of the burden should be borne by the country rather than by the people living in the area, who have given quite enough to society?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He has put to the Minister some aspects of the problem which may not have dawned on him and given him due warning that, when we consider the relevant parts of the Bill, satisfactory explanations will have to be made in Standing Committee and on Report. I would stress that a number of noble Lords will take a deep interest in some of those matters.

The Government will have to do their homework in the next fortnight. The Bill and the manner it is being dealt with do not give us confidence that any homework is being done.

12.46 am

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I have heard speeches from a number of Labour Members. I did not realise what good news was given from a sedentary position by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley). I must tell him immediately that I shall miss him.

I venture to think that there may be some misunderstanding on the Opposition Benches about the thrust of the motion on the Order Paper. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) for his interesting historical exposition of the outcropping and its relationship with the porcelain manufacturer in his constituency. It was one of the more interesting speeches from the Opposition and I should be delighted to hear the conclusion of that story.

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend is on the Standing Committee.

Mr. Eggar: Then we may have many such opportunities.

A wide number of issues have been aired, some of which are relevant to the proceedings in Committee. I am sure that Opposition Members will not be surprised or offended when I say that few of them, indeed almost none, were relevant to the resolution, but that is a matter for their consciences, the Chair and the length of time they wish to detain the House.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central for giving me notice of some of the issues that will be raised in Committee. I am particularly interested in considering how I will deal with the cows.

Much of the debate has been about the range of the Coal Authority's duties. The resolution will, of course, permit the authority to charge for the services that it provides, but it in no way restricts the range of its duties or the services that it provides. That is a matter for the Bill, and I shall not get into a discussion on that now.

It might be helpful and avoid doubt if I outline what the resolution covers. First, it covers charges levied by the Coal Authority. The Bill enables the authority to charge for the services that it provides and a good example would be a licence application fee for services provided in the processing and consideration of an application. The aim is to set fees at a level that will enable the authority to cover its administrative costs. As the House knows, that is a well established practice for such bodies.

Secondly, the resolution covers corporation tax. The Bill contains provisions that deal with the consequences for corporation tax purposes of the transfer under restructuring schemes of property rights and liabilities to successor companies and other public sector companies. There are also provisions to deal with the subsequent taxation treatment of such transferees. The general approach follows that adopted in previous privatisations which involve statutory bodies already subject to corporation tax. Finally, the resolution covers any sums to be paid into the Consolidated Fund or the national loans fund.

I hope that it has been of some use to the House to define exactly what the Ways and Means resolution covers. I am upset that we shall not be hearing any further contributions from the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central in Committee —we shall all miss him.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North) *rose in his place and claimed to move, That the Question be now put.*

Question put, That the Question be now put:

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 56.

Division No. 77] **[12.51 a.m.**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bell, Stuart
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dixon, Don
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Primarolo, Dawn
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 60.

Division No. 78] **[1.02 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Luff, Peter
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*

Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bell, Stuart
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dixon, Don
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Primarolo, Dawn
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Coal Industry Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the making by the Coal Authority established by the Act of charges for things done in the exercise and performance of its powers and duties;

(b) the imposition of charges to corporation tax by provisions relating to the taxation of persons to and from whom property, rights and liabilities are transferred in accordance with schemes under the Act; and

(c) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.

Agriculture

1.13 am

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I beg to move,

That the Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2901) dated 24th November 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

This scheme came into existence after a major review of help to farmers in 1988. As a result, the conclusions reached reflected the need at that time to introduce assistance for farmers to help curb production. It was decided that aid should be switched away from investments intended to increase productive capacity and that the benefits to farmers should be in the form of help with conservation schemes and schemes to benefit the environment.

To that end, I must start by making some announcements about improvements to the farm and conservation grant scheme *[Interruption.]* We have decided to provide additional assistance in three ways. First, through grants to help farmers with the costs of capital works to open up access to farmland. They will underpin further assistance because we shall return to the House to seek its approval shortly on matters connected with access and environmentally sensitive areas. Also we have decided to give grant aid to people in the poultry industry to deal with poultry waste, just as grants are available for assistance with other livestock wastes. Finally, we want to extend the life of the special package of grants for the Scilly Isles offered under the farm and conservation grant scheme for a further year while we consider the longer term needs of growers on the islands. I hope that the House will agree that those are three small but important ways in which we are trying to develop the

I shall now mention the rates of grant. As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said from a sedentary position, there are reductions. However, those measures have to be viewed in the context of the overall position of farm incomes. Farmers in the dairy sector have benefited significantly, especially from the on-farm schemes to deal with waste, and it is perhaps worth reflecting that in recent years dairy incomes have steadily increased. In 1991-92 incomes increased by 11 per cent. I expect that last year's 1992-93 forecast of a 19 per cent. increase in that sector will be fully realised.

In the beef sector there have been increases in incomes and in beef special premium and suckler cow premium. Those have been substantially increased and will increase further up to 1995.

Finally, for those farmers in the less favoured areas, total direct subsidies will be worth about £550 million in 1994.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale) *rose——*

Mr. Jack: Will my hon. Friend allow me to make a little progress? I do not want to detain the House unnecessarily.

The fact that grant rates under the scheme are to be reduced should also be viewed in the context of what that will mean in terms of the expenditure next year on the farm and conservation grant scheme. I must draw the attention of the House to the fact that that will amount to about £27 million—only £2 million less than the peak

expenditure in this financial year. That indicates the continuity of help that we are providing under the scheme, because much help is in the financial pipeline and is reflected in that expenditure.

Mr. Greenway: Perhaps it is as well that my hon. Friend continued a little longer, because he has just mentioned the point that I wanted to discuss. He is right to say that many dairy farmers have benefited enormously from the recovery in incomes and from the grant while it was 50 per cent. It is fair to say that those farmers who have money in the bank have made use of that. The farmers who now have schemes in the pipeline are the poorer farmers, who will lose out as a result of the cut to 25 per cent. Does the Minister think that there is a case for saying that those farmers who had a scheme at the planning stage and ready to go ahead should receive the 50 per cent. anyway?

Mr. Jack: Those farmers who submitted acceptable plans prior to 1 December 1993 will receive the old grant rate, as witnessed by the amount of money that I said was already in the pipeline.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I hope that hon. Members will allow me to make a little more progress.

The rate of grant, such as it was at 50 per cent., was above the European Community then maximum level of 35 per cent. We did that as a pump-priming exercise, to encourage farmers to take up that important opportunity to deal with farm wastes. It is worth pointing out that we have already paid out more than £115 million in grant in the four and a half years since the scheme was announced in February 1989. At that time, the intention was to spend about £50 million only in the first three years of the scheme.

To answer my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), about 9,000 farmers have already taken advantage of the scheme. Its success is demonstrated by the fact that in 1989 nearly 600 serious pollution incidents were attributed to agriculture. The figure in 1992 was less than 200.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Very many farmers still have not been able to carry out works in relation to pollution. I am worried that some of them, because they cannot afford the costs, will sell their quota. To all intents and purposes, that will mean that the farms they occupy will cease to be viable units. That will lead to further fragmentation and amalgamation of units, and make it that much more difficult for young people to enter the industry because the farm sizes will constantly increase as a consequence.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman might have had a point if I had been saying that we intended to end the grant scheme altogether. But I have described a remarkable take-up; 9,000 farmers have participated. The hon. Gentleman mentioned young people coming into farming, and I can think of no finer way to respond to that point than to remind him that the proposal to reform tenancy law has come from the Government.

As I was saying, the grant will continue, but at the rate of 25 per cent. The other area affected by the proposals is conservation, involving hedges, stone walls and traditional buildings.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose*——

Mr. Jack: Before I take the hon. Gentleman's intervention, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the farm conservation grant scheme came into existence at a time when many of the environmental schemes that have subsequently been developed were at a very early stage.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister has told us that there will be a reduction in the grant. Is he aware that already farmers in my constituency have told me that, because of that reduction, they do not intend to proceed with projects that they had hoped to undertake? Will he confirm that, under the current regulations, if certain action is not taken on waste disposal, it will be possible for environmental health officers to close a farm down? Against such a background, how is it possible to justify cuts that are stopping investments necessary for environmental and even for statutory reasons?

Mr. Jack: The fact that I can say that 9,000 farmers have already decided to minimise their risk of being penalised for pollution by taking up the grant shows me how aware the farming community is. I recently visited a farm in Cumbria where a substantial amount of work had been completed and more plans were in the pipeline. The people there were glad of the assistance, which had helped them to modernise and improve their farm. I saw no evidence that they intended to diminish their attempts in that direction, taking advantage of the scheme.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose*——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I want to make progress. Perhaps I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) in a moment.

In connection with the conservation and environmental aspects of the grants, I have already told the House that the scheme was introduced when other schemes, such as that designating environmentally sensitive areas, were in their infancy. In January 1993, six new environmentally sensitive areas were established, and six more are expected to be launched in March. By the year 1996-97, expenditure in the United Kingdom on such areas, which provides assistance for many of the types of scheme covered by the farm and conservation grant scheme, will total about £63 million. There will also be benefits in terms of farm conservation activity from parts of the agri-environment package, details of whose timetabling and introduction we shall announce later this year.

The House should also take into account the fact that the Department of the Environment has a budget of £105 million to deal with schemes such as the Countryside Commission's countryside stewardship scheme, the hedgerow incentive scheme and the work undertaken by English Nature. All of those are complementary to the work of the farm and conservation grant scheme in connection with hedges, stone walls and traditional buildings.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am glad that my hon. Friend has mentioned hedges and traditional stone walls. Surely it is more important to spend money on those, especially in our part of the world, than on encouraging access to the hideous set-aside land.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the idea of the typical landscape—in Cumbria and the

[Mr. Jack]

north-west, for example. That is the aspect that I am discussing. As I explained, in addition to our farm and conservation grant scheme, which will continue to provide assistance for such work, a range of other schemes funded by the Department of the Environment will also enable similar work to be carried on. Those complementary schemes show why it is justifiable in our scheme for us to reduce the grant rates in that area.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I want to come to a conclusion, as many other hon. Members want to speak and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to do so.

The third element in the grant scheme, which is coming to an end, deals with matters connected with horticulture. It is a matter of sadness to me as I made my living in the horticultural business before coming into the House. Although there was help for horticultural buildings, especially glasshouses and modernisation grants for orchards, less than 9 per cent. of eligible holdings took up the orchard replanting grant and less than 4 per cent. took up the greenhouse replacement grant.

Clearly, much work needs to be done in that area and I can assure the House that I shall take into account the problem with grant schemes in the work that I am undertaking to consider horticulture as a whole.

I commend the motion to the House and I hope that hon. Members will understand that, on the Conservative Benches, there is no diminution in our wish to provide assistance to farmers, in our effectiveness in dealing with farm waste, in the commitment of the Government to provide funding for environmental concerns and in the complementarity between schemes from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and those from other Government Departments.

1.25 am

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): There are parts of the supplementary estimates which we on the Labour Benches welcome. Those are the parts that the Minister has rightly outlined: grants for access, changes in provisions concerning poultry waste and the extension of support for the Isles of Scilly.

However, overall, the statutory instrument is a major blow to the farming community. It represents substantial cuts in environmental and conservation management. Unless the Minister will give some indication that he is prepared to take the statutory instrument away and consider it again, we shall have no alternative but to vote against it, because the changes are not to the advantage of the farming community, nor do they meet a number of commitments that the Government have made, as I shall outline.

The changes are a double blow. They are not only a direct blow to the farming community because of the loss of capital grants, but a blow to the wider issue of protecting and managing our countryside. I remind the House that the intentions of the scheme, as printed in the foreword of the original farm conservation grant scheme handbook were as follows:

"The Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme is designed to help farmers maintain efficient farming systems while also meeting the often heavy cost of combating pollution and conserving the countryside and its wildlife. The scheme focuses on those investments which cut costs by updating existing resources and those which help to achieve good countryside management. A special priority of the scheme is to help farmers install and improve waste handling facilities to avoid the risk of pollution.

I am sure that those are worthy aims, which the whole House should fully support. There is a shift in support payments for such objectives and such schemes which are exactly the kind to which we in the Labour party give high priority. We want to see the large amounts of public money being diverted towards such aspects of the CAP.

The scheme is comparatively modest in comparison with the total sums of available agricultural support. The scheme totals £74 million this year. To put that in perspective, it is well below 10 per cent. of the £840 million spent on set-aside and the arable payments scheme. Even though the scheme is modest, grants for conservation schemes are to be cut from 50 per cent. to 30 per cent. in less favoured areas, and from 40 per cent. to 25 per cent. elsewhere.

Capital grants for the handling, storing and treating of waste are to be cut from 50 per cent. to 25 per cent. Grants for the repair and reinstatement of traditional farm buildings are to be cut from 35 per cent. to 25 per cent. in less-favoured areas and to 20 per cent. in other areas. It is estimated that those cuts will bring about savings of about £12 million in the current year. I contrast that with total Government spending of £2·5 billion on the CAP in the current year. Such comparisons put into perspective the amount being spent on conservation management.

The National Farmers Union parliamentary land use and environment committee this morning——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Yesterday morning.

Mr. Morley: Not according to the parliamentary day.

That committee pointed out that the great advantage of such a scheme is that it is available to the whole country and that, unlike schemes such as environmentally sensitive areas, valuable though they are, it applies to the 85 per cent. of the countryside outside less favoured areas and environmentally sensitive areas. Such cuts, therefore, are detrimental to the whole countryside.

The scheme can be said to have been successful, unlike many agricultural support schemes. There has been a good take-up, and spending on waste handling facilities in particular has increased from £64,000 in 1989, to a peak of £23·4 million in 1991-92, and to £21·1 million in 1992-93. That demonstrates the tremendous investment that has been made in the farming community to deal with the problems of agricultural waste and its potential for polluting waterways.

Cuts in grant are a major blow to the livestock sector and they will affect the investment plans that many farmers, particularly those who do not have large sums of money available to them, have been planning. Of course, they have a knock-on effect on the environment and on jobs.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Will my hon. Friend comment on the likely adverse effect on watercourses of cutting grants to subsidise the treatment of waste? According to a recent report from the National Rivers Authority, in Wales the number of pollution incidents, from farms in particular, has increased alarmingly over the past few years.

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend is right. Over the years, agricultural run-offs have accounted for a large proportion of pollution incidents in waterways. There has been a recent reduction, but that is a tribute to the scheme and it is a reason why the scheme should not be cut when there are tangible gains in capital grants to deal with potential pollution problems.

It is worth raising a query which was referred to me by the Country Landowners Association, which shares my concern about the impact of cuts in grant. If capital grants for livestock waste are to be reduced, will the Government consider diverting some resources into grant-aiding the separation of clean and dirty water on livestock farms? That would reduce the volume of muck to be disposed of and it would also help the farmer and the environment. Is it possible to divert resources to such a purpose?

Apart from livestock waste, the grants have helped greatly in respect of environmental features such as shelter belts, trees for shading stock, the enclosure of grazed woodlands, traditional field boundaries, bracken control, the regeneration of heather and grass moorland, and the repair and reinstatement of traditional buildings. Again, the House will agree that those are important objectives and that they deserve support in terms of cuntryside management.

I shall focus on traditional field boundaries. I refer, of course, to hedges and dry-stone walls. Both features of the agricultural landscape are attractive, functional and important conservation features.

The loss of grant assistance for the reinstatement of hedges is a serious blow. Indeed, a recent Government survey revealed that there was a net loss of 23 per cent. of hedgerows between 1984 and 1990 and a substantial increase in derelict hedges because of a lack of management.

I wonder how the cut in grant for landscape features such as hedgerows squares with the Government's manifesto pledge to introduce legislation to protect hedgerows. What has happened to that pledge? Is it yet another broken promise to add to a litany of broken promises? Is the Minister prepared to urge his counterpart in the Department of the Environment to introduce the legislation which was promised many years ago and which is very necessary? Many miles of hedgerow continue to be lost or destroyed. Indeed, there is a case for increasing the amount of grant available for hedgerow planting, rather than decreasing it, as the statutory instrument does.

A measure for features such as hedgerows is too important to be left to the private Bill procedure, although I know that hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), have campaigned for a long time for such legislation. We had a private Bill on hedgerow protection. I regret that Tory Members wrecked it by talking it out and ensuring that it did not get on the statute book. If they continue to use such wrecking tactics, the Government need to introduce proper legislation to meet their manifesto promise.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Although I am in favour of hedges, there were certain disadvantages to the private Bill. It would have put the power into the hands of local authorities, which often do not know much about farming. I would rather have the power to deal with hedges with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or the farmers themselves but not with local authorities.

Mr. Morley: Obviously, there is an argument about the detail of the Bill. But dealing with hedgerows in terms of planning was a logical way forward. The Bill was supported by Ministers. If they think that the way forward is to introduce hedgerow legislation as part of planning controls—of course, they drafted the detail of the Bill—I assume that they think that it is the best way to proceed. Although the hon. Lady has her disagreements, I am sure she would agree that we do not need this statutory instrument.

The introduction of legislation is the right way forward, although we could argue about how it would work. I still think that it is important for the Government to give hedgerow protection some priority and to ensure that they abide by their commitment. Certainly, they do not abide by that commitment in this statutory instrument.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England rightly argues that what we need in terms of agricultural policy is an increase in countryside management and the support that goes with it. As for dry-stone walls as a field boundary, the CPRE refers to surveys which show that there has been a 10 per cent. reduction in the amount of dry-stone walling on agricultural land. Of course, such cuts do not impact simply in terms of conservation features and conservation management: they also impact on jobs in the rural economy.

Many people are trying to acquire new skills, or relearn old skills, in terms of hedge laying, tree planting and rebuilding dry-stone walls. Indeed, a colleague of mine is encouraging the reinstatement of dry-stone walls on his farm. He told me that the person who is doing the work has taken on an apprentice to learn the skill. That work is supported by the grants. I wonder how many people will lose their jobs and their income as a result of the cuts in grant. Such grants would otherwise have encouraged the reinstatement of these important features.

The same applies to the renovation of traditional farm buildings. In many parts of the country farm buildings are an important part of the landscape, and not only is their reinstatement valuable as a landscape feature but there are employment opportunities for acquiring and implementing traditional skills which are much needed within the rural economy.

I do not see how cuts of this kind will benefit the rural economy or rural communities. Not only will the cuts have an impact in terms of conservation features, but they are particularly badly timed in terms of the Government's commitment to publish a biodiversity plan which I understand will be published on 26 January. I wonder how the Minister can argue that the cut can meet the Rio commitments made by the Prime Minister for meeting biodiversity. Is that yet another broken promise which we can add to the list of commitments which have been given?

Is the Minister aware that a survey published last November by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology underlined the losses to wildlife species and the importance of hedges in maintaining their populations?

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in the Cotswolds, where there is a large proportion of stone walls, those stone walls are disappearing because they are simply too expensive to keep up? The hon. Gentleman quoted from a report by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology. The reason why hedgerows are disappearing is simply because they are becoming derelict.

[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]

The proposed Hedgerows Bill would have had no effect on that. If the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends wish to keep up such landscape features, the only way is to have a proper management plan under such schemes as the countryside stewardship scheme. There is considerably more money available for that scheme from the Department of the Environment and the hedgerow incentive scheme from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food than is available under the farm conservation grant scheme, which is merely——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This sounds like a speech, and not an intervention. Interventions are supposed to be brief.

Mr. Morley: I have put in perspective the sums which are available for farm conservation grants. Those sums are tiny in terms of the global commitment made by this country on the common agriculture policy.

I say to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) that it is true that it is expensive to maintain and repair stone walls. It is often difficult to find people with the skills to do so. However, cuts in grants will do nothing to assist hedgerow maintenance. I would have more respect for the hon. Gentleman on such issues if he had not been one of the main culprits in wrecking the Hedgerows Bill which was put before Parliament. I should have thought that, if he wants to be taken seriously on such matters as landscape protection, he should make sure that there was a proper facility or provision to protect such things as hedgerows, rather than wrecking the Bill in the way he did.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The simple reason, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) pointed out, was that we did not want local authorities which do not understand about growing hedgerows interfering and telling farmers what to do. That would not have been the right way forward and would have been bureaucratic.

The hon. Gentleman criticises me personally for wrecking the Bill. I have a record of a net gain of one mile of hedgerows on my farm.

Mr. Morley: I return to the original point that Ministers drafted the Bill, and they felt that local authority planning was the correct mechanism. While I do not doubt his commitments, that is no excuse for wrecking a Bill which many people were anxious to see put on the statute book.

I return to the issue of the impact of biodiversity. Is the Minister aware of the detailed farmland bird census which was carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology? That census demonstrated the dramatic losses of many of the once-common farmland birds. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds calculated that the numbers of grey partridges have fallen by 73 per cent. during the last 20 years. If the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) were here, he would share my concern at the decline of a species such as the grey partridge.

The measure also includes grants for heath and moorland reinstatement. Heath and moorland are vital to threatened species like the sand lizard, which is a red data book species. The proposals to reinstate habitat have been cut by the statutory instrument. How does all that square with the Rio declaration which the Prime Minister signed and which supports the biodiversity convention and protection when the Government are taking measures to cut the kind of support systems that are protecting biodiversity?

We need clear objectives and targets in terms of protecting species and habitat. How can cuts in a measure like this achieve that? Did MAFF consult the Department of the Environment about the statutory instrument? Will the DOE set targets for habitat protection and restoration? How will the cuts allow the Government to comply with the European Union habitat directive? That is particularly important, as the Government are already on record as saying that they will meet the requirements of the habitat directive precisely through measures of this kind.

If the Government are going to cut the farm conservation grant scheme, how will they meet the commitments that they have already made with respect to the habitat directive? Is that yet another broken promise to add to the list? Those issues, in addition to conservation and the impact on farmers, are important in terms of the overall commitment and responsibility that the Government should have for our countryside and environment.

The welcome aspect of the statutory instrument relates to the grants for access to agricultural land. The Opposition have been arguing for that for sometime. We welcome the grants for the provision of gates, stiles and footbridges. We believe that encouraging farmers to allow public access to their land is a valid use of public money. We hope that that will succeed. It is therefore a matter of regret that such positive measures are outweighed in the measure by the negative impact of the overall cuts in grant.

Given the overall reduction, will the Minister confirm what I understood from his opening remarks? Are the new grants for support for access to come from the budget for the farm conservation grant scheme or has there been diversion from the agri-environment programme to fund the improvement? I am working on the assumption that that is not the case because the Minister said that there is to be a further announcement about the agri-environment package and support for public access. I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm that we are not talking about diversion from the agri-environment package.

That point is important because the agri-environment package is not exactly a generous scheme. A joint report by the CPRE, the Ramblers Association and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation demonstrated that green payments to farmers, including environmentally sensitive area schemes, amounted to £2·31 per hectare on a United Kingdom average, while set-aside and arable payments amounted to a somewhat larger £45·39 per hectare on a United Kingdom average. That is a considerable difference, particularly in terms of value of money.

There is a great deal more value for money with regard to conservation and environmental support as part of agri-environment packages than simply paying farmers to keep land in set-aside. Farmers in my constituency share that view. They would rather see public money being spent on positive schemes which the public can appreciate and see than on the negative set-aside scheme.

Cutting environmental payments under the farm and conservation scheme while £840 million is spent on set-aside and arable aids, shows lack of commitment to environmental management. The cuts will produce minimal savings this year and will undermine a good value-for-money scheme. They will also undermine the

ability of farmers to protect and manage our countryside, and they breach the Government's commitment to the habitat directive and the biodiversity treaty. I urge the Government to withdraw the instrument and to think again on the matter. If they do not, they will stand accused of breaking yet more promises, adding to a record that is already littered with broken promises, and of a shift away from responsible management and protection of our countryside rather than giving the commitment and support that our farmers and our countryside deserve.

1.50 am

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): I am glad to take part in the debate. As a farmer, I do not think that, in a time of economic stringency, it is at all unreasonable to reduce grants. Grants still remain to spur the planting of hedges and shelter belts, and farmers are increasingly likely and increasingly encouraged to do that off their own bat. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) rather ruined his speech by exaggerating the effect that such fairly modest cuts would have on the countryside. I am sorry that he lost his balance.

When drainage grant was about 20 per cent. lower than what is proposed in the legislation, it was a spur for many farmers to continue with drainage schemes. Moreover, it is in the general interest of farming to be weaned from grants. We do not want to be the one sector of society that is continually encouraged and fed by grants to do what is fairly natural work in the maintenance and stewardship of the countryside.

I understand the reasons for the measure. It is necessary for farmers to share the general stringency that the rest of the country faces at a time when we are seeking to reduce public expenditure. The concern that has been generated about the reduction in grants is understandable because we all want to conserve and increase the wildlife value of our countryside. It is certainly not right to be complacent about what is being done to make the countryside a better place for wildlife and to rebuild some of the depleted stocks.

I am convinced that we can and should do more, and this is a unique opportunity to do that. The obvious way is not through grants and small measures of the type that we have been debating, but by using the vast sums that are available under the set-aside scheme. As the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said, last year farmers were paid about £840 million to set aside nearly 1·5 million acres. We are speaking of sums that are 100 times more than the relatively modest cuts in the measure.

Few of us who have anything at all to do with the land are pleased by the set-aside regime. We certainly feel that the existing arrangement is of little benefit to wildlife. In addition, the management of the set-aside regime is costly and, as a farmer, I do not think that it improves the fertility of the land or assists in growing crops in the following year. Under the set-aside regime, there is a massive opportunity and a real challenge to improve our efforts to help conservation and wildlife. We have a real opportunity to make set-aside of lasting benefit to conservation.

One such measure that we are moving towards is permanent set-aside. Set-aside along the edge of a wood can be of permanent benefit to wildlife.

We also have to accept that, to achieve real benefit to wildlife, we have to manage some areas. Where we manage the countryside, we increase the benefit of that countryside to wildlife. Let me give two examples. Britain has a shortage of lowland heathland. The reinstatement of heathland requires a low level of grazing. It would be valuable if we could secure that.

If we want really good permanent pasture, we need a regime of mowing for hay at a late date without adding fertiliser. If we could secure through the Common Market some measures by we which could have limited cropping from land, the advantages to conservation and wildlife would be huge. That is what we want, and it would produce real value for money from the huge sums being spent.

If we could secure the proper management of set-aside combined with growing areas under the environmentally sensitive area scheme and many other schemes—for example, the management of ancient woodlands—we could continue making real efforts to reconstruct valuable habitats on a grand scale and we would be spending the huge sums of available money effectively.

In conclusion, I certainly accept the modest measures proposed this evening. We should be weaned from grants and contribute to the national economic efforts, but I cannot accept our continuing failure to make set-aside work creatively for conservation. I should like the Government to be absolutely certain that the measures we take with other members of the European Community in the next few years ensure that set-aside land is of lasting benefit to the environment.

1.57 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle), because he has shown yet again that there is a groundswell in the House—an increasing tendency to realise that set-aside is central to the Government's problems with agriculture and with the misinvestment of resources in agricultural development.

When the former Minister came back to the House waving a piece of paper and saying that he had achieved peace in our time, he claimed reduced surpluses, reduced costs and reduced bureaucracy as major benefits from his common agricultural policy reform package. Initially, the Liberal Democrats were alone in the House in taking the view that the dependence on set-aside, especially rotational set-aside, would be the seed of the decline of the whole policy. In fact, it had built into it its own calamitous conclusion.

I very much endorse the views expressed this evening about the way in which, sadly, the cuts that the Treasury has made in agricultural support have been on the wrong targets. That has to be the message that hon. Members on both sides of the House have to express to the Government.

I hope that the Minister will be able to explain to us, if he speaks again tonight, how precisely the target has been selected out of all the targets that could have been selected by the Treasury in making cuts, when there is such a clear view among the agriculturists, conservationists, the general public, taxpayers and Members of the House that the real target should be the huge sums being paid in arable area compensation for rotational set-aside.

In the meantime, as hon. Members have already said, there is an element of double-speak or double standards in that the proposals are being brought forward at this juncture, when the Department of the Environment is to publish its biodiversity action plan within a few days. I hope that the Government will reiterate their support for

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the European Union habitats directive. How could any Government square the reiteration of that support with those cuts and those proposed targets for economies?

The National Farmers Union has made it clear that the great value of the farm and conservation grant scheme is that it is generally applied, extremely popular, nationwide and comprehensive and all farms are eligible, wherever they are. It is not selective and does not depend on lines on maps. Surely that is the way to proceed if we want all farmers—not only a few in particular areas—to sign up to wider environmental and community benefits.

The organisations that brief hon. Members of, I am sure, all parties have emphasised the fact that the take-up of the scheme has been unique in that it has been so cost-effective and has led to real improvements. The most popular take-up has been for investment in waste handling facilities and the scheme has been one of the best run of any Government. As the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said, the people who now wish to benefit from such schemes were not making large profits before and therefore had no ready cash to invest. We are therefore penalising the least well-off—in the dairy sector in particular—when it should be the other way around.

What message are the Government sending to the industry and to the country? In recent weeks, I have been to the borders of Scotland, to North Yorkshire and Somerset and, of course, to Cornwall, to meet dairy farmers. I do not think that the hon. Member for Lincoln has as many dairy farmers in the city of Lincoln as I have in my constituency. The diary farmers in particular know only too well that the scheme is of practical help to them. It is a deplorable day when cuts are made simply because the Treasury finds it easy to make them. That is the real reason for the cuts; it is not because the Minister felt he had found the correct target for reductions in costs.

On-farm waste management is a major problem, as has already been mentioned. Of course there is room for significant improvement. The National Rivers Authority and other organisations outside government have emphasised that fact and, in the interests of a long-term environmental policy, it is extremely important that there continue to be improvements.

It is significant that the grant scheme makes no great difference to the profitability of an individual holding; indeed, it may increase costs on the farm. Nor does it make any difference to the productivity of a particular enterprise. There is no benefit to the farmer. The benefit is to the environment and the wider community and, one hopes, to the Government's long-term environmental objectives.

The Minister referred to increasing income. What we are discussing is not a matter of income. It is not intended to help the farmer to make a bigger profit. Indeed, it cannot do so, but it can achieve other benefits for the community and the environment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said that the NRA can effectively close a dairy farm enterprise if it does not meet the appropriate waste management standards. The scheme is not merely a voluntary addition to help farmers do a better job, or make a bigger profit, but has much wider advantages.

I remind the Minister that it was his right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder), who is now the Patronage Secretary—that shows how far the Minister can rise if he plays his cards right—who introduced the scheme in 1989 when he was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister. On 14 February 1989, which is Valentine's day —I am sure that that was appropriate—he said:

> "Concern to protect and enhance the beauty and wildlife variety of our countryside is growing all the time. Increasingly, too, the public look to the farmer as the guardian of the countryside . . . What is less often recognised . . . is the extra cost this can impose on the farmer."

That is the point—it is an extra cost, not an advantage, to the farmer to introduce such a scheme. He continued:

> "Another important priority under the . . . scheme deals with the problems of pollution from farm effluent. The pressure on farmers to clean up their act is acute, and rightly so."

He added:

> "It also shows our determination to target assistance where it can do most good, both for the farmer and for the community as a whole."—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. 269-70.]

Where is that promise and that targeting tonight? Cuts has been made precisely where, on that occasion, the then Parliamentary Secretary identified a need to expand and increase support.

What has changed in those few years? Do the Government no longer believe that protecting the environment is important? Were their claims of sustainability so much cant? Is this measure just a sop to the Treasury because the environment does not really matter when the chips are down?

Do the present ministerial team share the right hon. Gentleman's view that the extra cost should not fall on the farmer? Today's targeting is most curious in relation to the priorities set at the Rio summit, the European Union habitats directive and the terms in which the scheme was introduced in 1989.

The Government's own 1990 countryside survey, published just a few months ago, reported the decline of habitats over the past 12 years—including the most valuable in this country. I refer to hedgerows and to upland grass and moorland—in both of which I am extremely interested, given the part of the United Kingdom that I represent.

Those habitats were precisely targeted, and rightly so, under the farm and conservation grant scheme, on the best possible advice to the Ministry. However, during the 12 years of the survey, 23 per cent. of hedgerows were lost, in addition to the considerable losses that occurred in previous eras. Up to 8 per cent. of upland grass and moorland was also lost.

Those areas are of huge value in terms of not only natural habitat but the upland landscape available to be enjoyed by people who do not live there all year but who visit from all parts of the world to see a man-made but nevertheless extremely attractive landscape—so there is even tourist value in work done under the scheme.

The survey identified an increase in derelict hedges, probably because of declining hedge management. Mention was made tonight of skills being lost because the grant is not enough—not because it is too much or too generous. Surely no one suggests that the scheme has outlived its usefulness. The reverse is true. Hedgerows, stone walls and Cornish banks—each area has its landscape vocabulary—are all part of the fabric of our countryside. The survey confirmed that they are still deteriorating. That is surely a reason for increasing the amount.

The Minister made three small announcements this evening. We heard nothing dramatic about poultry waste.

Although I am delighted—I am sure that the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) shares my interest—that the Isles of Scilly scheme will continue, that announcement was not so dramatic that we can all tear up our Order Papers and go home.

The access provisions are not a new announcement. On 10 August 1993, the Department announced that it would introduce funding for public access as part of its commitment to the European Union's agricultural environment programme. We cannot have double booking —that support cannot appear twice in the accounts. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will press the Minister to say this evening whether that is new money or whether it has simply been recycled —already announced, but presented by the Minister this evening as new by a sleight of hand.

The scheme's objectives are most worth while and deserve maximum support, but we want to ensure not only payment for existing rights of way but increased public access as part of the bargain, otherwise, we shall be paying for something that we already have. There is no value in that.

As the hon. Member for Lincoln pointed out eloquently, what is so galling is the contrast between the huge sums being spent on arable set-aside, particularly rotational set-aside—which he rightly identified as having limited conservation benefits—and this cut. The Council for the Protection of Rural England has pointed out that the cut represents 0·08 per cent.—less than 1 per cent.—of the total amount that will be invested in organised dereliction. Rotational set-aside, after all, is simply managed dereliction.

Rotational set-aside is in danger of becoming a bottomless pit into which increasingly large area payments will be thrown, bringing the whole of farming into disrepute. Already, parts of the tabloid press—perhaps not so ostentatiously in recent weeks; they have had other interests—have identified as scandalous the huge sums paid to large landowners in the eastern part of England. This will increasingly become a scandal, and the taxpayer will not put up with it in the long term. It simply is not sustainable politically. That would be so even if it were sustainable in other regards, which it clearly is not.

In the last year, 550,000 hectares of farmland in the United Kingdom were left idle, with virtually no environmental or social benefits. The Government's proposals will bring the CAP to its knees. It has already been brought into disrepute.

As the arable area scheme is now constituted, it is clearly doing great damage to the reputation of the farming community, and to the taxpayer. It appears that it is doing some good only to the largest landowners and the largest farmers. No doubt they used to be Conservative supporters. I do not know whether that is still the case. In the meantime, the Minister has suffered a severe defeat.

Let us be clear about this: these are not the Minister's proposals. I give her credit for at least having the good judgment to know that this is not the right target for cuts, although it may be a soft target. The statutory instrument involved has the Treasury's fingerprints all over it; it is nothing to do with the priorities of the Minister and her team. I have too much respect for them to believe otherwise. The Treasury has been allowed to savage the most valuable and vulnerable elements in the Minister's budget. No flights of fancy can disguise the fact that this represents a major defeat.

That defeat concerns not only the Minister; the real victims will be the farmers who really want to plan, in the long term, for the conservation of their land, as good stewards of that land. This is a defeat for the countryside.

2.12 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I trust that the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) will forgive me if I do not follow his remarks too closely; others wish to speak. Let me say, however, that I felt that a good speech was spoilt by his conclusions. The remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) put the matter into perspective. I think that it was a bit over the top to talk about a "savaging" policy. I am, however, grateful for his reference to the Isles of Scilly, which are in my constituency.

I fear that I have spent a good deal of my time in the House criticising my hon. Friend and his predecessor over their responsibility for fishing matters. I am delighted to be able to congratulate my hon. Friend on the announcement about the Isles of Scilly.

As one of your predecessors knows, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Lord Dean spends all his summer holidays there —the fabric of the islands is composed of small holdings. They are not farms in the accepted sense; they are minute holdings, but they make the landscape for the inhabited islands. In recent years, I—along with others—have been increasingly concerned about the future of some of those holdings. The structure of agriculture and horticulture on the islands has come under trememdous pressure from economic forces and several other factors. One of those factors was cold weather and violent storms some years ago, which destroyed the hedge pattern of the islands.

I was pleased to accompany my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) to the islands when he was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He announced the application of the scheme to the islands with particular reference to replacing some of the hedges. *[Interruption.]* I cannot hear what the hon. Member for Glandford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) is saying. That is probably just as well. I am sure that his comments are not helpful.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Suffolk, Coastal announced the scheme to give aid to the islanders to replace hedges and to improve and store bulbs. That has been a valuable scheme. I am sorry that, as a result of economic factors, there has not been the take-up for which some of us hoped. It is right, and greatly appreciated, that my hon. Friend the Minister has announced tonight that the scheme will be extended for another year while longer-term measures are considered. That will be welcomed by farmers on the Isles of Scilly and particularly by Mrs. Penny Rogers, the splendid secretary of the National Farmers Union branch. She is a grower, as are all her members of her family. She has worked extremely hard on behalf of all those involved in horticulture and agriculture on the islands. She has been in constant contact with me about the scheme and other measures that are needed.

My concluding remarks refer to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) said. He was right to say that responsible farmers do not expect to survive or depend on grants. That is perhaps the fundamental difference between Conservative Members and some Opposition Members on the point. There is a

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place for grants where encouragement is needed and where they are necessary to carry out certain preservation works. The Isles of Scilly certainly come into that category.

Isles of Scilly farmers are extremely independent. They do not expect to survive on grants. They have done an enormous amount to help themselves, particularly in marketing the daffodil crop. It always gives me enormous pleasure to see Sol d'Or daffodils being sold at Westminster tube station. A year ago, when Mrs. Rogers came to the House, she stopped at the tube station because the florist there was selling Sol d'Or daffodils from the Isles of Scilly. She looked at the box and they came from Lunnon, her farm on the Isles of Scilly.

The farmers have imagination. They have done a tremendous amount in marketing and promoting their products, particularly the daffodils. The scheme is a little further encouragement. For those reasons, I thank the Minister, on the farmers' behalf, for his announcement tonight.

2.18 am

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I had not intended to speak, but I wanted to ask the Minister a simple question. I was sorry that he did not give way. I shall be brief because I know that several hon. Members wish to speak.

The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) referred to hedgerows. We have lost 23 per cent. of our hedges in 12 years. I presented a hedgerows measure in 1982. The Government said that it was not required because the threat to hedgerows had ended. Between 1984 and 1990, almost a quarter of Britain's hedgerows disappeared. I urge the Minister to give favourable consideration to the Bill that I have presented in the past few days. It has been refined from the one that was blocked in 1989. It commands the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House, including some of the Minister's hon. Friends who have a distinguished record in conservation. I know that I could have had the support of more of his hon. Friends, if a larger number of supporters were allowed. The Minister will recall that we are trying to keep that measure non-partisan and I say that as a long-serving chairman of the Council of Europe sub-committee on the natural environment.

I would like Britain to maintain its leading position in the field. The Government's commitment in the manifesto on which Conservative Members were elected in 1992 means that they have an obligation to ensure that a hedgerows Bill is allowed to go through and that would make up for the decline in interest in hedgerows which may be a consequence of the order.

2.19 am

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a short contribution to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) made one of the most telling contributions when he asked the Minister about the position of those farmers who have already submitted plans to the Ministry and had them accepted. I was very interested and encouraged by the Minister's response that, if plans are accepted, they will receive grant at the higher rate. I note that the Minister is again agreeing to that.

I am especially pleased about that because, sadly, at the time that the farm and conservation grant scheme was introduced in 1989 there was some difficulty about the interpretation of the expression, "expenditure incurred", which appears in paragraph 2 of the statutory instrument.

One such case involves one of my constituents, Mr. Winston Richards, who was engaged in a project under the agricultural improvement scheme, which predated the farm and conservation grants scheme. The interpretation of "expenditure incurred" in his case has been particularly inflexible. I shall briefly quote to the Minister a letter that I received from the Secretary of State for Wales, which said that he accepted

"that the Welsh Office has to determine in any individual case how the term 'expenditure incurred' is to be applied. In doing so it must act in accordance with the guidelines which have been agreed between all Agriculture Departments and the Treasury".

If the interpretation has changed, I wonder how it will apply to constituents such as Mr. Richards, who incurred £15,000 of expenditure and—whether the grant is 25 per cent. or 50 per cent.—has not received a penny of assistance because of the inflexible interpretation of the rule.

I was very much encouraged by what the Minister said about developing the agri-environmental package. Environmentally sensitive areas are playing a more significant role in some of the most beautiful parts of the United Kingdom, such as my constituency. Two areas within it—the Cambrian mountains and the Radnor area—have been designated ESAs in recent times. However, the Brecon Beacons national park—an area of equal beauty—has within it many hedgerows, as the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will know, on which the skills of hedge laying have been kept alive.

Although other schemes assisted hedge laying and maintenance, I look forward with anticipation to the proposals that the Minister has said that he will present to the House in due course to ensure that we do not lose those skills and that farmers will be in a position to carry on their important work of looking after our beautiful countryside, in which they should be supported.

2.23 am

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I was struck by one comment made by the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), the Liberal Democrat spokesman on agriculture. He said that each area has its traditional landscape. I only wish that that were true in my area on the Lancashire plain. When I first knew it 20 or 25 years ago, it looked as most hon. Members would expect. Now it is a huge plain, which resembles Saskatchewan more than Lancashire.

So many years of destruction and dereliction of hedgerows will need a lot of fixing. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), who mentioned having created one mile of hedgerow, would have to work extremely hard to restore some of those in west Lancashire. They have been left as stunted stumps, which have all sorts of implications for country roads in the area. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans)—who has quite a large rural patch, believe it or not—watches as, in dry weather, thousands of tonnes of topsoil annually blow off his constituency and all over mine. Much as I like to receive things from his constituency, we could do without that. That is attributed by the farmers to the destruction and dereliction of hedgerows.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): When my hon. Friend refers to the situation on the south side of Lancashire, will he recognise that, in east Lancashire, the situation on the Pennines is very different in terms of the need for stone walls? The farmers in other parts of Lancashire will not be happy about what a Lancashire Minister said in opening the debate.

Mr. Pickthall: I welcome the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). He is quite right and the wind that blows in his part of the world is even more ferocious than it is in mine, although I maintain that, in a flat area like west Lancashire, any diminution of grants towards the maintenance and building of shelter belts and hedgerows is nothing short of disastrous.

I shall briefly mention the cuts in grant for the handling and storing of poultry manure in my region, where farmers have already expressed a great deal of concern to me about their problems in disposing of that manure. Especially they express concern in connection with the 15 per cent. set-aside, which presents them with extra diffficulties. When I brought the problem to the attention of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food officials, I was told that the solution was simply to burn it. That seems to me not only an absurd waste of energy in the process of the burning, but an absurd waste of energy in the material itself, which I suggest should be more imaginatively used. The types of grant that we are discussing could be useful in that respect.

I wish to comment on what the Minister said about the low take-up of greenhouse replacement grant. Most of that grant must have been taken up in my constituency, where there are vast areas containing thousands of derelict greenhouses, which are being restored piece by piece, with great difficulty in these times of recession. I very much resent any cut in that grant.

I welcome the provision of grants towards access to agricultural land for the maintenance of stiles, gates and so on, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). Such provision is important because popular paths especially sustain much damage from normal wear and tear. Footpath groups such as the Ramblers Association are, quite rightly, aggressive in keeping those paths open to walkers. That costs a good deal of money.

I hope that it will be possible for some of the grant to go towards the major footpath projects that we have in my part of the world. We have a lot of huge sluices in the peatland area, which sometimes can be as much as 20, even 30, ft across. Where the footbridges have fallen into disuse, it costs a vast sum of money to put them back in place. I know that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) will be reaching for her garlic, but Lancashire county council has shared with the Council for the Protection of Rural England the cost of building a bridge there that has cost tens of thousands of pounds. Farmers could not afford that, even with the type of grant assistance that we are discussing. That is the responsibility of local authorities and I hope that some of the money might find its way in their direction.

2.29 am

Mr. Morley: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to respond to some of the comments which have been made.

The hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) made a fair contribution, describing how farmers were trying to move away from grant support. Indeed, there should be a move away from set-aside schemes to environmental support schemes. That is precisely what the Opposition are arguing. The whole farm and conservation grant scheme is extremely small compared with the overall package of agricultural support and in such a small scheme, which has been viable and well supported, the cuts made are mean and petty.

The Opposition want a major shift in the structure of the agricultural support system. I know that farmers want to be more commercial and more independent, but for all sorts of reasons—whether social, environmental, economic or strategic—there will always be a need for some sections of the agricultural community to receive support. Assistance should be shifted away from subsidies for production towards support for environmental gain. Measures such as the grants scheme should therefore be expanded rather than cut.

I much appreciate what the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) said about the Isles of Scilly. I usually spend a week there each year, and last time I was there I had talks with the chief executive about local problems. I generally go to the Isles of Scilly during the week of the Conservative party conference, because there are few better places to be at that time, and I recognise the sensitive and fragile nature of their habitat. Incidentally, I believe that support for increased public access would be much appreciated by the tourists who go to Scilly.

I again emphasise the importance of a proper measure to protect hedgerows. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) may well have created one mile of hedgerow on his farm, but by wrecking the private Member's Bill on hedgerows he destroyed the chance to protect hundreds of miles of hedgerow. His constituents will judge him on that rather than on the one mile that he has created, and the electorate will judge the Government on their commitment, or lack of commitment, to conservation and the environment—a commitment that is sadly missing from the scheme.

2.31 am

Mr. Jack: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall try to reply to some of the points that have been raised in the debate.

First, I put on record my profound appreciation of the considerable interest shown in the measure by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but especially on the Government side. There has been an excellent turnout. Many of my hon. Friends have stayed throughout the debate, and I was especially pleased by the telling contributions by my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) chastised me for being the bearer of the news that rates of grant were to be diminished. He shows the typical Opposition approach to such matters, in that he is unable to take the wider view. We have heard during the debate about additional farming income from other sources. The Government have had to take a balanced view, because our task is to make the best use of scarce and limited resources. We reviewed the effectiveness of the scheme and, for the reasons that I explained in my opening speech, we concluded that we could afford to make some

[Mr. Jack]

sensible and modest reductions without inhibiting the take-up of money. As I have said, about 9,000 farmers have already taken advantage of the waste management grants. We have spent £149 million under the scheme, £119 million of which has gone towards waste handling projects.

One of the common themes of the debate has been the question whether we have put fundamentally at risk our commitment to the restoration of dry-stone walls, hedgerows, traditional farm buildings and various forms of banks and cover. I commend to the House an excellent book called "Conservation Grants for Farmers", a joint publication by my Department and the Department of the Environment, which lists a tremendous range of available schemes.

I can put on record the fact that, in additional to our expenditure, the Department of the Environment has a budget of some £105 million, which goes to the Countryside Commission, to national parks, to English Nature and to Groundwork, all of which have various schemes to deal with some of the important features of our countryside. The Government's commitment to working to restore those features is second to none, especially in the extension of the environmentally sensitive areas.

While considering the expenditure on those environmentally sensitive areas, the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe chose to ignore the fact that by the financial year 1996-97, £63 million will have been spent on that highly focused form of help to special types of countryside, of which hedgerow management and dry stone wall restoration are a part.

I visited Cumbria during the Christmas recess—I did not visit the constituency of the hon. Member for Workington—and went into an environmentally sensitive area. One of the farmers there said that the available money meant that there was no excuse for not maintaining the country craft of restoring dry-stone walls. Opposition Members' use of some rather cataclysmic and flowery language to describe the changes, when they are balanced by the introduction of many other schemes, must be for the consumption of local newspapers.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) referred to the wider environmental package. I remind him that, in addition to the environmentally sensitive areas and the continuity of the farm and conservation grant scheme, and the schemes which I mentioned under the Department of the Environment's responsibility, in 1994 we shall introduce the moorland scheme, the habitat scheme, nitrate sensitive areas, the countryside access scheme—which the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe mentioned—organic aid schemes, and so on. We are not reluctant to take seriously our responsibility for the countryside and the environment.

Opposition Members must have written their speeches on the financial impact of the changes before I had a chance to put on record that expenditure in the next financial year under the farm and conservation grant scheme in England will be £27 million—£2 million less than it is in the present financial year. By any standards, that is a substantial amount of money spent on such important matters.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe asked me a number of questions. He asked whether resources could be made available to separate in the schemes water from building roofs and run-offs resulting from the farm waste scheme. The answer is no. If the scheme had been extended to do that, we would have ended up cutting grant rates on the wider scheme. The hon. Gentleman asked whether access provision was paid for by money diverted from the agri-environment package. The short answer to that is no. It is in the envelope of the existing farm and conservation grant scheme.

The hon. Gentleman also suggested that there was no consultation between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment on the changes. The fact that I have pointed out a growing range of schemes administered by the Department of the Environment which dealt with many of the sensitive issues that he chose to raise shows carefully that, as expenditure in one area of Government rises, quite properly we re-examine expenditure in those same areas of our own budget.

Much criticism has been made of money that farmers are receiving under the arable area payments scheme and in other community receipts. It was this Government who fought for the reforms of the common agricultural policy and it was this Government who fought to control expenditure in that area. Farmers cannot ignore the fact that that income enables them, at a time when, properly, price support is being reduced and they are becoming more market sensitive, to play their part with or without grant schemes and to maintain the traditional fabric of the countryside which they have fashioned. The hon. Member for North Cornwall should not lose sight of that fact, because that is a farmer's responsibility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) made his speech from the Back Benches for the first time in six years. It was a special contribution, and I am glad that he made it. He reminded us of the importance of good management practice within the set-aside scheme. I assure him that there is growing awareness of that. My hon. Friend will be aware of the new requirements within the rotational and non-rotational set-aside, and I shall write to him and spell out in more detail some of the important measures. I welcomed my hon. Friend's recognition of the need to re-examine our spending priorities in light of the substantial income that farmers receive from various sources.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall mentioned the habitat scheme. That is part of the agri-environment package. the hon. Gentleman cannot walk away from the fact that we are committed to introducing it during 1994. I emphasised environmentally sensitive areas. They cover about 10 per cent. of the land area of England. That brings to bear in a very focused way schemes to deal with many of the points to which the hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention. I am certainly convinced, from my own involvement in inspection during the Christmas recess, that farmers in those areas are taking advantage of schemes.

Mr. Tyler *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I am sorry, but I shall not give way; I want to finish my speech in a moment.

Such schemes are contributing to the preservation of those important features of our landscape.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives for his generous comments on the Scilly Isles. It is right and proper that, when discussing big agriculture, we do not forget small, innovative farmers in places such as the Scilly Isles.

This has been an interesting debate. It clearly shows that, when farm incomes are rising, the Government were right to re-examine their priorities. I hope that I have demonstrated that we do not shirk our responsibilities in the environmental sense and that the schemes of my Department and of the Department of the Environment fulfil the objectives laid down by the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 153, Noes 38.

Division No. 79] **[2.41 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clelland, David
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Hardy, Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Pike, Peter L.
Rendel, David
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Colin Pickthall and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2901) dated 24th November 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

Sheltered Accommodation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway]*

2.52 am

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): First, may I say how pleased I am to be able to raise this issue in the House. My interest started as a result of a complaint from a group of constituents who were living in one of the types of property which I intend to describe.

When the group originally wrote to me, they also copied the letter and sent it to a now retired county councillor, Mr. Ken Maynard, who lives close to me. He had written an article for the magazine *Choice*. My subsequent research has so far identified 65 hon. Members with a constituency interest, and so far 93 colleagues have signed early-day motion 161. Before I go any further, I put on record my thanks to Ken Maynard, to Wendy James of *Choice* magazine and to my researcher, Keir Woods. They have done a tremendous amount of work to uncover the scandals which are going on up and down the country.

I refer in particular to owner-occupied sheltered accommodation where the freehold is owned by a third party. Such types of property expanded rapidly during the 1980s, and there are now more than 80,000 units of accommodation in 2,000 developments across the country. Managing agents are appointed by the freeholder—usually the builder of the complex—to provide a certain range of services, including that of a warden in return for a monthly services charge. The managing agents also deal with the appointment of firms to undertake building repairs and to deal with contractors.

That is well and good, except in the case of inefficient, uncaring and incompetent managing agents, who provide sub-standard care and who do not give access to audited accounts.

The examples that I have uncovered range across a wide spectrum. They include the sacking of a window cleaner so that a more expensive sister company of the managing agent could be brought in to do the job a lot worse. I found overcharging and hidden charges, including an exorbitant percentage of the service charge directed towards company administration. In some cases, that amounted to almost 30 per cent. A warden was paid £7,000 a year for just three mornings work a week.

I also found outrageous and unjustified service charge rises of as much as 60 per cent. over three years. They were in direct contravention of brochure promises, and massively in excess of most people's pension increases. Owners or relatives of the owners of properties were responsible for charges when properties were vacant. Despite that, leaseholders were prevented from subletting. In some cases, a 1 per cent. payment had to be made to the managing agents' solicitors just for surrendering the lease when a sale was made. There was lack of consultation with leaseholders before properties were passed from one group of managing agents to another.

There were also problems with a National House Building Council guarantee which ran from the date of the first occupancy in a development and not the last. That left the managing agents reluctant to challenge builders, as they do not hold possession of the lease until the last property is occupied. Transfer fees, a proportion of the sale price, were paid to the landlord on the sale of the lease. They do not benefit the occupier, but go directly to the landlord, for whom they are a useful source of regular income.

The principle of peppercorn rents has long been established in the leasehold sector. A minimal ground rent is charged to maintain freeholders' rights. That has long since vanished from the sheltered accommodation sector. In its place, freeholders often charge high ground rents to leaseholders who have paid capital sums for their properties but receive no benefits.

I want to give examples to show how widespread the scandal is. In Peterborough, a resident bought a property managed by Haven Management, a subsidiary of Anglia Secure Homes, because she felt that she might one day require a wheelchair, and she was allowed storage space in the property. She was subsequently told that she could not store her wheelchair in the property, because the battery might emit toxic fumes. Despite assuring the managers that the batteries were not of that type, the poor woman was left high and dry.

In another case involving Haven Management in Cromer, Anglia Secure Homes built the houses, and related firms received all the contracts to maintain the properties. Painting was carried out in bad weather. It peeled off quickly and had to be replaced. In that case, no regard was paid to safety considerations. Railings were left out of place for some weeks. Only when a shareholder who was also a resident threatened to tell a shareholders' meeting did the company relent and pay money that it owed to residents.

Hanover housing association in Droitwich appointed what was described as a poor-quality warden, who failed to repair important things like the timer switch on communal lighting facilities in corridors. In Millbrae gardens in Scotland, changes in prices between 1989 and 1992 were such that service costs rose 40 per cent.; warden costs rose by 50 per cent.; central alarm costs rose 31 per cent.; and administration costs rose by a staggering 100 per cent.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I have waited until this late hour to listen to the hon. Gentleman, because he is raising a very important subject. He is aware that some of my constituents have contacted him. I have received correspondence, and I am concerned about the figures that the hon. Gentleman has recounted. At a time of low inflation, when prices have been held down, service charges across a range of services provided to the elderly in sheltered accommodation appear to be inflationary and exorbitant.

The hon. Gentleman makes an important point when he says that there is often great difficulty in finding out how these sums have been charged. Elderly residents often have great difficulty in presenting their case, even when they act collectively, and sometimes even when some of the residents have a legal background. Increasingly, they write to MPs and others seeking assistance.

One of the most frightening aspects of the problem is the fact that these are elderly people who entered sheltered accommodation at a time in their lives when they were looking carefully at their income and what it would provide in their latter years. These huge, unexpected and regular increases cause enormous stress and anxiety at a time when people least expect it and least need it. I hope that the Minister will pay careful attention to the hon. Gentleman's account, because I know from the information that he has

received that this is not just a small, isolated incident. There are cases all around the country, including some in the west country, and we are all concerned about the trend.

Mr. Miller: The hon. Lady makes some important points, and I hope that the Minister was listening carefully. I shall seek to address some of them specifically later in my speech, when I pose some ideas to the Minister about how significant improvements can be made.

I was speaking about Millbrae gardens in Scotland. When residents withheld some money, Hanover went to court and was ordered to go to arbitration but refused. Its representative system in the properties is deeply flawed, because employees of the company sit on a committee which can only make decisions unanimously. That is crazy.

In Hampshire, the Humanist housing association has made increases of 40·6 per cent. and a management fee increase of 48 per cent. and has said:

"We do not speculate on their willingness to pay, they are bound to do so by the terms of their leases."

That association is a charity. Some charity! I uncovered an example in Halifax of service charge increases in excess of 36 per cent. in a year.

In Scotland, the situation is slightly different, but the House should congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who did a tremendous amount to uncover the practices of a company called McCarthy and Stone. That company recently sold its subsidiary, Perevel, which managed some 16,000 of its units, and has transferred the freeholds of its properties to Perevel. One wonders how much consultation preceded those moves.

These problems have arisen basically because there is inadequate regulation of managing agents and enforcement of the regulatons. It is widely assumed that all leaseholders are protected in law enshrining the rights of the tenant in protection from many of the problems that I have highlighted, especially rising prices, hidden charges, sub-standard service or lack of consultation and access to accounts.

Enforcement through the legal process is extremely complicated and time-consuming. For example, to replace a managing agent, preliminary notice must be served, the name and address of the tenant lodging the complaint, intent to go to court to have a manager appointed, and grounds under which the attempt will be made have to be stated, and an ultimatum must be sent to the landlord. If the landlord and freeholder do not take any positive action, the tenant must apply to the court for the appointment of a manager. The names and addresses of all those who are affected have to be listed, and, finally, the tenant has to recommend a manager to the court. Would the Minister want to follow such a procedure now, let alone when he is 75 years of age?

In other instances the process is similarly long and involved and, for a number of reasons, it is off-putting for the leaseholder.

Some of the people are frail and not really capable of going through all that trouble, and the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) touched on that. They moved into sheltered accommodation to avoid just such hassle. The process is extremely slow, particularly if the landlord or managing agent decides to contest the matter, and the pensioner may well die in the meantime.

Finally, there is the cost. The people concerned are not rich; they are often on fixed pensions, as the hon. Lady said. A gentleman from Tewkesbury was advised against taking legal action

"mainly because of the risk of very high costs".

Even the managing agents of sheltered housing, who are advantaged by such a complicated process, seem to appreciate its absurdity. Robert Smith, finance director of Haven said in *The Daily Telegraph* in October 1989:

"there are some historic cases where there are anomalies, and it would be better if people could go to a totally impartial ombudsman to resolve these disputes by arbitration. It seems crazy that people should have to go to court which is expensive, stressful and demoralising".

That was true in 1989; it is much more true today.

The present position is described in a letter from a Minister in a letter to Mr. Maynard on 27 April 1993 saying something to the effect that the ombudsman service for housing association tenants is available to owner-occupiers where the tenants are a registered housing association. However, that does not take into account those leaseholders whose managing agents are not a registered housing association—a large proportion of the cases to which I refer.

The ombudsman is not a statutory appointment by the Minister and does not have the power to enforce his conclusions unless he is hired as an arbiter to settle a dispute, for which a fee is required. He reports to the Housing Corporation, which uses its statutory powers if action needs to be taken.

The remit of the ombudsman is unclear. He is unable to rule on the justness of a service charge, and thus is useless to a large number of owner-occupiers who have legitimate grievances. It appears that he will be an irrelevance to the majority of complainants.

The limitation of the ombudsman must also be noted. He can act only on the reference being made, and that presupposes all the points that I mentioned earlier coming to a head and being agreed on by the tenants of a particular property in an organised group.

Recent legislation states that, if 66 per cent. of leaseholders in a sheltered development decide to buy out their freehold, they are at liberty to do so. They can choose their own managing agents. However, why should leaseholders, who have already paid substantial sums of money to purchase the leasehold, be asked to pay further sums of money just to get legal protection? Again, the process is extremely complicated and the organisation involved extremely onerous, particularly to the elderly.

The landlord is entitled to expect the investment value of the block and half the marriage value, and compensation for loss of any development rights. In addition, the new freeholders take on joint responsibility for the management of the flats, even though they may employ an outside managing agent and they are all responsible to shareholders. Those are not exactly the issues that people want to take on at that time of life.

Despite the complications and the expense, some groups have sought to purchase of the freehold and it is not as simple as it might seem, even to a host of lawyers. There was an example in Hayling Island in Hampshire, where it was reported that obstructive tactics from a freeholder's solicitors were used in order to circumvent the leaseholders' right to the first refusal on the freehold. Such tactics are deplorable and must be stopped.

What is needed? FRASH—the Federation of Residents Associations in Sheltered Accommodation—presented the

[Mr. Miller]

other place with some recommendations before 6 April last year, hoping that amendments would be made to the Housing and Urban Development Bill, which became the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993. FRASH sought, first, regular and public review of service charges rises; secondly, independent opinion on what is a reasonable charge—incidentally, Age Concern has suggested between £6 and £12 a week—thirdly, random independent audits to ensure discipline; fourthly, an agency to monitor the application of the codes approved by the Secretary of State and envisaged in the Bill but not with the force of law; and finally, the availability of an arbiter or an ombudsman to settle disputes.

There is also an urgent requirement for some direct accountability. Currently, managing agents are responsible to the wrong people—to the freeholders who appoint them rather than to the leaseholders to whom they have a duty of care. Some amendments in that respect may go a long way towards solving the problem.

David Bogle, the housing manager of the Guardian housing association, was reported in *The Sunday Times* of 12 April 1992 as worried that leaseholders who purchase their freehold and select their own managing agents

"could fall prey to irresponsible management companies offering low tenders".

That sounds suspiciously like a justification for management companies imposing high charges.

Although it is a pretence to claim that increased accountability will automatically lead to irresponsibility, the deficiency in the Government's approach thus far is clear. Even if the right to buy the freehold worked effectively and was attractive to residents, without some regulatory system residents would still be open to the type of abuse to which I have referred.

Beyond the expansion of the role of the ombudsman, the problem requires a two-pronged assault. The regulations in place need to be backed by more stringent monitoring to ensure that they work in line with FRASH's recommendations and, if leaseholders were given the right to choose their managing agents, a good proportion of agents would improve their services voluntarily or risk losing business. Managing agents would clearly have to have statutory duties towards the freeholder, but pressure would be taken off the leaseholder, as he would no longer have to go through complicated legal processes to ensure accountability. I recommend that the Minister considers that novel approach in great detail.

Finally, may I thank the Minister for replying to the series of parliamentary questions that I tabled in November? I can provide him with yet further enormous amounts of detailed documentation on cases across the country but, now that the Minister is aware of the problem, I hope that he and his Department will have the good grace to acknowledge how widespread it is and agree that it justifies a fresh look. I am sure that all parties would welcome moves to improve the lot of the elderly in the situation that I have described.

3.13 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I have listened with great care to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) and also took note of the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning). I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern about the management of sheltered housing and agree that elderly leaseholders, like all owner-occupiers, should of course have the greatest possible control over the way in which their properties are managed. That is why all leaseholders do, in fact, have statutory protection, do have rights under the terms of their lease and do have opportunities to take control when they wish to do so. Indeed, control was one of the most important principles behind recent housing legislation, especially with regard to leaseholders.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested that the attractiveness of the sheltered housing option is being eroded because leaseholders do not have sufficient protection, and that there should be further protection to ensure that managing agents are accountable.

The lease protects the leaseholder, because it forms a contract with the landlord. Anyone entering into a lease needs to take legal advice before signing any agreement. A lease is a series of mutually reinforcing covenants, rights and remedies that need to be understood. Any lawyer specialising in property law will be able to examine a lease and advise the prospective leaseholder of its terms and protection. It is to everyone's advantage if disputes do not lead to the courts and to all the expense and distress that can cause. I therefore welcome the services of the Sheltered Housing Advisory and Conciliation Service.

The hon. Gentleman said that one managing agent's actions had directly contravened a brochure promise. If I were the lawyer representing the leaseholder in question, my first instinct would be to ascertain the terms of the lease. In the case where the managing agent would not allow a wheelchair to be stored, as a lawyer I find it difficult to imagine what restrictive covenant the landlord could possibly have inserted in the lease to prevent that leaseholder from doing as he wished.

Both parties are entitled to expect the terms of their contract to be honoured—and if they are not, remedies are available. If a landlord fails to perform his obligations under the lease, the leaseholder may take him to court.

I am aware of concern that some leases are unsatisfactory, and Parliament has given all leaseholders statutory protection under the Landlord and Tenant Acts 1985 and 1987, strengthened by the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993. That legislation strengthened the courts' powers in cases of proven bad management, gave leaseholders the right to a management, gave leaseholders the right to a management audit and, most importantly, allowed long leaseholders the right to buy their freeholds or to extend their leases.

I shall describe the most important protection given by those Acts. For management problems alone, there are a formidable range of rights. Leaseholders have a right to information that will enable them to identify their landlord and an address in England or Wales to serve notices. They have the right to find out about the insurance of their block or complex and can challenge it in court. Also, a recognised tenants association has the right to be consulted about the appointment or employment of a managing agent.

If the management of a block proves totally unsatisfactory, leaseholders have the sanction of asking the court to appoint a manager to allow compulsory acquisition.

Under a new right that only came into force on 1 November 1993, leaseholders may require a full

management audit of their landlord's service charges or other management accounts, which will provide evidence where there has been bad management. Such evidence may be used in court.

The hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend gave examples in which the levelof service charges was of concern. Under legislation, leaseholders have the right to ask how charges are made up and to inspect documents. They have full statutory protection to challenge unreasonable charges, and a stututory right to be consulted about major works.

Qualifying long leaseholders have the ultimate sanction, where they wish to obtain control of enfranchising under the 1993 Act without the need to prove bad management. That right is open to elderly leaseholders where they are qualifying tenants—although I appreciate that in many cases, enfranchisement would not be the right course for elderly leaseholders.

I acknowledge that the choice of sheltered housing may not have been totally satisfactory for everyone. In many cases, dissatisfaction is genuine and needs resolving. In others, it has been brought about by a failure of communication between managers and tenants.

In cases in which dissatisfaction is genuine, as I have said, we have recently introduced an important power that offers protection for all leaseholders. The 1993 Act gives the Secretary of State power to approve codes of practice relating to the management of residential property. Such codes are likely to be drafted with the consensus of best practice from across a wide range of interested bodies, to ensure that they command general respect. They will be useful in directing the managers of residential property, and helping tenants where management is not satisfactory.

Mr. Miller: Will the Minister assure me that he will consult the organisations that represent such residents before publishing codes of practice?

Mr. Baldry: Yes, indeed: when we are drawing up codes of practice, it is our usual practice to consult bodies that will have an interest in them, wherever possible. Where there are recognised special interest groups or consumer groups, it will be the general practice of the Department to consult those organisations. I am convinced that the codes of practice can play a vital role in improving standards of management of residential property.

The hon. Gentleman called for the introduction of an ombudsman service to register and regulate landlords or managing agents in the private sheltered housing sector, similar to the service set up by the Housing Corporation for tenants of registered housing associations. I am not sure how that arrangement would work. Unless the parties are prepared to agree some other jurisdiction, only the courts can settle private disputes and impose sanctions; an ombudsman, therefore, would be of benefit only if both parties agreed to conciliation.

The hon. Gentleman gave the example of a managing agent who said he felt that a matter should go to independent arbitration. It is always possible, of course, for a matter to go to independent arbitration—or any other form of arbitration—if both sides agree; the difficulty in such cases is the fact that landlord and leaseholders cannot agree, cannot arbitrate and cannot concur that legal agreements have been broken. The only answer is legislation to replace the jurisdiction of the courts with that of an ombudsman—but I see no scope for an ombudsman, beyond the role of a voluntary conciliator.

Other roles for ombudsmen—including that of the parliamentary commissioner—specifically exclude the power to investigate if there is access to the courts to seek relief. In addition, the ombudsman is concerned with maladministration, rather than the level of service charges. A conciliation service is already available to leaseholders in sheltered accommodation, sponsored by Age Concern.

I consider that elderly leaseholders—along with all other leaseholders—have considerable rights, remedies and protection under existing legislation. I shall, of course, take careful note of the points made by the hon. Gentleman, in case there is a lacuna in the protection offered; but I believe that the new legislation provides considerable protection. I shall, of course, take a close interest in that legislation——

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-two minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 19 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

1. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about local government finance since July.

8. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about local government finance since July.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): We have received many representations on various aspects of local government finance since July. These have included representations from 150 authorities about the provisional local government finance settlement.

Ms Eagle: Is the Minister aware that my authority, the Wirral, is expected to make £12·5 million-worth of cuts in its expenditure this year, which is in addition to the cuts of £53 million that have been demanded of it over the past four years? Is it credible for the Minister to maintain that cuts of that magnitude demanded by the Government do not mean that there will be cuts to front-line services when that is clearly not the case? Our services in local government are being decimated.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Lady has got it wrong. The only possible meaning of a cut is that the budget that her local authority will set for 1994-95 is less than that set for 1993-94. That is not true. Wirral local authority will be able to increase its budget by 1·25 per cent. What it will have to do is cut the budget that it would like to have had. It will have cut its wish budget, which is entirely different from its actual budget. Wirral is not an authority which has to cut its budget in real terms. Only seven authorities are in that category.

Mr. Litherland: Did any of the representations query how vast amounts of public money could be found for prestigious projects, such as the Manchester Olympic bid, which bring kudos and publicity to the Government when, at the same time, vicious cuts for local authorities mean the closing of school playgrounds, swimming baths, pets corners and other leisure amenities? Does not the Minister think that there is a stench of hypocrisy?

Mr. Curry: I do not recall that. However, I recall that a report commissioned by Birmingham council stated that Birmingham had indulged in some prestige buildings when it should have spent its money on education. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman might think about that one.

Mr. Pickles: Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 375, which refers to local government finance? Does he agree that all hon. Members must lead by example? Does he believe that Opposition Members who preach about local government finance are handicapped by the behaviour of the councils of the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy? Does my hon. Friend look forward with me to the days when good local government returns to Derbyshire county council and to Monklandsgate?

Mr. Curry: The lesson is that Opposition Members should be careful before they start hurling accusations about councils. There has been a pattern of accusations against authorities. There have been local authorities in respect of which the auditor is not yet satisfied with the accounts, and those include a large number of Labour councils. People should cast the motes out of their own eyes before they level accusations elsewhere. We have a common interest in making sure that local government acts with probity. The sooner we recognise that common interest, the better it will be for everybody.

Mr. Bates: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways to improve local government finance is to have unitary authorities? Will he accept the thanks of my constituents for the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday to abolish Cleveland county council? Will he join me in condemning the decision by Cleveland county council to challenge that decision in the court, at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds to council tax payers, in a vain attempt to save its own neck?

Mr. Curry: If Cleveland thinks that it should spend its charge payers' money by going to court, that is a decision for Cleveland. We implemented the proposals and the provisional and final recommendations of the Boundary Commission. The district councils made strong, articulate representations about how they would carry forward the business of that region, and they were extremely convincing. That is why we implemented the proposals. We will judge every case on its merits according to entirely objective criteria based on the needs of the local electorate and charge payers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I, as the original objector to the sale of the Westminster cemeteries, which led to Mr. Magill's first report, and one of the objectors to designated sales, ask the Minister what action is being taken to ensure that Westminster council no longer wastes ratepayers' money? Do the Government have power to send in a commissioner to make sure that our interests as ratepayers are protected by those Conservative councillors?

Mr. Curry: If we had, we would have done so in respect of Lambeth a long time ago.

Mr. Congdon: Does my hon. Friend agree that those who criticise some local authorities would do better to direct their concern at authorities that waste money, overspend disgracefully, do not collect council house rents, leave houses empty and do not collect their council tax, and that most of those authorities are Labour controlled?

Mr. Curry: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: Let me refer the Minister to his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) about real cuts. Is he embarrassed by the comments of the previous Secretary of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), in May 1993, when he wrote to the Treasury saying that, in the financial year 1994-95, a 5·2 per cent. increase in total standard spending was necessary to protect——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is paraphrasing and not quoting.

Mr. Henderson: Indeed, I am, Madam Speaker, and I am about to paraphrase even more in my final paragraph.

Comparing that figure with the 2·3 per cent. increase in total standard spending which is allowed in this year's Budget, will the Minister admit that he has surrendered to the Treasury or say that he needs a "back to basics" course in arithmetic?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is clearly in fine form. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It took a long time to get that one from Opposition Back-Bench Members, I have to say.

The settlement that we have put forward is fair and reasonable and, in the economic circumstances, one with which local government can cope if it is sensible. That is the reflection of independent commentators such as Mr. Tony Travers on the matter, and that is a perfectly reasonable position.

Regional Offices

2. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when a single regional office for all Government Departments in London will be established.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The new regional office for London will come into being in April.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new regional offices will be widely welcomed as bringing decisions closer to the community, not only in London but elsewhere, and will be particularly welcomed in Lancashire, where they will provide better liaison with the new unitary authorities, which we hope will come about sooner rather than later so that we can get rid of that high-spending county council as quickly as possible?

Mr. Gummer: Bringing together the various offices of government in London and elsewhere will enable decisions to be made in a much more holistic way, rather than individual decisions being on made matters that should be considered together. Advice will, therefore, come in that unitary manner. It will be for the commission to make its proposals for Lancashire, but I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will have views that he will want to make clearly.

Mr. Vaz: Although the House will welcome better co-ordination between Government Departments—for many years, the Labour party has put forward that policy and it has now been accepted by the Government—does the Secretary of State realise that his plans are fatally flawed in two respects? First, not one extra penny of resources will be allocated to London to deal with the problems that Londoners face and to enable our capital city to compete with the best cities in the world. Secondly, his plans do not go one step towards creating what the people of London really want—a properly elected and democratically accountable government for London. Why are the right hon. Gentleman and the Government so afraid of democracy?

Mr. Gummer: First, I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has forgotten the curmudgeonly way in which his more senior colleague welcomed the change when it was introduced. Indeed, he did as much as he could to attack it as being unsatisfactory. I see that Labour Members have already changed their minds about whether we are right.

Secondly, I was surprised that, on that occasion, I was accused of hiding cuts in London's budgets in that I was not going to deliver the amount of money which was proposed. In fact, I have delivered every penny of it, so Labour Members were entirely wrong in that slur.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman says that we are not spending the money in comparison with other countries. Interestingly, in a recent survey, French voters in Paris nominated London as one of the finest cities in Europe providing services better than those provided in Paris—the city in which they live.

The fourth point that the hon. Gentleman dares to raise is the suggestion that anyone in his right mind would want the Greater London council back again. If we ask people in London—even those who believe in a Greater London council—what they want, none of them put this at the top of the list; they want a lot of more sensible things first. There will always be some people who forget that billions more pounds would have been wasted if we had continued to have the GLC, whose stewardship of London, especially London transport, was a disgrace that none of us will forget.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Following my right hon. Friend's robust and welcome remarks, will he assure my constituents that under no circumstances will there be a repeat of the Greater London council or anything like it under this or any other Conservative Government? We cannot afford it.

Mr. Gummer: The Government will continue to deal with the real problems in London and leave it to Labour Members to hide the absence of a policy with a continuous nostalgia for one of the worst systems of local government that we have seen.

Local Government Finance

3. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what views he has received from the Audit Commission on his provisional proposals for distribution of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Curry: None.

Mr. Ainsworth: Is the Minister aware that in the document "Passing the Bucks", the Audit Commission says that many of the decisions taken on grant distribution are political and there is no adequate explanation for the criteria used? When will we end the year-on-year manipulation of the grant system? In April, people up and down the country will face cuts in their budgets and increases in their taxes. In Coventry, the average will be £57, with £3 million in cuts. When will we have fair taxes at the local level?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is saying that the whole system of distribution—the standing spending assessment system—is rigged politically. The Select Committee on the Environment will report on that, and I will bet the hon. Gentleman that there will be no reference whatever to the rigging of the system. What is more, the Audit Commission does not say that.

It is perfectly legitimate to have a political argument about how much money is available for local authorities, but we shall not have a political argument about the mechanisms of distribution because we do our best to ensure that they are fair, dispassionate, objective and up to date. All the councils that have come to see me—58 councils have been through our doors in the past few weeks —have accepted that.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am delighted that there have been no representations to my hon. Friend. The city council in my area is delighted with its standard spending assessment, although, of course, the county council is not pleased and is grousing fit to burst. Does my hon. Friend accept that we who run our affairs properly are delighted?

Mr. Curry: I am grateful to have had the opportunity to give my hon. Friend such pleasure.

Ecolabelling

4. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about how many products now have ecolabelling in the United Kingdom.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): On Thursday 25 November the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board awarded the first European Community ecolabels to Hoover Ltd. for three washing machines in its New Wave range. Environmental criteria have also been adopted for dishwashers.

Mr. Bennett: I welcome the Minister to his new post, but he takes over a pretty sorry tale as far as ecolabelling is concerned. It is clear that about one third of shoppers would be happy to purchase products that were environmentally friendly, but they have become increasingly disillusioned by false claims. It is almost four years since the Government promised that they would have a proper system in place. Is not it appallingly slow progress to have virtually one award every year for four years? Can the Minister tell us how many more awards there will be in the next 12 months?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. I think that it is right and proper for me to place on record my appreciation of, and thanks to, my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), for the sterling work that he did for environmental and rural interests. He can be proud of his ministerial achievements.

The hon. Gentleman has raised the matter of ecolabelling on numerous occasions, and he is right to do so. We are in the forefront of those pressing for a Community-wide system as a result of pressure from my predecessors, and indeed the pressure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will continue to bring to bear. The hon. Gentleman cannot expect us to operate a separate system, which would be clearly counter-productive in the context of the EC.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I welcome my hon. Friend to his post. In his time as a Northern Ireland Minister, my hon. Friend had experience of being grilled by the Select Committee on the Environment, and I can promise him just as much in his new post.

Does my hon. Friend agree that making sure that false environmental claims are not made about products is equally as important as ecolabelling? Will he therefore ensure that talks with the DTI deliver a reform of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 in that regard as soon as possible?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend makes an entirely fair point, and I am grateful to him for his kind wishes. We are in conversation with the DTI, and I know from my own experience how important it is that the information that is provided on any product fits in with the Trade Descriptions Act. I know that the DTI is fully aware of our concern and of the concern of the consumer.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will animal testing now be definitely included in the ecolabelling process? The Government had apparently said that they were willing for animal testing to be included, but that has not been formally confirmed. Will there be across-the-board acceptable criteria and standards? When will the Minister conclude his discussions with the voluntary sector so that a general agreement can be made?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. I know that the Commission is considering the matter and, as he will understand, I am not yet in a position to make a detailed judgment or statement on where the Commission stands. Certainly the Commission is interested in that, and the ecolabelling board in the United Kingdom is also aware of the concern. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that there is more of an ethical argument than an environmental argument over animal testing, and that is a part of the problem that we have to consider. I shall give the matter my urgent attention.

Sir Roger Moate: Is it not more important to get ecolabelling right than to be rushed into premature judgments? Will my hon. Friend take particularly seriously the representations of the paper industry to ensure that any system of ecolabelling does not work to the disadvantage of British producers of what is an environmentally friendly and eminently recyclable product?

Mr. Atkins: What my hon. Friend says is right. It is essential that we have a standard that is applicable throughout the European Union. In those circumstances, it is better to take time and get it right, recognising that there is legitimate pressure from the consumer and from Conservative and Opposition Members that we should do so as quickly as possible.

Subsidiarity

5. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce the principle of subsidiarity to relations between central Government and local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have made clear my commitment to the principle of subsidiarity and the delegation of responsibility not only from central Government to local

authorities but from local authorities to the lowest possible level, consistent with efficiency, including locally managed and grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Wareing: Alone among European Community members, Britain has a highly centralised government machine in which local self-government has been almost completely destroyed. I hope that the Minister will take on board the feelings of many people in Britain that it is time that local self-government was restored. People are fed up with the creation of quangos staffed by a Tory nomenklatura that will have to be swept away by the next Labour Government. I hope that when he talks about subsidiarity in the sweet terms that he does——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have not yet heard the hon. Gentleman ask a question. Is there one coming into view?

Mr. Wareing: You will remembers, Madam Speaker, that I asked the Minister when he would restore local self-government—or is subsidiarity to be conceded only to Wandsworth and Westminster?

Mr. Gummer: I remind the hon. Gentleman that as Minister for Local Government and now as Secretary of State for the Environment, I pioneered, and fought for, the extension of local government powers by passing community care to local government rather than to any other system. That major extension of local government powers will be completed.

I am interested to see that subsidiarity stops where the hon. Gentleman is. When he talks about subsidiarity, he means that is should stop at the local authority. Why is not the hon. Gentleman fighting for more grant-maintained schools in Liverpool, so that schools can run themselves, instead of insisting that the local authority bosses them about?

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that local authorities are able to spend more than three quarters of all the money that they have, without any specific grants? Will he further confirm that the Government will continue the policy of caring capping, which means that we shall not allow local authorities to spend and waste money and we shall continue to protect ratepayers with capping?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend underlines that the reason why we have capping is that some local authorities, including the Liverpool authority that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) supported, behaved in the most disgraceful manner and found it impossible to manage their finances properly. Therefore, I should like to see more and more freedom for the local authorities that are prepared to be responsible in the use of their money. That is why I fought for, and will continue to fight for, the extension of local authority powers, particularly in the caring services through community care.

Mr. Straw: On the issue of subsidiarity between one authority—Westminster—and central Government, and as Dame Shirley Porter said on the radio that she could not remember whether she had consulted the Government about Westminster's housing and poll tax policies, will the Secretary of State confirm that at the material time, Ministers were, indeed, working in league with Westminster and Wandsworth councils in their gerrymandering efforts and were gerrymandering grant to those local authorities just at the time when the authorities were gerrymandering for votes?

The Minister of State said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) that the grant arrangements were objective and dispassionate. Will the Secretary of State say whether the decision to give Wandsworth £33 million of the £390 million available in council tax reduction schemes comes within that category? If it does, how can it be that one authority representing about half of one per cent. of the country's population ended up with 8 per cent. of the grant—16 times its entitlement?

Mr. Gummer: Because Wandsworth has the largest cut in grant and, therefore, attracts a larger amount of the damping system which covers all London boroughs and especially benefits Labour London boroughs. It is rare that I have to say this and I shall say it directly to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* He may find it amusing to accuse people of organising a system that cannot be run in that way. His local authority associations were fully consulted on the laying down of the SSA system and they know that it is entirely objective. They asked for the damping system that he attacks. He knows that to be absolutely true and he is a disgrace to his party.

Rough Sleepers

6. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made with helping people sleeping rough in central London.

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): The Government have spent £96 million since 1990 to provide almost 3,500 places in temporary and permanent accommodation and to help people sleeping rough in central London. Independent research shows that our rough sleepers initiative has housed several thousand people with a history of sleeping rough. We have provided a further £86 million to continue the initiative until March 1996. A count by voluntary sector agencies last November found 287 people sleeping rough in central London, compared with estimates of more than 1,000 before the initiative began.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my right hon. Friend for that extremely welcome news, but does he agree that it is disappointing that the Labour party persists in putting forward their own campaign—*[Interruption.]*—persists in making cheap political capital at the expense of the small number of unfortunate people still sleeping on the streets? How many extra beds were made available during the recent spell of cold weather and what percentage was taken up?

Sir George Young: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the many voluntary organisations—especially Church-based organisations—that have done first-class work in achieving the reduction in numbers to which she rightly referred. It is encouraging that, according to the last count undertaken by voluntary associations in November, only three people under the age of 18 were sleeping rough. During the cold spell at the end of November, which was one of the coldest in London, extra emergency beds were opened—I think 150—and the maximum number taken up on any one night was 55.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why are there so many more people sleeping on the streets of London than in any other European city? Does not the Minister feel any shame about the fact that, in this year of 1994, so many thousands of our young people are sleeping on the streets of London?

Sir George Young: I do not know which European cities the hon. Gentleman visits.

Mr. Tony Banks: I said all of them.

Sir George Young: I do not know which cities the hon. Gentleman visits, but I made it absolutely clear that the regular counts by voluntary organisations—not by the Government—show a reduction from 1,000 three years ago to 287 in November, of which only three were under 18. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that progress has been made and that he will encourage voluntary organisations to drive forward the programme. I also hope that, from time to time, he will accept that the Government do good work on housing.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there are empty hostel beds in London today and that there are thousands of empty council houses in Newham, Islington, Lambeth and other Labour-controlled boroughs? Is it not sheer hypocrisy for the Labour party to complain that there are people sleeping rough when Labour councils are the most inefficient housing authorities in London?

Sir George Young: Indeed, I hope that hon. Members who visit European cities will also find the time to visit some of the authorities in London that have large numbers of empty local authority homes. If one goes past an empty council house in London, the chances are that it is owned by a Labour local authority.

Mr. Battle: I recognise that there is some temporary assistance for the homeless in London, but, instead of scapegoating single mothers in his homeless review, making the victims pay the price for his failed housing policies and redefining away the homeless, as the Government have the unemployed, why does not the Minister tackle the causes of the housing and homelessness crisis? There are 1 million people with negative equity, 500,000 people with mortgage arrears, 1·5 million on local authority waiting lists, 150,000 statutorily homeless people and 63,000 people in temporary accommodation. Will not he accept the acute and absolute shortage of homes to rent and acknowledge that Labour authorities have the most effective housing record—*[Interruption.]* Of the 25 housing authorities named by the Minister in December, 11 were Labour, four were Tory and one of those named was Westminster. The truth is that Conservative Governments and Conservative councils keep houses empty. Is not it because Labour housing authorities are better that the Minister will not allow Labour local authorities the right to build the much-needed homes to rent?

Sir George Young: I was grateful for the first half-sentence of the hon. Gentleman's remarks when he made a rather grudging recognition that some achievements have been made. When he sees the Government's consultation document on access to social housing tomorrow, he will see that no one is being scapegoated. He should also recognise that in each of the past six quarters, the number of people who are accepted as homeless has fallen and he should recognise that there has been a reduction of 41 per cent. in the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation. The hon. Gentleman should also recognise that of the top 10 local authorities in London that have empty properties, nine are Labour controlled.

Mr. Tracey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there has been a massive reduction in the numbers of rough sleepers in London since the Government began their initiative and that reports of anything different are grossly overstated, exaggerated and untrue? Will he also agree that there is one particular case in which there is a real problem —the bullring—and will he concentrate his attention on that, so that the propagandising by the Opposition, which is totally untrue, can stop?

Sir George Young: About three years ago, everybody who was sleeping rough in the bullring was offered alternative accommodation and it was closed. The Government asked Lambeth council to leave it closed, but the council decided to reopen it and the problem has recurred. Discussions are taking place with the property owners to see whether we can get a more acceptable alternative to the present design of the bullring, and a key part of any redesigning or rebuilding will be offers of suitable accommodation to those who are sleeping rough.

Minerals Planning Guidance

7. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce new minerals planning guidance on opencast extraction.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): We published revised planning guidelines for public consultation on 14 December. The guidelines deal with both deep mine and opencast coal and with the disposal of colliery spoil.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank the Secretary of State for his decision in the Birch Copice case, when he refused the application for opencast mining and overruled the public inquiry. May I remind the Minister that 20,000 homes in my constituency are still threatened by the prospect of opencast? Many of the people who live there are former miners and face not only the loss of their jobs but the potential destruction of their environment. Is not it time that he gave local people a veto and a right to say no to opencast despoiling their environment?

Mr. Baldry: In those circumstances, I think that the hon. Gentleman's constituents will welcome the new guidelines, which have gone out to consultation, because they mark a distinct shift. They have withdrawn the strong presumption in favour of opencast coal development that existed previously and have replaced it with a test of environmental acceptability.

Mr. Wells: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the new guidelines on mineral extraction and ask when he will introduce in the House the orders necessary to put those guidelines into practice?

Mr. Baldry: They are out for consultation, which closes at the end of March. Given their acceptance and welcome in the House, I hope that hon. Members will make that clear as part of the consultation process.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Minister must, however, agree that what he wrote into the new draft planning guidelines

on opencast mining in December is a presumption not against opencasting, but in favour of it. The guidelines state:

"It would be against the national interest to refuse permission",

and only then go on to apply an environmental test. Does not the Minister realise that opencast mining despoils the countryside, damages the local environment and helps to destroy our national deep mine coal industry? Should not there be a strong presumption—far stronger than he has put in this document—against new opencast mining, rather than the green light that the Government seem intent on giving?

Mr. Baldry: Any reasonable person who reads the guidelines will see that they make it clear that where the impact of opencasting would have particularly adverse effects on the environment and the quality of life for local people, permission should not be given unless the development would produce overriding benefits. The guidelines strike a balance between the economic importance of opencast coal and the protection of the environment. It is worth the House recalling that when the socialist Government nationalised the coal industry they did not have any planning regime whatever for opencast mining.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

9. **Mr. Coe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the extension of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: My Department is currently consulting local authorities and other interested parties on detailed proposals for extending CCT to local authority security work, vehicle management, management of on-street parking and legal services. We will begin consulting on other white collar services in the course of this year. I anticipate that legislation will take effect in a phased programme beginning in April 1995.

Mr. Coe: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's response. He spoke of the solid benefits of compulsory competitive tendering. Is he also aware of the hidden benefits to a local authority department that chooses to bid for a service: perhaps for the first time it has to look afresh and self-critically at the costs and true resources of that department, to the benefit not only of the smooth running of the department but of the charge payer?

Mr. Baldry: Yes, competitive tendering has brought substantial benefits. Independent research has shown that it has reduced costs on average by 7 per cent. and on some services by up to 20 per cent. Those savings have been made to the benefit of local taxpayers and can be applied to other services in the local authority area. In addition, competitive tendering has improved contract specification, standards have risen, staff morale has improved and scrutiny has improved. All those have been brought about by competitive tendering.

Mr. Denham: Is the Minister aware of the great contribution to the quality of the built environment made by local authority architects' departments? Last week, for example, I attended a meeting with the Royal Institute of British Architects in Hampshire to celebrate a Hampshire school winning the national RIBA award for public design and on Friday I attended the opening of the Tauntons college in Southampton, the design of which was completed by local authority architects.

Is not the Minister aware that the extension of CCT threatens to undermine the enormous contribution that local authority architects have made to the quality of the built environment and that many of our cities, towns and villages will be despoiled by cheap off-the-shelf design in place of the high-quality public architecture that we have enjoyed in recent years?

Mr. Baldry: Even by the Labour party's terms, I can see no possible ideological reason why architecture has to be designed in-house. A few of us could think without too much difficulty of some fairly horrific examples of 1960s and 1970s buildings by municipal architects.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my hon. Friend, in his customary big-hearted way, extend warm congratulations to Geoff Lennox, who was a committee chairman and later a senior officer at Derbyshire county council and dedicated his career firmly to fighting against contracting out local services——

Mr. Skinner: He was never any good.

Mr. Oppenheim: He was a big buddy of yours.

Mr. Skinner: He was not.

Mr. Oppenheim: —but who recently took a job on a large salary with a private sector company dedicated to selling contracted-out services to local government institutions? Does this show that at least parts of the Labour party are making progress, or is it just the usual mixture of hypocrisy and opportunism?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A number of people in the Labour movement are seeing the light. My hon. Friend mentioned one; let me mention another. At a recent meeting of the Association of Direct Labour Organisations, Jack Dromey, the national secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, warned that there could be no return to the 1970s, when, he acknowledged, the interests of producers had dominated those of customers. He said:

"The managers, councillors and unions made arrangements which suited them, not the community as a whole. I can't put forward any ideological reasons why refuse collection has to be done in-house."

As usual, the parliamentary Labour party is somewhat behind the rest of the Labour movement.

Mr. Pike: Will not the Minister halt the extension of CCT to housing management, recognising the failure last week in Tory-controlled Wandsworth to introduce and privatise the management of some 8,000 houses in Putney and Battersea? Does he not recognise that that failed and abortive exercise has cost the tenants and residents there some £750,000 in trying to meet Tory policy?

Mr. Baldry: There is absolutely no reason why competitive tendering should not also extend to housing management. As to the hon. Gentleman's point about privatising, most of it is extending to council tenants a considerable choice, to which the Labour party seems opposed.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order come after Question Time, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Sir Paul Beresford: Does my hon. Friend agree that the whole point of competitive tendering is that it allows the in-house team to prove its ability, if it has it? Significantly, it has been proved in Tory boroughs, whereas Labour boroughs consistently fail, when they do not fudge the figures.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities will increasingly have to demonstrate that they are giving good quality to local people for the vast sums of money that they spend. One of the best ways that local authorities can demonstrate that is to expose their services to competitive tendering. I find it amazing that the Labour party still has difficulty with that concept.

Council Rents

10. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made about the impact of housing revenue account subsidy on the level of council rents.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is increasing council rent guidelines for 1994-95 by an average of £2·20 a week. The average council rent guideline for subsidy purposes next year will be £31·60, which is both moderate and reasonable.

Mr. Clelland: At a time when owner-occupiers—I count myself among their number—are benefiting not only from tax relief on mortgage interest payments but from significant reductions in housing costs because of the fall in interest rates, how can the Minister justify the fact that, in the forthcoming financial year, local authorities will receive no net subsidy for housing and will have to find £66 million to support housing benefit, which will have to come from rents? Why are the Government so vindictive towards council housing and council tenants?

Sir George Young: To get the figures straight, there will be some £4 billion in housing revenue account subsidy next year. Local authority tenants who are on benefit will, of course, be insulated against any increase. Those tenants who are not on benefit have the option of the rent-to-mortgage scheme, which was put through the House by the Government. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will promote, with vigour and enthusisasm, the rent-to-mortgage scheme to his tenants who are paying the rent in full.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my right hon. Friend look at councils that are increasing the costs of running their housing departments, which they are passing on to their tenants on an increasing scale? They are doing that to bring in more revenue for the council and are hiding the real costs of running their department.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that housing management will be put out to compulsory competitive tender. The benefits from the reduced cost that that will bring will be fed into the housing revenue account and will feed through in lower rents for his constituents. That is a powerful reason for the Government's pressing ahead with their policy, on which we were urged a few moments ago to hold back.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recall the answer that he gave me on 1 December, which showed that in the previous four years, when the retail prices index increased by 28 per cent., average council rents in London had been pushed up to 89 per cent? His own local authority, Tory-controlled Ealing council, led the way with a massive and disgraceful increase of 201 per cent. Does he recognise that his own authority has the record of the highest local authority rent in the country followed by Tory Redbridge, Tory Westminster, Tory Kensington and Tory Harrow? Will he now admit that it is Tory councils, often inefficient and corrupt, which hold the record for the highest rents?

Sir George Young: As the hon. Gentleman may know, I take some interest in local authority rents in Ealing. He may be aware that rents in Ealing had to go up by such a substantial amount because of some creative accounting by a Labour-controlled Ealing council, which was thrown out of office three years ago. It was the only gain that we made from the Labour party and we achieved it because local people recognised that creative accounting by Labour-controlled councils was highly expensive.

The hon. Member is aware that we are progressively moving towards capital value rents. Next year's guideline increase is lower than that of this year.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

11. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings have been made by local authorities in the last year as a result of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: Details of annual savings are not held centrally, but the results of independent studies by the university of Birmingham show that compulsory competitive tendering has reduced costs by an average of 7 per cent. between 1989 and 1992 and up to 20 per cent. for some services, and also improved services.

Mr. Duncan Smith: In the light of my hon. Friend's answer, will he look carefully at my local council, Waltham Forest, and join me in condemning it for dragging its feet on the application of CCT? As a result of that delay, the council has now started to lay off managers as well as workers in the direct works organisation, which could have been avoided had it applied CCT. Does that not demonstrate that yet another socialist council is failing to work for the people?

Mr. Baldry: Waltham Forest's record on competitive tendering is pretty miserable. We have had to give two directions to it in respect of financial failure of its direct labour organisations, one for failure on building maintenance work and one for failure on ground maintenance work. That meant that Waltham Forest's direct labour organisations were making losses, which were inevitably passed to local tax payers as higher local taxes or reduced services, or both. We are determined that such losses should not continue.

Mr. Gerrard: When the Minister is attacking Waltham Forest council by suggesting that it should be more efficient and producing savings, will he also consider what is happening to the housing action trust in Waltham Forest? It seems that the local authority is expected to make savings by putting services out to tender, whereas the housing action trust, which spends millions of pounds of

public money, is allowed, unilaterally, to dispense with contracts with the local authority and to set up its own direct management, without any tendering process. Is not that a case of one rule for the local authority and another for the quango?

Mr. Baldry: It is very sad that the hon. Member should seek to attack the Waltham housing action trust, because he knows, as other hon. Members know, that local tenants voted for it because they saw that it would bring considerable benefits to them. It is clear from the exchanges in the House this afternoon that the Labour party does not like tenants voting for their own management or local authorities providing better services through competitive tendering.

Mr. Matthew Banks: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the benefits of CCT. He is also aware that his Department had to issue an instruction recently to close the contract services department of Sefton metropolitan borough council, which holds sway over my constituency, at least until we recapture our unitary authority status in Southport. Will he join me in expressing regret that it was necessary for the Government to step in to look after the genuine interests of the council tax payer instead of being able to leave the matter to the local authority leaders concerned?

Mr. Baldry: I very much regret it when it is necessary for Ministers to issue statutory notices and directions. I hope that we can achieve a situation in which Ministers are no longer concerned with CCT, because I would hope that every local authority, be it controlled by Labour, the Conservatives or others, would appreciate the virtues and benefits of exposing their services competitively to the marketplace, and the benefits that that brings to local people. It is clear from this afternoon's exchanges that Labour still has a real ideological hang-up about competition. It seems that for the foreseeable future, Ministers will have to continue introducing statutory notices and directions to ensure that local authorities behave properly.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one person who hopes to benefit from compulsory competitive tendering is none other than the person mentioned by the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim)—Geoff Lennox, the ex-director of education with Derbyshire education authority? He used the Labour movement and tried to close schools in my constituency, until I stopped him. I smelt a rat seven or eight years ago and warned my Labour colleagues that he would desert them in the end—and now they all agree with me.

Mr. Baldry: As always, my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley scored a palpable hit. It is clear that the gentleman concerned was only appointed by the Labour party because he was a socialist—and for no other reason of merit.

Pollution

12. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet his EC counterparts to discuss pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: At the next Environment Council on 24 and 25 March.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that Great Britain has now ratified the climate change convention? Which European countries have not ratified, and will he take steps to see that they do?

Mr. Gummer: We have ratified and are followed in that by a number of other European Community countries. All have said that they will ratify, and we expect the remaining member states to do so. The Community itself ratifies, of course. I am pleased that we shall together help to guard against climate change, which would be so damaging to this and other countries.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it the Minister's intention to explain to his colleagues why the Government are privatising the parts of the civil service that specifically provide protection against pollution in this country by making a high level of scientific input into investigations of instances of environmental pollution? Will the right hon. Gentleman do all that he can to ensure that those functions remain within the Government service and are not privatised for the benefit of private industry?

Mr. Gummer: I want the highest possible standards of pollution control services. If they can be improved through the use of private organisations or by privatisation, I shall hurry on with that. The measurement is not whether the services are public or private but whether they deliver the goods that we want—the highest standards of pollution control.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the opening of an opencast mine in a sensitive area between the village of Poynton in my constituency and the Greater Manchester boundary might be described as a form of pollution? If he does, and if my constituents are unhappy with the decision taken by Cheshire county council—which has responsibility for deciding mineral extraction planning applications—is there any way that my constituents can take their case to Europe?

Mr. Gummer: As you, Madam Speaker, did not stop my hon. Friend asking his question, it must be possible for it to be infiltrated into the subject of pollution. I will go no further in answering the first part of my hon. Friend's question.

As to the second part, this country has proper planning procedures that meet the democratic balance between differing sides in trying to reach a decision of that kind. In normal circumstances, those procedures are British procedures and adequately meet the needs of the United Kingdom. I thought that my hon. Friend upheld that position in every other circumstance.

Mr. George Howarth: Is the Secretary of State not ashamed of the fact that in this day and age people who use our beaches and waters for sport and pleasure often find themselves surrounded by raw sewage? Why does he not direct his energies, and those of his colleagues, to cleaning up our bathing waters—instead of seeking to dodge out of the EC bathing water directive?

Mr. Gummer: What I am ashamed of is the fact that, for many years, the nationalised water undertakings did not spend the money that they should have spent on ensuring proper discharges. That is why we privatised the system, in

the teeth of opposition from the Opposition; it is why we are spending—*[Interruption.]*—I hope, Madam Speaker, that you will want to hear this figure. We are spending £3,000 million a year on improving the infrastructure of the water system in Britain. The Labour party tried to deny the system that money, because it voted day in, day out against privatisation. The hon. Gentleman is another Labour Member who should be ashamed of himself.

Energy Efficiency

13. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he plans to take energy efficiency forward.

Mr. Atkins: The promotion of energy efficiency to reduce carbon dioxide emissions remains a key Government priority, as demonstrated by the further increases in the Energy Efficiency Office's budget for 1994-95 to over £100 million. Energy efficiency measures will play a significant part in the United Kingdom's climate change programme which will be published later this month.

Mr. Thomason: When undertaking their recent inquiry into energy efficiency, some members of the Select Committee noted widely differing standards of energy efficiency among local authorities. Will my hon. Friend endeavour to encourage local government to pursue energy-efficient schemes as widely as possible?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend, with his great experience of local government, is right to pick on this area as one which can be developed even faster. Certainly, my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning and I are prepared to spend as much time as necessary encouraging local authorities to recognise that their expenditure and, hence, their costs to local charge and taxpayers, can be reduced by energy efficiency.

Madam Speaker: Time is up.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether I can raise two important but related issues——

Madam Speaker: No. I am not here to listen to the issues that the hon. Gentleman wants to raise. If he has a point of order that I can deal with, I will listen to it now, but I want direct points of order.

Mr. Burns: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that guidance.

I want to raise with you the bringing into disrepute of this House and the security of this House. As you may be aware, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) appeared govellingly with Saddam Hussein on Iraqi television last night, when he said that he supported Saddam and congratulated him on his courage and that he was with him until he secured victory.

Given that this country fought a war against Saddam Hussein, and given the massacre of the Kurds and the marsh Arabs, will you, Madam Speaker, make a ruling on whether an hon. Member, by associating himself with those who commit genocide and who have provoked a war with us, brings the reputation of this House into disrepute?

Furthermore, are there any precautions in place to prevent the hon. Member for Hillhead from bringing into the precincts of this building any of his Iraqi friends who are our enemies because of the actions of Saddam Hussein?

Madam Speaker: Let me deal with the latter point first. I never discuss security matters across the Floor of the House, and I am not about to do so now.

As for last night's television, I was otherwise occupied and did not see the programme in question. It was not a point of order, however. In fact, the hon. Gentleman has just given extra publicity to an hon. Member's opinions on which I cannot possibly comment.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request from the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement in this House about the report that has been published by the marine accident investigation branch and by the marine pollution control unit in respect of the Braer, which went aground over a year ago? I have just been in contact with the other place, where the Shipping Minister serves, and with the MAIB, and I am told that a number of copies of the report have been circulated but that the Opposition were not included on the circulation list.

It is high time the Secretary of State asked to make a statement; if he does not, this House will be brought into disrepute.

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed by the Secretary of State that he or any other Minister is seeking to make a statement on the matter.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, about parliamentary language. During Environment questions the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) used the word "gerrymandering" in connection with two London boroughs—the City of Westminster council and the borough of Wandsworth. His suggestion has absolutely no basis.

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a matter for argument. The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member and knows that he does not argue with me in the Chair but puts his point to me. What is it, and I will do my best to deal with it?

Mr. Tracey: My point is very simple. To allege gerrymandering without any evidence is surely unparliamentary. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with this. At this end of the Chamber I often hear rich vocabulary and, if the expression had been unparliamentary, I would certainly have stopped it at the time. Perhaps we can proceed to the ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Has not the hon. Gentleman just abused the procedures of the House by raising a spurious point of order attacking the district auditor whose comprehensive report published last week made it clear that there was gerrymandering?

Madam Speaker: I am sure the day will come when I get a genuine point of order. Meanwhile, there is a genuine ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): On a genuine point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of what has been said about Westminster, may I take it that it is in order to describe the reorganisation of Scottish local government as a gerrymander?

Madam Speaker: At the present time that is hypothetical.

Conscientious Objection (Public Expenditure)

3.36 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to reform the system of taxation so that taxpayers are enabled to hypothecate on grounds of conscience a proportion of taxation to purposes which they nominate.

The Bill's simple purpose is to allow people who have a conscientious objection to their taxes being used for public expenditure on military purposes to be able to register that objection and to divert that part of their taxes to a specific fund that will be used for peaceful purposes connected with the development of international security.

I believe, and I think that many people associated with the Bill and with the Peace Tax campaign believe, that far too much is spent on armaments, and that far too much talent is wasted on the development, research and production of arms which could be put to much more useful purposes. Far too many arms are exported from this country, particularly to areas in which we know they will be used by regimes that are intent on internal repression. However, that is not what the Bill is about, nor is it the reasoning behind it. There is no logical reason why someone who thinks that present arms spending is reasonable should not support the Bill's principles.

It is important to stress at the outset that the Bill is about conscientious objection. It is not a way for someone to pay less tax, nor is it in any way a charter for people to dodge taxes. It is about tax diversion, not tax evasion. Therefore, there is no incentive whatever for someone who is not a genuine conscientious objector to take advantage of the Bill's provisions. Many conscientious objectors are deeply concerned about international security, international peace and human rights in areas of conflict or potential conflict.

Almost 80 years ago, during the first world war, the House first recognised the right to conscientious objection. It was recognised again during the second world war and during subsequent periods of national service and conscription. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights recognises conscientious objection to war as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience is also recognised as fundamental by the European convention on human rights.

Being a conscientious objector has never been an easy option. To be a conscientious objector, especially in times of war, has required a great deal of personal courage, and in many cases self-sacrifice. It has never been easy.

It is unlikely now that a conscientious objector will be required actually to fight in a war. The nature of modern warfare involves sophisticated weaponry and professional armies. However, a significant proportion of our taxes is being used in preparation for war to which some people deeply object. For someone who is a conscientious objector that is as unethical as being asked to fight. The Bill would allow such people to have their objections recognised.

May I address a point that is often raised? Some people accept some of the principles behind the Bill, but do not believe that it would work. They believe that such a Bill would open the door to all sorts of problems and that people must recognise that our system of taxation does not work in that way.

When a Government of whatever persuasion have been elected, they have the right to decide how to spend our taxes which end up in a single consolidated fund. We cannot allow someone to say, "Do not spend my taxes on roads or education". To change that, one can vote for a different party at the next election; we cannot expect Governments, local authorities or anybody spending public money to please everyone all the time. I agree with that, as do others who support the Bill.

However, it is a special case. I do not consider that it is a special case that I have to prove to justify the Bill as it has already been recognised by Parliament. If conscientious objection can be recognised in wartime, why not in peacetime as well?

In practical terms, it is not a difficult exercise. All that would be necessary is for the number of registered conscientious objectors to be known by the Inland Revenue. The average individual contribution to the Ministry of Defence budget can be calculated and a simple multiplication of the two figures produces a sum of money to be paid into a peace fund. That would certainly satisfy people who support my view.

The Bill would specify in general terms the purposes for which the fund could be used. I mentioned the need for research and development into converting industry from military to non-military production, the study of causes and resolution of conflict, community-based work to develop and maintain democratic structures and human rights in areas of potential conflict.

In view of much of what has been happening in Europe in recent years and may well happen in future, the need for such work cannot be over-emphasised. Even during the terrible events in the Balkans in the past year or two, small groups of people have been working locally, trying to promote understanding and to maintain democratic structures and human rights. Those people deserve our support by any means.

I hope that we can all agree on the importance of non-military work in promoting peace, security and human rights. A fund of that kind would make a direct contribution to security for everyone. In his recent statement "An Agenda for Peace", the Secretary-General of the United Nations suggested the establishment of a peace endowment fund which, in many ways, is a similar concept.

People have strong personal objections on religious, ethical or moral grounds to taking part in war, and I am asking the House to recognise that similar objections are held by people in respect of the spending of their taxes on arms.

One need not be a pacifist to respect the sincerity of the beliefs of those who are or to acknowledge that people have the right to a conscience. I am asking the House to allow the means for that conscience to be expressed and not violated. I ask the House to support my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, Mr. Ian Davidson, Dr. John Marek, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Mr. Michael Connarty, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mrs. Alice Mahon and Mr. Frank Cook.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION (PUBLIC EXPENDITURE)

Mr. Neil Gerrard accordingly presented a Bill to reform the system of taxation so that taxpayers are enabled to hypothecate on grounds of conscience a proportion of

taxation to purposes which they nominate: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 28 January, and to be printed. [Bill 35.]

Industrial Training Levy

3.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I beg to move,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following motion:

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 2nd December, be approved.

Miss Widdecombe: The proposals before the House seek authority for the Construction Industry Training Board and the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board to impose a levy on the employers in their industries to finance the operating costs of the boards and to fund their range of training initiatives, including grants schemes. Provision for this is contained in the Industrial Training Act 1982, and the orders before the House woud give effect to proposals submitted by the two boards.

Both proposals include provision to raise a levy in excess of 1 per cent. of an employer's payroll. The Industrial Training Act 1982 requires that in such cases the proposals must be approved by affirmative resolution of both Houses. In each case, the proposals are almost exactly the same as those approved by the House last year. As in previous orders, they are based on employer's payrolls and their use of sub-contract labour. Both have special provision for excluding small firms from paying levy.

For the CITB the rates are 0·25 per cent. of payroll and 2 per cent. of payments made by employers to labour-only sub-contrators. Employers with a payroll of £61,000 or less will be exempt. This is an increase from the previous threshold of £45,000.

The ECITB treats its head offices and construction sites as separate establishments and applies different levy rates which reflect the actual costs and the different arrangements for training particular workers. For head offices, the rates are 0·4 per cent. of payroll and 0·5 per cent. of payments to labour-only sub-contractors. Firms employing 40 or fewer employees are exempt. The rates for sites are 1·5 per cent. of payroll and 2 per cent. of labour-only payments, with exemption for employers with a payroll of £75,000 or less.

In each case, the proposals have the support of the employers in the industry as required by the Industrial Training Act 1982 and have the full support of the respective boards, which consist of senior employers, trade unionists and educationists.

The House will know that the CITB and the ECITB are the only two statutory industrial training boards. Most other sectors of industry are covered by independent, non-statutory arrangements. In those two industries, however, employers are firm in their support for a statutory board and the House will recall that last year we reconstituted the CITB for a further five years. In doing so, we recognised the strong feelings of employers, and the performance and achievements of that board.

The House will also be aware that the ECITB is currently being reviewed. Such reviews are, of course, necessary if we are to ensure that the training arrangements that we have in place are right for employers in a particular sector. As with the CITB, we have consulted fully with the

industry about the effectiveness of the board and about the levy system more generally. The ECITB's current term of office is due to expire in July and I expect to make a statement to the House around the beginning of April.

The draft orders will enable the two boards to carry out their training responsibilities in 1994. It is right that the House should approve them, and I commend them accordingly.

3.50 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): This so far remarkably short debate shows the priority that the Government place on training.

Miss Widdecombe: Before the hon. Member comments on the degree of Government interest in training, will he recall that there were no Opposition Members present during a major debate on the national education and training targets a few weeks ago?

Mr. Lloyd: That is an interesting point given that the Minister is surrounded by a Whip, who has to be here, and by the hon. Members for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) and for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who—and I mean no disrespect by this—are always here for such debates. I do not think that there are signs of a massive interest in training.

Perhaps I can provoke discussion by starting off where we left off yesterday, when the Minister offered me various invitations. She asked whether I would welcome the number of young people in training and jobs. But she never responded to the argument that, at a time when skill shortages are beginning to emerge in the economy, 125,000 16 and 17-year-olds are unemployed. She has never sought to deny that fact because the figure comes from the Department of Employment's labour force survey, which was published in the *Employment Gazette*.

I am happy to talk to the Minister or, indeed, to the Secretary of State who invited us to discuss the fiddled figures. If the Minister gives me a guarantee that she will talk seriously about what happened to the 125,000 unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds and state why they did not appear in the official unemployment figures, we shall attend the discussions. Will the Minister give that guarantee?

Miss Widdecombe: The invitation to discuss with the Secretary of State the way in which the figures were calculated and the various differences and studies was extended to the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, but it was never taken up. I shall be most interested to know whether the current Labour Front-Bench team want to take up the offer. Until the team come to discuss the employment figures with us, they are not in any position to condemn civil servants for their independent and high standard of work.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is bigger than I am, so the invitation is bound to come to him first. We would be delighted to come along. The accusation is not that civil servants fiddle the figures but that politicians instruct them on how they should count—in fact, miscount—the figures.

I did not pluck from the air the statistic that 125,000 16 and 17-year-olds are unemployed. The figure appeared in the *Employment Gazette*, a Department of Employment publication, and it comes from the labour force survey. It was produced by the same civil servants who the Minister wants to deride. Of course, those civil servants are telling the truth. For 125,000 young people, the Government's guarantee did not apply. They were betrayed by the Government. They were unemployed, some of them were left idle on the streets and some resorted to crime and drugs —the sort of things that afflict young people and society. The Government are responsible.

Miss Widdecombe: As the hon. Gentleman has such utter confidence in the labour force survey, and as he is so keen to accept its figures, will he confirm that he accepts the figure of 2·7 million unemployed and that it is not underestimated by 1 million, as his friends have been claiming in recent days?

Mr. Lloyd: We had an enjoyable debate about that matter on Sunday; regrettably, it was not in this place. As the Minister will recall, I was able to quote to her a survey done by Dr. Wells at Cambridge university. He pointed out that the Government's official figures underestimate real unemployment by between 1 million and 2 million.

It is internationally accepted that the Government are prepared to use and abuse any form of statistics, just as we saw with the abuse and suppression of information on the health service and the way in which the Government manipulate figures up and down to suit their political purposes, and sometimes for nefarious purposes. Apparently it is not relevant to mention the £1 million profit that the Conservative party made when it bought the freehold of Smith square from Tory-controlled Westminster council and then sold it on again to the private sector.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It was £2 million.

Mr. Lloyd: As my hon. Friend says, it was £2 million. I do not think that it was applied to training. I think that it was to prop up the deficit of the chairman of the Conservative party at that time. That matter is not central to training, but it is central to the shoddy way in which the Government deal with their own properties and those of other people.

Miss Widdecombe: May I refer the hon. Gentleman to the debate? I am sure, Madam Speaker, that if you had not been otherwise engaged, you would have ruled several of the hon. Gentleman's sentences out of order.

However, the hon. Gentleman claims that the International Labour Organisation definition is the one which we should be using. He says that we are deliberately suppressing figures. May I take it that the essence of the hon. Gentleman's case is that the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation are conspiring with Conservative politicians to produce a definition specifically to enable Britain's employment figures to be fiddled? Is that the hon. Gentleman's ludicrous statement?

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister is on rather dangerous ground in praying in aid the ILO. Will the Minister discuss, for example, the fact that the ILO has condemned unconditionally the Government's ban on trade unions at Government communications headquarters, and that it has described that employment practice as an outrage against the employment rights of people at work? That is what the ILO says about the Government. The ILO unemployment figures are certainly worth discussing.

[Mr. Lloyd]

We will take up the Minister's offer, but only on condition that we examine in particular the 125,000 missing 16 and 17-year-olds whom the Government betrayed when they promised training which they did not undertake either through the CITB or any other training mechanism. That must be the starting point.

Let us consider the Government's record on training and the particular role of training boards. Department of Employment spending specifically on the now disbanded employment training and youth training schemes dropped between 1987 and 1992 by £3 billion a year down to £1·7 billion, when unemployment and the number of people who needed training to put them back into work had increased massively.

But the Government's record becomes a little worse. We know that, since that time, there have been further real cuts in the training budget. Training and enterprise councils have had their budgets cut, so in real terms less money is devoted to training and considerably less money is devoted to individual training, with the result that training for work and youth training are particularly shoddy little schemes.

For example, we know that, as a result of the training for work scheme and its predecessors, only one third of the people obtained work. The remarkable statistic—it would be amusing if it were not so very sad—is that unemployed adults have virtually the same chance of obtaining work if they do not go on a Government scheme as they would if they did. That must be the biggest indictment of the Mickey Mouse training schemes that the Government have made available through the CITB and, indeed, elsewhere through employment training and now training for work.

Miss Widdecombe: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify his statement by telling the House within what period that one third had not found work before he creates the impression that they never had work?

Mr. Lloyd: If we want to pursue this matter, I invite the Minister to begin to answer questions which would allow us to answer her question. The Department of Employment has stopped publishing figures that enable people to track what has happened to the unemployed. I would be delighted if the Minister returned to the Dispatch Box—of course, I would do her the courtesy of giving way again—and said that she will answer questions which relate specifically to what has happened to the long-term unemployed. If she does not have the information at hand, which is the usual departmental response, I hope that she will undertake that the Department will set up precise mechanisms to track the unemployed so that we can begin to talk seriously about what has happened to them. Does she want me to give way on that matter, or was she simply introducing a bit of Dispatch Box rhetoric?

It is a serious point. We need to know what happened to the long-term unemployed. I shall tell the Minister what has happened to them. They live in poverty; their families suffer; they have greater health problems; they have greater marital breakdown; they have greater stress; and they die younger. In the end, their children are more likely to be involved in crime and drugs. That is a tragedy.

Long-term unemployment blights our society and the lives of our constituents. It is a direct result of the mass unemployment policy that the Government have pursued. Therefore, to some extent, we know what happens to the long-term unemployed, and we know what the Government have not done for them. They do not provide training for people to go back to work. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) says, the bottom line is that they simply do not care.

Miss Widdecombe: In view of the hon. Gentleman's deep concern for the long-term unemployed, which I share, will he now welcome the 1·5 million training opportunities that the Government have created for that category of people?

Mr. Lloyd: No. I am sorry, but I will not welcome the Mickey Mouse schemes set up by the Government, because they do not any good. They keep the unemployed off the streets, if that is what the Minister means, and out of the statistics. If that is the objective, of course we understand why the Government welcome the schemes. *[Interruption.]* They are fiddlers on the Bench—that is absolutely right.

Miss Widdecombe: The main intention of our training schemes is not simply to equip people with the right skills as determined locally but, more importantly, to keep the long-term unemployed in touch with work-related training. One of the things we found—the Labour Government found exactly the same thing—is that employers are reluctant to take on people who have been unemployed for any length of time. Therefore, it is crucial that the long-term unemployed have training which is linked directly to employment and the labour market so that they at least keep in touch with work-related activity. Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that that is the basis of our training schemes, and will he welcome it?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) says that there is one vacancy for every person out of work and for every 20 people on the dole. That is the tragedy of what the Minister is saying. There is no easy path for people to return to work when there is no work to which they can return. That is the tragedy of the employment schemes that the Government have made available.

The schemes do not work. They do not create work; they do not up-skill people; they do not help the nation; and they do not help individuals. The bottom line is that it is a political game. We saw the same game as each Secretary of State was trundled out to pasture and a new one was wheeled in. The Government reinvented the wheel. What is worse, sometimes they have broken the wheel.

I shall refer specifically to construction skills because the Minister has tried to divert me from that matter on occasions. Recently, the Secretary of State launched the Government's new apprenticeship schemes with a lot of fireworks. He said that it was a magnificent opportunity and there was a vast marketplace for the United Kingdom to compete in, but in order to do so successfully, we needed to ensure that our work force had all the skills they need.

The Secretary of State has also said that he wants to build up vocational training and qualifictions. If he were serious about that, he would get the support of Opposition Members. He had the nerve to ask whether somebody would want their house rewired by an electrician who had demonstrated skills by rewiring other houses, or by someone who had passed an exam in solid state physics. Is

the Secretary of State saying that decent education is the privilege of people like him? I believe that the Secretary of State went to public school, and his children may also go to public school. The Under-Secretary herself may have gone to public school.

The reality for many thousands of our fellow citizens is that they do not have an opportunity to go to such schools, but they are entitled to the best quality education. To sideline them and to say that all that is wanted is people who have basic rewiring skills is to insult them and to denigrate their abilities.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is keen on education. Yesterday, I announced that 77 per cent. of those aged 16 to 18 stayed on in education to obtain the qualifications which are so important.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): That is because they have no jobs.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman makes my point exactly. When the figures were announced, all that Opposition Members did was to cry out that it was because there were no jobs. In other words, education is the second-best choice.

If the hon. Gentleman is so keen that education be made available to all—that is an ambition that I share—why does he put it down as second-best to getting a job and leaving young people low paid, untrained and poorly educated at the age of 16?

Mr. Lloyd: Perhaps we need to engage in a little systematic teaching in the Chamber. Let me teach the Minister about what happens in our further education colleges. It is true that the Opposition welcome the increasing numbers of young people who are staying on in education.

Miss Widdecombe: The Opposition do welcome it?

Mr. Lloyd: We welcome it where that education is of their choice and is meaningful. It would be simply ridiculous to do anything else. Like many of my generation, I was lucky enough to pass through the state system at a time when the state system was able to transport people from areas where education opportunities had not existed previously.

Of course I welcome the increase in figures, and further education ought to be a right. Let me tell the Minister what happens in the underfunded system which she and her colleagues have created during the past 15 years. At the age of 18, there is a massive decline in the figures so that Britain has a far smaller proportion of its young people in full-time education than in most other parts of western Europe. That is the case when we compare ourselves with France and Germany—the nations which we like to compete with.

If the Minister wants to say that we are doing a little better than Morocco on that scale, I would not want to dispute that. However, that is not the reference point to which I or the people I represent aspire. We can do a little better than that.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The hon. Gentleman said that he would inform the House of what is going on in our further education colleges. May I invite him to come to the Lancaster and Morecambe college of further education? He could not find a more admirable institution than that. The college provides the most superb training and it turns out people who get jobs. Places at the college are sought after, and the people it turns out are sought after. Would the hon. Gentleman care to visit, so that he will be in touch with what is happening in a part of the world which he ought to know?

Mr. Lloyd: With the respect that I have for the hon. Lady, of course I will accept her invitation. However, there is a proviso. A year or two ago, when I spoke for the Opposition on health and safety, I wrote to a lot of hospitals and health authorities regarding the position of health and safety in those areas. I specifically wrote to the chairman of the health authority in the area which the hon. Lady represents. The hon. Lady raised a point of order in the House and condemned me for interfering in her constituency. I trust that, if I accept her invitation, it will not lead to the same hysteria and shenanigans which occurred on that occasion.

I would also say to the hon. Lady that I would be delighted to come up to that area, which I visit from time to time. She knows that her seat is one which the Labour party would expect to win at the next election, and she will have a considerable number of visits by Labour Members during the coming months. If I agree to come to see the hon. Lady's college of further education, will she come with me to the jobcentre, where perhaps we will talk to those in the dole queue who number about three times as many as there were when the Government took power in 1979? It would make an interesting joint focus—the failure of the Government represented by the dole queues and the paltry effort that they have put into further education.

I wish to talk specifically about the construction industry and the Construction Industry Training Board. I welcome the Secretary of State to the Chamber. He will be interested to know that not so many minutes ago the Minister was berating the House for the limited number of people interested in training who have bothered to turn up for the debate. I can tell the Secretary of State that it will not take him long to read the Under-Secretary's speech, because there was very little in it. However, he may be a little more interested in the speech that she has made since then in interventions in my speech. We are ever willing to help the Government. We should develop our interest in training and I welcome the Secretary of State to the debate.

I have just referred to something that the Secretary of State said. I did not complete the point that I wanted to make, because I gave way to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman). Given the Secretary of State's educational background and the opportunities that it gave him, he has something of a cheek to denigrate ordinary people in the way that he did when he spoke at the national training awards ceremony at which he launched his plans for vocational training.

I have said to the Secretary of State privately and I repeat it publicly that we shall support a properly structured, properly funded approach to vocational training, as long as it provides proper, quality education which is genuinely aimed at uplifting the skill level of our young people. We need to uplift the skill level of not only our young people. The Secretary of State should recognise that the position in Germany is very different. Many of those who enter vocational training do so having already received a first-class education to a high standard through the ordinary academic system.

If the Secretary of State is prepared to put the money into such a scheme, he will receive a welcome from the

[Mr. Lloyd]

Opposition. But if his scheme is simply an attempt to divert those who are regarded as the lower classes by Conservative Members on to Mickey Mouse training, if he is simply saying, "We want the best for the chaps and chapesses from the public school system, but anything will do for the kids from the inner-city areas," he will receive no welcome from the Opposition.

The Secretary of State makes comments such as:

"do you want driving your car someone who has only passed a written examination?"

I do not want someone driving my car who has had only practical experience and no training whatever. That would be ridiculous. He says:

"who do you want as a foreman on a construction site, someone with good practical and people skills or someone who could write a good essay on the construction industry?"

If the Secretary of State denigrates the type of education that makes our construction workers properly qualified, he is foolish.

Let me quote from someone at the sharp end at one of the very good colleges of further education to which the hon. Member for Lancaster referred a few moments ago. Almost as if in response to the Secretary of State's silly remarks, one of the critics of the current system of training, a college lecturer, said that a young NVQ-qualified craftsman could build a brick wall, but

"because he had never been told about the effects of freezing weather on water, he would not know what to do when it was cold."

He went on to say that the wall would probably fall down in a couple of years. I agree with what that lecturer said.

I remind the Secretary of State that there is a need for theory as well as practice. Of course we want practical skills. The Government have sold the practical side of the nation down the river for the past 15 years. However, we must upgrade the general level of education of those who become the practitioners in industry. That is what the Secretary of State seemed to denigrate in his launch. I hope that he will think again if he is serious about education and training in construction for our young people.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman cannot accuse me of not responding to him. He has consistently referred to what he describes as Mickey Mouse training. Will he tell me how a syllabus devised not by the Government but by the industry, independently assessed and drawn up on the basis of good practice, can be a qualification deserving of the title "Mickey Mouse"? Will he please recognise that there are those who, while not benefiting from the academic route, will nevertheless, like their German and Japanese counterparts, benefit from a competence-based work route? That is what NVQs are about. Will he please welcome them and respect the industry that has drawn them up?

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister has a long way to go. She does not seem to understand the problems.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Answer the question.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course I shall answer the question. Does the hon. Gentleman want to intervene to ask a question before I start to reply to the Minister?

I refer the Minister to a study conducted by Professor Prais and others who considered NVQs and concluded that they were not terribly good. The university of Manchester also carried out a study of NVQs and concluded that in many cases there was an over-concentration on—I cannot remember the Minister's exact words—what is, in effect, self-assessment. The teacher decides whether the student, apprentice or learner has made progress and, in accordance with the Government's preferred method of assessment, is then measured by output funding. It is a nasty little world, but a Government who praised Westminster council should not have too much difficulty with the concept of people cheating, which is what happened under that system. That is what devalues NVQs.

If the Minister thinks that what I am saying is merely proof of the nasty Opposition being beastly to the well-meaning Government, let me cite Mr. Martin Pollard. He is the chief executive of the joint council between employers and unions in the electrical contracting industry, so his comments are highly relevant to the debate.

Mr. Pollard said that one of the problems for young people undertaking the TECs' two-year courses is that they find jobs as electricians although they have not—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the Minister, having asked a question about the quality of NVQs, is talking to the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), and does not want to listen to the answer. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) can tell her the answer later. Oh, it is very decent of the Government Whip to leave the Chamber.

Mr. Pollard said that some training and enterprise funding councils were funding two-year courses and releasing trainees to find jobs as electricians, although they had not reached the required standard. He continued:

"In fact the only position in which they could be employed is that of a labourer—surely a waste of two years' training."

It is not only a waste of training but a massive waste of Government money and of the lives of these young people.

I visited the construction site of a very good development in my constituency. One of the senior people there said that, when he takes people from Government training courses in the construction trades, he finds that he has to put them back in the classroom. People who have undertaken a two-year Government course are being told that their bricklaying or other skills are not up to scratch and that they must go back to the classroom. They do not earn the money that they had expected to earn, so they say, "Sorry pal, I'm off," and they decide to take a job elsewhere—if they can find one. They may have difficulty doing so because their skills are not adequate. That is an example of the problems created by the Government.

The Government are directly responsible for the failure outlined by Mr. Pollard, an independent industrialist.

Miss Widdecombe *rose*——

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: If the Minister will forgive me, I shall give way first to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Graham: Some time ago I mentioned to one of the Ministers the case of a young constituent of mine who had been training to be a plumber. The training shop was shut and he was thrown on to the dole without having finished his course. However, the Secretary of State for Scotland told the House that we badly needed to spend more than £5 billion on improving water and sewerage services. We shall desperately need plumbers and construction workers,

but the Government are not willing to provide money for training in Scotland because they have cut funding by more than 33 per cent.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) makes an important point. He makes the case that we shall certainly need those skills and that is not in doubt. I shall come directly to that point on a United Kingdom basis in a moment.

One of the staggering things that we confront in Scotland is that, as my hon. Friend says about one of his constituents, young people are treated in a shoddy way. Yet we learn that the Secretary of State, who has announced his apprenticeship scheme, has not the clout in the Cabinet to take that system north of the border. The apprenticeship system on which the Government are pinning the future skills of the nation will not apply in Scotland. My hon. Friend is right to be incensed.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): He has not got any money.

Mr. Lloyd: Well, there is a difference of opinion on our Front Bench, which one gets now and again in a healthy, democratic party. I had not thought of it before, but my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde tells me that the scheme is seen as so sub-standard that the Scots do not want it. Even the Secretary of State for Scotland has apparently rumbled the Secretary of State for Environment and does not want the scheme. I thought that it was because the Scots were being deprived. I now learn that the Secretary of State for Scotland does not think that the commitment will be there, that the money will be there or that it will be there to provide the quality training that we ought to have.

If the Secretary of State for Scotland does not want the scheme, we must doubt the reason why it has been foisted on those of us in the rest of the country. Does the Minister want to give way?

Mr. Prescott: Is it true?

Miss Widdecombe: No.

Madam Speaker: Order. One debate at a time.

Mr. Lloyd: I invite the Minister——

Madam Speaker: May we return to the subject of the order?

Mr. Lloyd: Give me a chance. *[Laughter.]* I invite the Minister specifically to confirm whether the apprenticeship scheme will apply in Scotland as she seems to indicate.

Miss Widdecombe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lloyd: She is now shaking her head. Is the Minister telling us that she does not know whether the scheme will apply in Scotland?

Miss Widdecombe: When I said it was not true, I was referring to the incredible degree of waffle, imputed motivation and knowledge of what goes on in Cabinet, which the hon. Gentleman does not have. I was also saying that the hon. Gentleman is getting more ludicrous by the moment. Madam Speaker agrees with me: we should get back to discussing the order. May we discuss the training levy for the construction industry and not Scottish NVQs?

Mr. Lloyd: I am a little surprised. I thought that when I gave way the Minister wanted to tell us whether she knew that the system would apply to training and to the construction industry among others in Scotland. It is clear that she has not got a clue. The Secretary of State is in the Chamber. I wonder whether he knows. I undertake to keep talking for the time it would take him to get to the Dispatch Box. It appears that the Secretary of State does not know whether the scheme applies in Scotland.

Would it be possible for the House to adjourn until the Prime Minister came along to tell us whether he knows? Perhaps we could even get the Prime Minister to the Scott inquiry to tell us whether he knows anything about the sale of arms to Iraq, anything about Government policy on training——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am not minded to adjourn the House. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a lot of material before him at the Dispatch Box and he can return to the order.

Mr. Lloyd: I am just beginning to warm up.

There is a central question about whether the apprenticeship model will apply to construction trainees in Scotland. It seems as if the cavalry is about to come with the news. Does the hon. Member for hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) want to break the news to the House himself, or would he prefer to convey it to the Minister? We seem to have a problem in inter-departmental consultation. It seems to be a case not so much of Fabian of Scotland Yard as of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

If we consider the construction industry and the situation as evidenced by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde in his constituency, and then consider what has happened on a national basis to the number of trainees in the construction industry, we find that the level of employment in the industry has plummeted. In 1990, when the foolishly manufactured boom of Lawson was still at its height, there were nearly 1·9 million people employed in the construction industry. By last July that figure had dropped down to only 1,392,000. In other words, about 500,000 construction workers had lost their jobs in that two-year period. That is a staggering loss both of employment for those individuals and of our economic base. It is a staggering leaching of the nation's skills.

I have something else to tell the Minister and again she will not know whether it is right or wrong. The industry on a reasonably accurate forecast reckons that, for every two construction workers who leave the industry during a slump, only one returns.

Miss Widdecombe: Has the other one found a job?

Mr. Lloyd: I will tell the Minister about that. A couple of weeks ago I came by taxi to the House. The driver of my minicab was a very nice man and I talked to him about his background. He told me that he used to run his own construction company but, unfortunately, he was one of many victims of the recession. He hates this Government. He lost his business and his employees were all made unemployed because of the Government. He is now driving a taxi and he hates it. He resents the fact that he is a skilled man yet cannot use the skills that he has acquired over the years to work for those who want him to in his chosen trade. Instead, he is taxiing around, like many other people. Yes, the Minister is right, some people find

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jobs—they find jobs as taxi drivers or in the McDonald's sector of our economy. They do not find skilled jobs in construction or in manufacturing, because that work has gone and in many cases gone for good.

In a little over two years, a quarter of the construction labour force disappeared. We should stand back in amazement at that and show at least a little sympathy for the individuals involved and for our economy. At the same time the number of apprentices in the construction industry slumped. In 1990—the year that I cited for the peak in employment—there were 77,000 apprentices in the construction industry. By last year, the figure had virtually halved to 43,000. That is no great tribute to the skills revolution that the Government claim is taking place. It simply shows an industry that regards training for the future as an avoidable expense when the going gets tough, in this case directly because of Government policy.

In no sense is the level of skills being maintained. We have lost permanently about 250,000 skilled workers and we have not even begun the process of replacing them through the industrial training schemes that we are discussing. The Minister should apologise to the House for that.

I do not want to be over-critical of the industry training board.

Mr. Prescott: Why not?

Mr. Lloyd: Because it would be unfair to shoot the messenger when the people responsible are sitting behind the Government Dispatch Box. Sir Clifford Chetwood, the chairman of the construction industry training board, wrote in the foreword to the 1991-92 report—the most recent one available:

> "It is therefore with some satisfaction . . . that, by judicious use of reserves and by the application of a range of counter-cyclical measures, CITB has been able to maintain training at an acceptable level during this period of deep recession in the industry."

I am sorry to say so, but Sir Clifford is being complacent, given that the number of apprentices in construction has virtually halved.

We know that one of the problems facing the CITB is that its revenue has been cut during that period. As businesses have ceased to trade and as people have left the industry, the sums coming into the construction industry have been cut by £8 million. Last year the level of spending in the industry was about £52 million; this year's spending will be down to £43 million. That is a significant fall. That goes a long way to explain why there has been the cut in the number of people gaining training in the construction industry, which we think they should have.

The Government are simply incompetent in their ability and desire to plan. They were forced, because of the demands from within the industry—one or two Conservative Members were part of the process of lobbying—to retain the Construction Industry Training Board. I am happy to pay tribute to the role that they played at that time. It was recognised that the Government's ideological approach to training—that we do not want national bodies and do not need any national mechanisms for planning—was wrong-headed. The industry said that.

In the end, even the Government, dogmatic and pig-headed as they normally are, were forced to listen to what the industry said. In the end, grudgingly and against the desires of the ideologues on the Government Front Bench at the time, the Government accepted the role of the CITB. But they have never accepted the need for the CITB to act in a counter-cyclical manner. When there is an upturn again in the economy, we shall see an increase in wage costs, for example, as happened between 1981 and 1990, when the industry increased the number of employees by some 250,000. Wage inflation became a significant part of the construction industry at that time. It was a damning critique of the incompetence and failure of the planning mechanisms that the industry was allowed to get into that position.

It may be bold and unwise to do so, but let us speculate that the shoots of recovery have at last appeared and that one of the industries that will pick up is construction. We would once again have skills shortages throughout the construction industry of a kind that will not easily be picked up by the present training board policies.

That is the central failure of the training board structure that we currently have. The Government are not committed to it. They will not finance it properly and will not let the industry finance its training properly. That is why we will have wage inflation within construction when there is any kind of pick up within the industry. Although I welcome every new job that is created—let the Minister understand that the Labour party welcomes that—we do not welcome the incompetence of a Government who have failed to plan for the future.

Reference was made earlier to colleges of further education, of which there are some 400 in England. Some 40 have stopped their wet trade construction courses over recent months. The reason for that is twofold. It is in part because the trainees are simply not coming forward, either through the CITB or the industry. There simply are not the bums on seats. The other reason comes down to the Government's so-silly view of the educational process. They paraded with great pride and pleasure the creation of a market in education.

The effect is that further education colleges, squeezed for money, have made decisions. They have decided to withdraw from high-cost courses that are resource intensive, such as construction and some of those in the manufacturing skills, and instead have opted for low-cost courses, sometimes courses such as English. That is welcome and I am not denigrating those courses, but I am dismayed that one in 10 of our colleges of further education has ceased to provide resource-intensive courses.

Will the Minister tell the House whether she has any views on who will train our young people in construction skills if those courses no longer exist in further education colleges? I do not know who will train the next generation. It becomes a serious problem.

The central point of the debate is that it is because the Government consistently underfunds the CITB, because they do not have a credible approach to training within construction, that the Opposition intend to divide this evening on the two orders. We must make it clear to the Government that they are simply not providing the money nor the effort necessary to maintain training opportunities. I have been in the House for some years and I have participated in debates on previous training orders. Today is the first time in my memory that we have sought to divide the House on the issue. We shall do so to make our protest public.

The time has come to tell the Government that they can no longer get with their rhetoric about training. Each new Secretary of State launches his or her new scheme, but a couple of years later each new system fails.

According to any reputable measurement—that discounts anything produced by central Government—and any international comparison, Britain is falling short when it comes to providing intermediate vocational qualifications. A recent report showed that 63 per cent. of workers in Germany have intermediate vocational qualifications, either technical or craft qualifications. Nearly two out of three German workers have a vocational qualification and a further 11 per cent. have a degree. The German economy is based on a high level of worker education and skills.

In Britain, the number of workers with university degrees is rougly the same, but only one in four people have vocational qualifications. We are falling far behind the Germans, the French and the Japanese. Conservative Members may still believe that we are witnessing a skills revolution, but that is not what is happening in the British workplace.

Miss Widdecombe: Can the hon. Gentleman tell me how many national vocational qualification equivalents the Labour Government introduced? What did his Government introduce as an equivalent to training and enterprise councils? What did his Government ever do to bring about a training revolution?

Mr. Lloyd: That is a good question and like all good questions, it has a good answer. The Minister should cast her mind back to when the apprenticeship system was still alive and training our young people.

Miss Widdecombe: How many apprenticeships were offered for girls?

Mr. Lloyd: I agree that that lack has always been a problem and a black mark against our training system. I intend to ask the Minister a specific question about the number of women trainees in construction. I hope that she intends to make progress on that issue.

The Minister asked me what happened to promote training before the Government came to power. Critical as we are about the collapse of training in construction, because of the Government's lack of commitment to that training board's structure, the fact that that board exists has offered protection to the industry. Despite that, however, the number of trainees in construction is half what it was in the years 1981 to 1990.

There were 56,000 apprentices in the construction industry in 1979, but by 1993 that number had dropped to 43,000. Roughly one quarter of apprenticeships were lost. In 1979, the number of trainees in the print industry was 2,767. By last year that number had fallen to 380. That is an incredible reduction and its relevance must be obvious to hon. Members.

In the early 1980s, the Government abolished with a flourish the Print Industry Training Board along with the other industrial training boards. The Government argued that they had to be abolished because they were not fulfilling the role desired by the Government. According to the Government White Paper published in 1988,

"ITBs had 'not succeeded in raising the standard and the quantity of training in the sectors they covered to the level of our major competitors.'"

Since then, in those industries where the Government misguidedly abolished training boards, training has collapsed. *[Interruption.]*

The Minister laughs with mock scorn. When the printing industry training board was abolished, the number of trainees dropped from 2,767 to 380. The Minister does not think that is a collapse. The Government have sabotaged training, skills, the skills stock and Britain's future in the printing industry—which, of all industries, needs high skill levels.

I come from a family of three generations of printers. I was brought up in a family in which it was common to recognise the love that my own father had for his skills as a printer. The Government are dismantling that tradition. For the Minister to laugh places her and the Government in the right context. This is an anti-training Government. This is a Government of industrial destruction. This is a Government of political Luddites, who have smashed our infrastructure and left little for young people in industries such as printing and construction.

Although training has been badly hit in the two remaining boards, the number of trainees has only halved. In industries where boards were abolished, training has effectively been dismantled.

Miss Widdecombe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister shakes her head. In printing, one trade union put up £1 million to run a school of excellence. The European Community was prepared to make available £1·5 million to back that project and Salford local authority in Greater Manchester made a prime site available for the school. Some employers also wanted to put up money, but the employers collectively could not get their act together. The printing industry loses by that because, when an upturn arrives in that sector as in construction, we shall see again the skills shortages that bedevil this country every time that the Government lead us from bust to a temporary pick-up in the economy. The Minister's laughter is the laughter of a Government who have neither the sense nor the compassion to understand the problems.

Even though the Government did not want to talk about construction and engineering construction industry training and have made almost no comment, this debate provides others with an opportunity to express their views. We have had the opportunity to bring the Minister to her feet on other occasions, but she has not answered particularly constructively to questions about the construction and engineering construction industries.

I will ask the Minister one or two questions that I hope she will find easier to answer, since they were posed by her predecessor when the CITB review was completed and the board was told that it could continue another five years. At that time, the Government devised a number of tests. The CITB had to set a target for participation by ethnic minorities and women in youth training schemes. What progress has been made? Can the Minister encourage us to believe that there is realisation of the need to encourage ethnic minorities and women to enter an industry that has traditionally been male-dominated?

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): The disabled should also be encouraged.

Mr. Lloyd: As my hon. Friend says.

[Mr. Lloyd]

I am not sure that I understood the Minister's remarks about the long-term future of the engineering construction training board.

Miss Widdecombe: A statement will be made in April.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister says that a statement will be made in April, but we do not know now what will be the outcome. It would be outrageous if the Government were to destroy that board as they did the others, hard on the heels of the information that I have given the House about the collapse of training in the construction and allied industries.

Britain is sliding steadily backwards, and it will continue to do so as long as we have a Government who are anti-education and anti-training. The Government display no commitment to industrial training and offer no encouragement to train to those who are in work. They offer precious little encouragement to people out of work and to the next generation. The Government's failure to treat the engineering and construction industry training boards seriously will lead us to divide the House at the end of this debate.

4.44 pm

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Anniversaries are an uncomfortable reminder of the passage of time, but they also provide an opportunity to measure the advance and achievement of the year gone by. This annual debate gives the House such an opportunity. My interest in the construction order arises from my role as parliamentary adviser to the Federation of Master Builders. It is the third such debate in which I have taken part. Nothing much changes, except the Minister. It is never the same Minister twice. This afternoon, we are glad to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) to take her turn in starring at the Dispatch Box.

We always hear a major speech from a member of Labour's Front Bench. On the last occasion, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) took one third of the 90 minutes available for debate. This afternoon, we have three hours available, but again the hon. Gentleman has taken one third of the time. I hope that the Government do not give a full day on the next occasion because, if the hon. Gentleman were to speak for two hours, I am not sure that I have the stamina or bladder capacity to hear all that he had to say.

I welcome one change. The Government have given this business prime time by putting it first on the Order Paper, and we should welcome the opportunity to bring the construction and engineering construction industries to the attention of the nation at this early hour, rather than debate them at some dark hour of the night when only Members of Parliament are around to listen.

There have been two main developments since our last debate. I welcomed the statement made two weeks after we last debated the future of the CITB, which was under review. I expressed my appreciation of the Government's action in recognising once again the unique character of that industry and accepting that it continues to warrant exemption from Government policy of looking to industries to make independent, employer-led arrangements to provide and to fund adequate training.

The case for exemption needs to be defended. A project's time span can be as short as three months. Larger projects, of course, may be measured in years, but there are not so many of them. The construction of the Palace of Westminster took 15 years, but today it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that one can see in Hong Kong the start and finish of an office building in the three weeks that one is on holiday there. The longer-term view is no longer available to the construction industry as to other industries, so a statutory levy makes sense. Otherwise, the cheap short cut would always be taken.

The construction industry consists mainly of small firms, widely dispersed, engaged in a variety of activities. The work load is cyclical and vulnerable to changes in the economy, which makes manpower forecasting unfeasible.

The industry is highly mobile, the size of the workplace varies and businesses come and go with frightening frequency. At the same time, it is all too easy to start up a business, however inadequately trained or qualified a person may be.

The industry is therefore in a category of its own. As for health and safety, the very nature of the work in the construction industry involves much higher risks than the work in many other industries, so safe working practices are imperative, and training for safety must be given the utmost priority.

No employer would ever want to take on staff who, once they have qualified, go down the road and work for some other business, thus acting in competition with the original employer. Thus, a central statutory requirement is essential, and the need for a training levy proven. I thank the Minister for allowing the CITB an extended life of five years, thus giving it time to plan strategically for the training function of the future.

A second major development has been the improvement in the economy—*[Interruption.]* Now that my voice has recovered its full vigour, I hope that the House will be interested to hear about the improvements in the economy. The depth and length of the recession were without precedent. We have been in uncharted territory. The economy seemed to turn the corner, but then it appeared that it had not done so. There are, however, real signs of recovery now. For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, there is good news every day. That shows the difference between now and February of last year, when we were much less certain.

Mr. Graham: The other day I had a visitor from America who was travelling through from England to Scotland. He was appalled by the infrastructure problems that we face in Scotland and England—the potholes in the pavements and roads, and so on. He was shocked to find that the school that he had gone to was in a dilapidated condition and had no money for repairs.

One of the major problems, surely, has been that the Government have not injected enough cash into the infrastructure of public life, thereby employing more plumbers, electricians and builders. It is like the chicken and the egg: the Government are not prepared to train workers because they are happy with the short-term gains that arise from not putting enough money into public infrastructure. We will only get the construction industry going again, with real training, when the Government start putting money into public infrastructure to improve our

roads, schools and hospitals. That will never happen until the Government put their money where their mouth is—that is the only way to get Britain back to work.

Sir Michael Neubert: I was rather surprised, on two counts, to hear what the hon. Gentleman had to say, although I always listen carefully to his interventions. Although the United States has a powerful and successful economy, it also has areas of dereliction that are far worse than any in this country. I saw in a news bulletin from Michigan last night scenes of shocking dereliction. As for infrastructure, I was going on to refer in glowing terms to the Government's policy on infrastructure projects, on which the Government have a proud record.

I identify the following features of the economy as encouraging. First, we have low interest rates. Then, we have a low annual rate of inflation—still below 2 per cent., and we have been below that figure for a record period. We have low wage settlements, high productivity and a competitive currency. All those are ingredients for economic growth.

The building industry, however, is slow to share in the benefits of increasing confidence and expansion. In recent years—notably in the autumn statement 15 months ago—the Government have offered commendable support to major infrastructure projects. That is a welcome boost for the construction industry, but those projects have only limited trickle-down benefits for small and medium-sized builders such as those which make up the membership of the Federation of Master Builders.

The Jubilee line extension is a prime example of a project given Government support. It is tragic that it took a year for the financiers to get their act together, although the difficulties are well understood. The recovery would have been further ahead if this major £1·9 billion project, creating 20,000 jobs, had been under way 12 months ago, but it was not to be. It is a good illustration of our negative news reports that, on the day that the project was clinched, it did not feature on the BBC's nine o'clock news until 9.25 pm, and then only fleetingly.

Crossrail is another project to which I hope the Government will give whole-hearted backing. It combines private and public finance and it could transform transport in London, enabling all those Americans who pass through on their way to Scotland to enjoy efficient public transport.

To show the state of the building industry I should like to draw attention to a submission made by the Building Employers Federation and the Federation of Master Builders. The submission was made jointly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 27 October last—only three months ago, since when I am assured the position has not changed much.

Those organisations reported to the Chancellor:

"output has declined for 13 consecutive quarters since the beginning of 1990, making this the longest recession since the 1930s; the value of output is now over 15 per cent. down on its peak, a significantly larger fall than in most other industries; the housing market is still very fragile with sales well below expectations; employment in the industry has fallen by about half a million since 1989, and there have been additional cuts in employment in our associated professions and in the building materials industry; the length and depth of the recession has in turn led to very substantial and damaging reductions in our training and recruitment programmes for both apprentices and graduates. This now threatens the future capability and capacity of both small and large firms".

As I have already said, there is little prospect of improvement—indeed, there has been none in the past three months, as shown by the most recent state of trade surveys.

The building and construction industries are always the first to be hit by recession, they are always hit the hardest and they always take the longest time to emerge into recovery. Let us not overlook the importance of the industry to Britain, however. In 1992, the recession notwithstanding, the industry had a total turnover of £47 billion, or about a tenth of Britain's gross domestic product. Construction amounts to about a third of the nation's manufacturing base and even in this recession it continues to provide about 1·4 million jobs. A tenth of the entire population depends directly or indirectly on the construction industry.

Moreover, construction accounts for half of Britain's fixed investment and it has a crucial role to play in extending and improving our economic and social infrastructure. There is a widely recognised need for new investment and for more maintenance work on housing, on school and hospital buildings, on roads and factories and on other areas of construction work. To that extent at least I can agree with the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

The order is to be welcomed, but I have two reservations about it. I apologise for the fact that they are repetitious, in the sense that I have inevitably made these points before, but they remain relevant. The first criticism is that the order provides for the threshold for exemption to be increased, from £45,000 to £61,000—the intention being to exclude firms with four workers, whereas the number used to be three.

At a time when the Government talk of the need for increasing training it is ironic and contradictory that, by means of this exemption, they should reduce the obligation to contribute to the costs of training. No fewer than 35,000 businesses are estimated to be excluded from the levy—businesses effectively in receipt of subsidy for training from the rest of industry.

The raising of the ceiling reduces the board's income by £1 million. I agree with the hon. Member for Stretford that it is unfortunate, at a time when we want more training and recognise its importance, that we should start by giving the board a new lease of life for five years but then reduce its income. It is estimated that a nil threshold under which everybody would be required to contribute would yield £8·5 million. That would give a significant boost to training, and it would be money from the industry and not from the public purse.

The Federation of Master Builders represents many small and medium businesses, and it may seem odd that it should support the view that all should contribute. I support that view because I recognise its fairness. Competition is distorted because some businesses have to pay the levy. It is a small amount compared to the funds with which those firms manoeuvre, but is another competitive disadvantage for small and medium businesses that are liable for the levy. That is obvious from my earlier illustration about the level of turnover for VAT registration, which was likewise increased by the Chancellor to £45,000. The same considerations apply because revenue is lost.

In a parliamentary answer on 16 December, the Paymaster-General revealed that the revenue forgone as a result would be £40 million in the next financial year and £45 million in the following year. It is surprising that, with

[Sir Michael Neubert]

the deficit running at £1 billion a week, the Chancellor is willing to forgo that amount. One would have thought that it would be welcome.

It is understood that we want to encourage small businesses: that is the purpose of those policies. However, it could be argued that small businesses should learn from the beginning that the full cost of training and VAT liability are among the expenses that they will have to bear if they survive and succeed. That would be fairer than the current system and would remove the competitive disadvantage of having to charge customers 17·5 per cent. plus the cost of training for work that could be done for much less by a smaller business. Most customers may find the extra amount rather too much to pay. We are not debating the difference between small and large businesses because such an advantage could accrue to a business with four workers and not to one that employed only five. That is where it hurts and the disadvantage must be resisted.

I have reservations about the training and VAT exemptions. I understand that the Minister is not responsible for VAT but she will appreciate how the two come together in the minds of business men who are struggling to survive in this over-long recession. Firms that could constantly exceed the ceilings might be tempted to take short cuts and adopt devices to avoid liability. In such cases, the cash-only-no-questions-asked payment becomes attractive and the black economy beckons.

Despite those disadvantages I welcome the order and I am glad to know that it will give the Construction Industry Training Board another year to plan and execute training in one of the country's most important industries.

5.3 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Nobody is enthusiastic about the order, because everybody knows what the Government have been like over the years. It is almost 32 years since the levy raised its head, following a White Paper in 1962 and an Act in 1964. I must declare an interest because I am proud to say that I am sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union. I was also the Scottish political education officer. We carefully examine any schemes that the Government organise, and we looked at the situation in 1962 and again in 1964. When the Government do not agree with a scheme they use a Ways and Means resolution to change an Act and give power to a Minister or a Secretary of State.

In 1973, the Government used the 1964 Act to set up boards. The 1962 White Paper had examined the state of firms throughout Britain and had found that no training whatever had been provided. Everybody knows that a country without a skilled work force cannot survive. Everybody also knows that the country is bankrupt. The Minister said little, but neither did the Minister who produced the orders in 1993. The record of what was said is in *Hansard.*

The Employment and Training Act 1973 again gave power to the Secretary of State, and he used it to get rid of the training boards. At that time, there were about 27 boards, but now there are only two. The Minister spoke about reviews. The Government have had more reviews on training than any other Government, and the reasons for their reviews were, first, that they could not stomach the trade unions and people in the community being represented on the boards and, secondly, because they had no control whatever. They gave the power of supervision to the Manpower Services Commission and then removed it when they limited the 1 per cent. levy. They abolished that in the way that they abolished 25 out of 27 training boards.

The two boards that remain have been given a life of five years, but the Government do not really agree with them. That is why the Chamber is empty and why the Minister has little to say about the matter. As trade unionists and socialists, we are interested because our political philosophy greatly differs from that of the Government. They believe in consultation with big business and in consultancies for themselves.

An ordinary Member of Parliament's wage is no use to this lot. They have had their fingers in the till for years and that is why they have bankrupted the country. They wasted money on the poll tax and on other schemes on which they had to turn back. Now they are talking about training.

It is instructive to compare training in countries such as Japan and America with the state of our 16 and 18-year-olds who have to beg in the streets because the Government have taken away allowances for the kids. Their lack of investment has turned Britain into a drug-ridden, crime-ridden country. Anybody knows that a Government who will not invest in houses, schools and hospitals to give bread and butter to the electors will not survive.

We are looking at a fallen House. The Government are out and they know it. They are on the run and that is why they have little to say. The former Prime Minister has moved to the hierarchy and many more will follow, and the Prime Minister is running scared. *[Interruption.]* I could not say that they have done a good job. I get that message from my union and the workers I support, who are working-class, humble people. They get out of their beds in the morning; they do not go to wine bars and live in other ways. I want to get it all on record to let the Government know the effect of the orders.

The 1994 draft order maintains the arrangements that applied in earlier years, except in one important respect —the exclusion threshold level—which greatly concerns us.

The exclusion threshold provision in the draft order means that employers with annual payrolls of less than £61,000 will not have to pay a training levy, though they will continue to be eligible for training grants. That is unfair to other employers and employees, who should all have the same quality and reserves.

In 1993, the exclusion threshold was £45,000—a figure which was set in 1990, when the exclusion threshold was increased from only £15,000. It was a substantial agreement and represents a considerable loss to the training boards.

My union, the Transport and General Workers Union, opposes the principle of an exlcusion for small employers and objects to the proposed increase in the threshold. The Construction Industry Training Board is also opposed to the principle of the exclusion, as is the Federation of Master Builders, of which I once applied to be a member, and which encompasses 20,000 building firms with more than 300,000 employees, including many smaller companies.

As the levy is set as a percentage of the payroll, it falls proportionately on small firms and large firms. The order sets an exclusion threshold, outlined in paragraph 5 of the

schedule and article 6 of the order, expresses a sum in pounds sterling, which represents the threshold size of net payroll below which employers are excluded from payment of the levy.

An exclusion threshold has been in place for the construction levy since 1971, when it was set at £6,000. So it has moved a long way—from £6,000 to £60,000.

In 1993 and preceding years, the exclusion threshold was £45,000; however, for 1994, the Government are proposing that it be increased to £61,000. The Government's intention to increase the exclusion threshold has been known for some time. In 1992-93, the future of the Construction Industry Training Board was reviewed by the Government and on 23 February 1993, it was announced that the CITB would be reconstituted with effect from 1 May. The Government kept the training board dangling on a string, thereby destabilising its effect on employers.

The Minister decided that the CITB would continue in place for a further five years and would retain its statutory levy powers. The change in the exclusion threshold was announced by a junior Minister at the Department of Employment on 5 May 1993 when he said:

"We need to ensure that small firms are relieved of burdens and encouraged to grow. In future firms with combined payroll and payments to labour only sub-contractors of less than £61,000 a year will not be subject to the training levy".

That was bad news for the construction industry.

The Construction Industry Training Board has consistently objected to the principle of exclusion on the grounds of equity and competition. However, it reluctantly accepted on 13 July 1993 the Government's rquirements to raise the threshold, and that was included in its proposals to the Minister. The CITB was worried that, if it did not accept the new threshold, the Government might close the board down, as they closed down the other 25 boards.

The Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors also expressed serious concern at the raising of the exclusion threshold to £61,000. In addition to concerns about equity, it said that the system is open to abuse and it would not be beyond the abilities of some companies to manipulate the figures in such a way as unreasonably to gain an exclusion from payment of the levy.

The Building and Allied Trades Joint Industrial Council, which brings together the Federation of Master Builders and the Transport and General Workers Union, is also opposed to exclusions from the levy. In its submission to Ministers dated 10 November 1992, it said:

"The current levy arrangements exclude firms with combined payroll and labour-only subcontracting payments of up to £45,000 per annum".

We know that some firms work the lump and abuse the system. It continued:

"This seriously distorts competition. Such excluded small firms derive benefit from the training carried out by other firms, but can claim a grant for their own training. This is inequitable".

The Transport and General Workers Union concurs with that view. The existence of the exclusion challenges the very principle on which the levy is based—that all the firms contribute equitably to the cost of training within the industry. Small firms get all the benefits of the schemes, but with none of the cost.

More than almost any other industry, the construction industry has a need for an equitable training levy. That is because of the short-term nature of much employment in the sector; the high geographical and company mobility of employees; the high levels of skills required in many sectors of construction; the exceptional health and safety risks to workers in the industry and the importance of ensuring high standards of safety for the public in construction projects.

The CITB estimates that the yield of the levy in 1994 will be £46 million compared with £54 million. That is a big loss to the construction industry and it will mean less training, for fewer people. The decrease is largely a consequence of the decline in construction employment due to the recession; the levy is a percentage of the payroll.

The CITB estimates that the raising of the threshold will represent a loss of income of less than £1 million, but certainly many hundreds of thousands of pounds. The existence of an exclusion threshold also serves to set an informal poverty trap for the industry, whereby firms that can expand to just above the threshold level are penalised for such growth by suddenly having to make payments for all their employees.

The proposed new exclusion threshold represents a fourfold increase on the level less than five years ago of £15,000, yet the training needs of the industry continue to grow. It cannot be right that, when long-term investment in the skills of the work force is so crucial to future recovery, the CITB should lose hundreds of thousands of pounds in income so that even more small firms should be excluded from making a modest individual—but significant collective—contribution to the industry's skills.

When the industry's funds for training are declining, the further erosion by the Government of the levy powers of the Construction Industry Training Board is to be deplored. The Transport and General Workers Union and the Federation of Master Builders are extremely concerned. I read out their comments to put on record every word they said, but they fell on the deaf ears of the Government.

The Opposition are disgusted at the way in which the people of the country and especially the youngsters, have been treated. The House should decide to make a hefty contribution to the construction industry, and every other industry, to retrain our people and to provide us with a well trained and skilled work force of men and women, irrespective of their creed or colour. We will get out of this pit only by investing.

We must build roads, railways, trams, trains, hospitals, schools, police stations and training colleges. That is how to get the country back on its feet. We will not get the country back on its feet by squandering money and looking for as many jobs as we can get. The Conservatives are into every till in the City. They have been exposed.

The Government have been disgraced. For the past few weeks, they have been embarrassed to come to Westminster. I would not say that they do not know their asses from their elbows because they certainly do—*[Interruption.]* I said "ass" because I am talking to asses.

I have described what we have to put up with. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House come to this place and work hour after hour. We are telling the Government Front Bench to do its job. The Government should act honourably and pick up their morals.

5.20 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): We have just heard an extraordinary tirade from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray). He must be living on a different planet if he believes that the

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

Government have not been investing in housing, roads and other construction projects. He should come and look around my constituency.

I have an interest to declare because the Construction Industry Training Board is located in my constituency at Bircham Newton. If the hon. Member comes to Bircham Newton, he will arrive on a new, electrified railway. He will see a local health authority which has new buildings and facilities which have been created over the past 10 years or so. The hon. Gentleman will see a brand new leisure centre in King's Lynn. He will see that a very large amount of money has been spent on new housing by the local authority and by different housing associations.

If the hon. Member for Provan comes to my constituency in two weeks' time, he will see a start being made on the new A47 bypass around Tilney High End and Terrington. That will be six miles, of dual carriageway bypass just outside King's Lynn. A huge amount of Government investment has gone into East Anglia. The hon. Gentleman should come and see it because it is so important from the point of view of the construction industry. During the recession, the Government have continued to invest in fixed capital formation by way of public projects. Had they not done that, the recession in the construction industry would have been much worse.

In that context, the staff at the CITB in Bircham Newton welcomed last year's announcement.

Mr. Wray: Would the hon. Gentleman like to come to my constituency to see the crime that is rife in the city? The city has a drug problem amounting to £188 million a year. There are 12,000 drug addicts. What kind of world is the hon. Gentleman living in? He is certainly not living in the same world that I am living in. Five thousand people in my constituency have never had a job and will never get a job unless we get rid of the Government. The hon. Gentleman should go and see it for himself.

Mr. Bellingham: As my grandmother came from Glasgow, I go there from time to time. If I were a Glasgow Member, I would be proud of my city and of the fact that, two years ago, it was European city of the year. I would not be talking Glasgow down, I would be talking it up.

The staff at the CITB were extremely relieved by last year's announcement. That sword of Damocles and uncertainty which had been hanging over the CITB had been extremely debilitating. Morale at the CITB had been suffering. The lecturers and other staff had no idea what the future held for them. That is why they were so grateful for the announcement last year.

Mr. Graham: Does the hon. Gentleman recollect that the Prime Minister guaranteed in the House that every school leaver would have a training place? However, in Scotland, more than 8,000 young people have not yet received such a place. How can we expect the Government to deliver the goods when they could not deliver the goods to our young school leavers? How can we get folk into training to rebuild the infrastructure?

Mr. Bellingham: I do not entirely disagree with the hon. Gentleman. However, he must bear in mind what the Government have done. When hon. Members say that they are going to vote against the draft order, they must bear in mind that the very fact that the levy has been continued means that organisations like the CITB can help to provide that guarantee. If that had not happened, the situation would probably have been far worse. Far from trying to suggest that the Government have not done enough on training, the draft order is all about the Government doing more than many people expect them to.

I have always supported the work of the CITB. The complex at Bircham Newton is a centre of excellence which probably has no rival. The commitment and dedication of the staff must be seen to be believed. The impact on the local economy is enormous, not just in terms of local services but in respect of the indirect jobs that have been created.

I did not need to be convinced about the importance of the CITB in west Norfolk and I needed no convincing about the principle of the levy. Construction is very different from other types of industry. There can be training in a factory complex or a plant. However, as construction is so widespread and dispersed, if we did not have a levy which brought money into an organisation such as the CITB, training standards would undoubtedly fall. Above all, there would be serious problems with safety standards.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) explained, the construction industry is a very large employer. It employs 5·5 per cent. of the work force. However, it accounts for 60 per cent. of all deaths caused by falls, in spite of fast-rising safety standards. That statistic shows that if the levy and the CITB had not continued, that figure would undoubtedly be worse.

I welcomed last year's announcement and the fact that the then Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology accepted the arguments from both sides of the House. In that context, I thank my colleagues who helped me in my lobbying campaign.

On this point, I should also like to thank the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), who has been extremely active. Whenever I have asked for his support and asked him to lobby on behalf of the CITB, he has been extremely supportive. I hope that he will visit the CITB in the near future. The campaign was an all-party campaign and it is unfortunate that today's debate has become a confrontation that will result in a Division. We are talking about good news today, which should be supported across the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford referred to the problems caused by the recession. No industry has been harder hit by the recession than the construction industry. The downturn in housing and new starts in construction generally have had a very damaging effect. As a result, the number of new trainees on CITB schemes has fallen to 10,000. That is roughly one third down on the figure in the late 1980s.

That has meant that the CITB has been under pressure. Pressure has also arisen because the levy is raised on a payroll basis. As many firms have suffered a fall in their payrolls, it is hardly surprising that the levy funds have also decreased.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford and the hon. Member for Provan have said that it is unfortunate that the threshold exists and that there are exclusions from the levy. I agree. It would be far better to have a blanket levy on everyone because among the firms that benefit most from the training schemes and the work of the CITB are the very small firms. It is interesting and telling that the Federation

of Master Builders, which is represented in the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Romford, supports that point of view.

Many small builders resent paying the levy. I receive letters from small builders who want to know why they have to pay the levy. They want to know what the tangible benefits are. The levy is not popular. That the Federation of Master Builders firmly supports the idea of a blanket levy shows great foresight.

During the recession, the CITB was most imaginative. It was able to continue many schemes and build on its excellent work during the 1980s. It has been criticised for using its reserves in funding extra training places. However, that should be applauded. Over the years, the CITB has built up considerable reserves through its levy collections.

One argument was that its reserves were too high. During the recession, at least 2,000 of the 10,000 trainees participating in CITB schemes were funded by its reserves. As a result of that funding, we will have, I hope, enough trainees as the economy picks up and as employment in construction increases. There will also be courses and schemes at further education colleges and other centres as a result of that spending. If the CITB had not used its reserves in that way, the infrastructure of such courses might have collapsed.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Over the past few years, the industry has lost half a million people. I have said before that it is normally estimated that only one out of every two people who leave the industry will go back to work; therefore, 250,000 skilled people have left the industry. Even though I applaud the way in which the board has marshalled and kepts its reserves, I must point out that we are not only failing to train enough people in the construction industry but falling further and further behind with every week that passes.

Mr. Bellingham: To some extent, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Obviously, if there were an increase in training, the CITB in my constituency would expand. We must consider the complex at Bircham Newton and its schemes, and not just the immediate training places that are provided but some of the activities on which the money is spent. It is a huge operation. It would be extremely expensive to extend it in the way suggested by the hon. Gentleman and it would mean an increase in the levy. We must ask whether the Government's training budget is realistic. Bearing in mind the decline in the construction industry work force, the CITB should be applauded for maintaining such a high number of trainees—far in excess of the proportionate decline in the construction industry's work force.

I fall out with the hon. Gentleman when he criticises Sir Clifford Chetwood and accuses him of being complacent. About two and a half years ago, Sir Clifford Chetwood criticised the Government and said that they had not woken up to the fact that the recession was biting far more deeply in the construction industry than anyone realised. He is now much more supportive and he is saying that the economy is picking up and that many Government measures are the right measures. One can listen to Sir Clifford Chetwood because his approach has been completely fair throughout. When criticism was deserved, he was critical, but when praise was deserved, he gave it.

The CITB has progressed since the uncertainty was lifted. Uncertainty greatly damaged the moral of lecturers and other staff at Bircham Newton, but they are now concentrating on the task in hand and coming up with many new initiatives. Their initiatives over the past year represent a positive achievement. They have worked very closely with City and Guilds as an awarding body for non-vocational qualifications. More than 30 construction non-vocational qualifications are awarded by the CITB in co-operation with employers in the construction industry. That is very good news. On quality standards, the CITB puts great effort into helping companies to achieve BS5750 certification. More than 400 companies have been helped by a training programme at quality clubs which the board set up two years ago.

Continued investment in pre-vocational educational projects has enabled school children to use construction as a context for learning under the requirements of the national curriculum. There are now more than 70 projects at centres all over the country, and the CITB has been working closely with employers and other educational interests.

I have mentioned how crucial health and safety standards are. Any fatality in the construction industry is a tragedy. Over the past few years, there have been too many fatalities, but I wonder how many more there would have been had it not been for the work of the CITB and the constant emphasis on raising safety standards. The board has come up with a large number of initiatives, and it will continue to do so. The CITB has approached many employers in various occupational sectors. About 300,000 people are registered on industry record schemes, and that excludes those who have registered on the new construction NVQs. That is excellent progress.

I pay tribute to the CITB for using the past 12 months extremely wisely, bearing in mind all the problems that it faced as a result of the uncertainty of last year. That uncertainty has been lifted. It will now continue to exist for five years, instead of three. I welcome that because it will be able to plan for the future and build on the five specific aspects that I mentioned. At the same time, it will move forward in the context of a significantly improving economy with reducing unemployment. The CITB will have a critical role in ensuring that we have a well-trained construction work force.

Rather than regarding the debate as an opportunity for confrontation and a chance to criticise the Government, Opposition Members should give credit where credit is due, and credit is due to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has done all that he can to make sure that the levy continues and that the CITB remains in existence. That is why I support the order.

5.36 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) has spoken eloquently from his special knowledge of the Construction Industry Training Board. I agree with everything that he said about the effectiveness of that board. I suspect, however, that the Construction Industry Training Board is one of the exceptions that might prove a rule. It appears that the rule now is that the Government oppose industry-specific training boards and industry-specific wages councils whenever they can get away with it,

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

although they were not able to get away with their original intentions in respect of the Construction Industry Training Board.

It is welcome that the Construction Industry Training Board is to have at least another five years of existence; but, logically, everything that the hon. Gentleman said about the board, which has its headquarters in his constituency, can be applied elsewhere—for example, to the Agricultural Training Board. In Wales—this matter affects my constituency—the Agricultural Training Board is being run down. Its activities are being reduced from a high and active level to what might eventually become nothing much more than a residual level. The board might be driven to dealing with virtually only the aspects of health and safety that it can barely ignore, having regard to the fact that agriculture is even more prone to accidents than the construction industry.

It would be unsatisfactory to conclude the debate without registering our concern that, although the Government are prepared for the boards that we are considering to continue, they are nevertheless not prepared to apply the same logic to other industries.

One of the great advantages of the CITB—the hon. Gentleman highlighted it very well—is that it is focused and industry-specific. It understands everything about its own industry and it is able to undertake research and teach the teachers within its industry.

One of the disadvantages of having a multiplicity of agencies dealing with training—certainly, it is a problem that we face in Wales—is that there is not such necessary focus or specificity. For example, in my constituency we have the Powys training and enterprise council. We have Coleg Powys, the local FE college; the Development Board for Rural Wales; the Construction Industry Training Board; the Agricultural Training Board; the local education authority and others, all involved in training—a multiplicity of agencies which lose their focus in the generality of the training courses that they supply.

I add a comment. If the Minister were listening, she might take this point on board. I should like her comments later. One of the problems that we have with the multiplicity of training agencies is that it is extremely difficult to detect fraud. It is a fact that fraud is taking place in the training structure at present. Some of the companies and firms which are engaged to provide training courses are not doing so competently or even honestly. It is well documented that some organisations are simply fee-churning, taking as much money as possible for the minimum of training provided.

That does not happen in organisations such as the CITB. Of course, the CITB is scrutinised by its own industry. The hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), who speaks for the Federation of Master Builders, made it clear that his organisation scrutinises as well as supports the work of the CITB. However, that form of focal scrutiny is not available in the generality of training that is available for most other aspects of working life.

Some time ago, a bright but cynical, frustrated and rebellious 16-year-old girl told me that the trouble with the people who taught her was that for the most part, with exceptions, they taught only to perpetuate their own jobs. That may have been an over-cynical view of the education that she was receiving. Nevertheless, it is probably true to say that education for its own sake is a minority pursuit which is attractive to only a few, and not necessarily all, of the brightest and the best.

I am sure that such cynicism drives away many young people like her from being trained to the careers, or even interests, in which they would make the greatest contribution to society. My view and that of my party is that it is extremely important to give the highest possible priority to that wide scope of training which fits people on the broadest possible basis for the jobs and careers which might be available for them.

I deliberately chose the example of a girl because the Minister referred earlier to apprenticeships for girls. Of course, she is right. It is extremely important that there should be equality of opportunity across virtually all walks of life. It may not be 100 per cent. possible—there may be some jobs which men cannot do—but there should be virtually 100 per cent. availability of training across all walks of life to enable those who may reject other forms of education to maximise their talents and their opportunities.

The continuing economic problems of the construction industry are easily described. It was a pleasure to hear the hon. Member for Romford making his third consecutive speech in a debate on this subject. If the hon. Member will forgive me for quoting his words, on 8 February 1993 he said:

"Small builders need work now. They are clinging on by their fingertips . . . It is just as well that the CITB exists, because if the responsibility had been left on a voluntary basis, there would unquestionably have been a very sharp reduction in training—even sharper than has been the case."—[*Official Report*, 8 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 789.]

Those words are as true today as they were one year ago.

Unemployment in the construction industry has continued to rise over the past 12 months. The statistics are stark. If one looks at unemployment in construction in 1989, it was 6·7 per cent.; in 1992, it was 17·6 per cent.; and in 1993—the latest available figures—it was 20 per cent. Those figures highlight the need for industry-specific training and are evidence that small builders—and, indeed, those who are able to obtain any work in the building industry, especially at the smaller end—are, to use the hon. Gentleman's words, still "clinging on by their fingertips".

How does one maximise the potential for ensuring that, in construction and elsewhere, training is not simply training for training's sake but training for jobs? There is a respected and growing body of academic opinion led by a leading economics professor from the London school of economics who, in an interesting TSB lecture on the subject, said recently that training without the removal of long-term unemployment was a complete waste of money.

What worries many hon. Members on this side of the House is that, although the Government have announced an increase in the number of training places—and anything that takes young people who have nothing better to do off the streets is very welcome, for reasons mentioned earlier in this debate—at the end of the training as it is structured at present too many young people, especially young men, enter a period of long-term unemployment from which some will never recover.

I do not subscribe to the unrealistic view that one can restore real full employment in this country—a situation in which everyone has a job. That is a vision, but not one that can be brought to fulfilment. What is possible is to bring back an element of fuller employment. The element that needs to be brought back is the one which means that practically no one faces long-term unemployment. The

body of academic opinion to which I referred believes that there is no need for anyone, other than rare exceptions, to be unemployed for more than six months. The Government have not yet grasped the nettle of that issue or shown proof that they are dealing with the question of long-term unemployment.

Miss Widdecombe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Alex Carlile: No, the Government have not proved that they have found anything like a solution to the problem of long-term unemployment. One way of starting towards that solution—I recognise that one cannot solve the problem overnight—is to extend the principle of training levies, as my party advocated at the last general election and before. There may need to be exceptions for very small businesses which may not be able to afford such levies. Nevertheless, the imposition of training targets, reinforced by the power to impose levies when companies do not voluntarily meet proper training targets, is a sensible policy and a course which would greatly contribute to the reduction of long-term unemployment.

Sir Brian Hill, then the chair-elect of the Construction Industry Employers Council, said after the last Budget:

"Any hopes we had that this budget would help early recovery from the construction recession have been disappointed. In the short-term its effect will be to reduce further workload, jobs and to raise the costs."

There is a myriad of similar quotations and opinion. The CITB tries to stem the tide of that trend, but it is bound to be fighting a losing battle if economic policies are not tuned to ensure that employment can be increased quickly in the construction industry.

The Minister must answer a number of questions when she replies to the debate. Is she satisfied with the state of the construction industry? If not, what are the Government going to do to stimulate the recovery in the industry? Is she satisfied that housing starts are meeting the need? If not, will the Government take steps to reduce the evident housing shortage and to stimulate the construction industry by increasing resources for that industry? There must not be a skills gap, and the CITB, with its specific focus, is the best-equipped body in the construction industry to deal with the skills shortage. Does the Minister think that the same principle might be applied elsewhere in British industry and commerce?

5.53 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I had not intended to speak in the debate, but after hearing some of the speeches I feel I must bring my wealth of experience to bear in the House.

When I hear Conservative Members speaking, I fear for the future of Great Britain. I certainly fear for our infrastructure, for our young people and for people who have to live in housing which the Government have allowed to deteriorate. In Scotland, damp housing is causing tremendous anxiety and places a huge burden on people who are on fixed incomes and who want to heat their houses. What do the Government do? They sit on their backsides and allow many people to become unemployed, when those people could be reducing Government expenditure and ensuring that folk have a better quality of life and a more healthy life.

Since 1978, I have been an executive board member of an organisation which has worked hard to create training places for young people in Scotland. The organisation has looked closely at the training needs in Scotland, but I am not here to put in an advertisement for that organisation, which is a voluntary and charitable organisation.

Something has deeply worried me since 1979, when I was a councillor in Strathyclyde, and I will speak about it in my rather nice English voice rather than my broad Scots accent, so the Minister can understand me. I travel around my constituency and around other parts of the country and I concur with a friend of mine, an exiled Scotsman who lives in America, who on his visits back here has seen a terrible deterioration in the country's road network. There are potholes in the roads, and every day I hear of constituents who have fallen and broken their ankles or legs because of broken pavements. Every day I hear of parents complaining that schools are leaking, or that the schools have no books.

Perhaps the Minister does not have eyes to see the problems, but many of us do. The infrastructure of the nation is falling apart in front of us. I should be delighted to take any Minister on a guided tour of my constituency, and I could show the Minister the problems clearly. We have allowed the building industry to deteriorate. Our European partners have more bottle and brains than we have, because those nations are investing in training. While we allow our training and infrastructure to run down, nations in Europe are investing in training, in their young people and in their infrastructure. That training is allowing their folk to gain experience in house building, in sewerage and in water supplies.

I want to make sure that my point is heard and felt. Our European partners—I call them partners, and not the enemy—in France, Germany, Spain and elsewhere are training their work forces. Their training levels have been kept up while this country's training and skill levels have been pushed down. If any major public works jobs were put on the market, we would fall back into the tendering scene. So instead of Scotsmen, Englishmen, Irishmen or Welshmen working on the jobs, it will be Spaniards or Portuguese because those workers will be the most skilled. They will be able to undercut British workers by being able to do the jobs faster and with better quality.

If the Government continue to run down our skill levels, we shall not be able to meet demands to improve our infrastructure. I am a working-class guy. My background is that I was trained as an engineer and I served an apprenticeship on Clydeside. I am not a graduate of any university, but I come from the university of life and the university of experience. That experience tells me that if I want to fix a door now, I need to do it myself. At one time, a skilled joiner would have come along and fixed it in five minutes, instead of me taking an hour to do it. We cannot become a group of do-it-yourself has-been specialists. We need proper training so that our folk can meet challenges.

If we want to build new schools, those schools could be built by the finest workers Britain can produce. We should have the skills to ensure that we do not just build a school, but that we build a school which will withstand the weather and will be comfortable for our young people to be educated in.

We are throwing the baby out with the bath water. The Government have got us into such an incredible mess, with a borrowing requirement of £50 billion which has really blown us out of the window. We seem to be chasing mistake after mistake. There have been the problems in the City, and a lot of money has been squandered. That money does not seem to be going to the right places. I am sure that

[Mr. Thomas Graham]

the audience tonight could all cite cases where they know of where a construction job could come into being which could make our country a better place to live.

The other day, I went to a photo call for a local newspaper which was rightly campaigning about the environment. If a person drives along a road—particularly in a rural area—what does he see? Rubbish is dumped at the roadside by polluters, some of whom are the fly-by-night builders the Government are encouraging.

We should have proper areas where folk can dump rubbish. That is where we should put in the skills. If we go to the local council, it says, "We can't really do it, we haven't got the money." If the Government would provide the money, we would not have to see our cities, towns, and rural areas being devastated. We could provide skips, dumps and so on which could be controlled and at which skilled workers could work.

I raised a point about Scotland in an intervention in the Minister's speech. I know that we face the same problem everywhere in Great Britain as a result of the Government's lack of action and lack of commitment to the public sector. In Scotland we face a horrific situation. The Government have sought to reduce the standards for drinking water. So the folk in Scotland will be expected to drink water that is not so good as the water in Europe. It is unbelievable that Scotland, which is renowned for its surplus of water, is to be expected to drink water that does not reach the European standard. The Government have done a deal.

The Government themselves have told us that Strathclyde alone needs expenditure of £5 billion to bring the water supply up to standard. We also know that we need to spend a fortune on the sewerage systems in towns and villages throughout Great Britain. We can do that only if we have the trained work force to do the work. At present we can hardly cope with the plumbing in Westminster because we do not have the necessary skilled people. Perhaps the woman Porter could show us how to do it. She could fiddle anything by the looks of it.

We need to ensure that there is adequate training to meet the upturn.

Miss Widdecombe: So the hon. Gentleman acknowledges the upturn?

Mr. Graham: If the Minister wishes to intervene I will give way.

Miss Widdecombe: I should be delighted. Did I hear the hon. Gentleman acknowledge an upturn? Is he welcoming the recovery?

Mr. Graham: I am most grateful for that helpful intervention. I was referring to training for it if the upturn comes. I represent a constituency that has suffered raging unemployment. Factories such as the Talbot car factory at Linwood closed down 10 years ago, putting 5,000 people on the dole. The famous manufacturer of tyres, India Tyres, closed seven years ago, putting about 3,000 workers on the dole. I used to work at Rolls-Royce, where almost 3,000 workers are facing the dole.

I have seen a litany of factory closures and the decimation of the shipbuilding industry on the Clyde. I am desperate for an upturn, not for myself but for the people whom I represent. I wish to see apprentices, shipbuilders and plumbers back at work. I want to see Britain great again. The Minister should not think that I do not. My ambition is to see my young people get the full potential of their education. I want to see people living in decent houses. I want to see our people able to die in comfort and live in comfort from the cradle to the grave.

Make no doubt about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker: my wish is for Britain to be a good society and a caring and sharing nation. I do not want it to be one which is epitomised by the Government. They simply squander and fritter. I have made some remarks in the House on previous occasions about how I believe that the Government think. They seem to think so small that they have no vision. They have less vision than the people of Britain. I am sincere when I say that the next election—the European election—will show the door to the Tory party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is going wide of the training order.

Miss Widdecombe: We have been for a couple of hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have not been wide for a couple of hours. The hon. Lady spoke a couple of hours ago. If she had been wide of the order, she would have been out of order—but she was not out of order.

Mr. Graham: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can only say that, perhaps because of my bulk, my vision and my brain are such that I feel sincere and genuine about what I am saying. I do not think that the Minister has been bad with me. I believe that she sincerely wishes to improve the lot of people. But she does not listen to the advice that she receives from the Opposition. She thinks that it is purely opposition. She does not see that we are offering constructive advice and suggestions.

I will finish on this note to the Minister. I believe that the Government's role is to plan as best they possibly can. If we are training young people or any people for that matter, we should not train them for the dole. We should plan for those people to finish their training and find a job. How do we get construction workers through their training and fit them into a job? The private industry is not meeting that need. I do not believe that it has the finance. we are talking about Britain's infrastructure. The Government can take effective decisions today which would start things moving tomorrow and which we could see starting next month.

I have mentioned roads, housing and hospitals. The Government could set up projects to look after the environment and improve our sewerage and water systems. Those are things that we know need to be done. I am sure that the Minister recognises exactly what I am saying. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) asked what was the point of training folk for the dole. I agree that there is no point, but I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman agrees with me that we want to improve our infrastructure, which we all know is falling apart. The only person who does not believe that it is falling apart is the "back to basics" Minister. The rest of the country is going back to the wall. When we try to move forward we fall into a pothole. Eventually, we shall have to swim to get across the road.

The recent flooding in England is disgraceful. We have been talking about floods for years. At what stage will the

Government take preventive measures? Folk have been telling us for years that floods will happen. Do the Government use our construction industry——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not referring to training matters, and he should be.

Mr. Graham: I was going to say that we could have trained workers, fully fledged construction engineers and so on, in place working to prevent flood damage. But the Government do not plan. They lurch from crisis to crisis. We shall have an incredible problem in Britain because we will not be able to move for foreign workers building our houses and improving sewage works while our folk are unemployed. That will be because the Government have not given sufficient money to training or educating our young folk to deal with the crisis in Britain.

6.8 pm

Mr. Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Small Heath): I have listened with interest to the debate this afternoon. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made a telling point when he said that training without a proper programme for employment was in many ways a waste of money. He was right.

The constituency that I represent in inner-city Birmingham has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country. There are more than 7,000 male adult unemployed in my constituency. There is an enormous need in the constituency for infrastructure development. Apart from having one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, it is one of the most deprived areas of the country.

Like other hon. Members, I welcome the supposed reduction in unemployment in the past few months. The only problem is that no one believes the figures any longer. As everyone knows, in the past 14 or so years there have been more than 30 changes in the way in which the unemployment figures are calculated. Nobody believes the Government's unemployment statistics. It is a matter for regret but it is something over which the Opposition have no control.

However, I know for sure that more than 7,000 people in my constituency have no job. Many of them have been unemployed for a long time, and some school leavers will be added to their number. Very few of them have any prospect of finding a job.

Miss Widdecombe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Godsiff: The Minister shakes her head. I invite her to tell the 7,000 people in my constituency who are without jobs and the school leavers who will soon join the unemployment queue what will happen to them in the future. What are their prospects?

If the Government want to contribute to the country's long-term development, they should put aside other aspects of their policies and accept that it is vital to invest in skills. It is universally acknowledged that the countries which have a skilled, trained work force are those that succeed. No hon. Member, and certainly none of the acknowledged experts, will disagree with that.

It is vital that we have a trained work force to meet the challenges of the next century; but what have the Government done? They have halved the number of apprenticeships, which has resulted in the disappearance of more than 500,000 jobs in the construction industry—that figure applies to one industry alone. It is absurd that 500,000 jobs should go in an industry that is desperately important to the improvement of the infrastructure which, in many places—not least in Birmingham—is falling apart. *[Interruption.]* The Minister throws her head back and turns it from side to side, uttering an exclamation. I am more than happy to give way to her if she wishes to respond.

It is part of the arrogance that goes with being in power for 14 years that Ministers do not want to hear what the Opposition have to say. They believe that we are irrelevant and that only the Conservatives have a divine right to rule the country. Arrogance breeds contempt for democracy and, in the past few weeks and months, we have witnessed the Government's utter contempt and arrogance. They do not realise that they are answerable to Parliament and to the people; they believe that they have a divine right to be in power, running the country's affairs.

Miss Widdecombe: We have an electoral right.

Mr. Godsiff: That is true. You have an electoral right, but I was taught that in politics one should listen. You may not always agree with what you hear but, from time to time, you might find that your political opponents have something valid to say. With respect, I must say that the way in which the Minister is behaving now and the way in which she has behaved in the past two hours reveal her contempt for the points made by me, by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and by my hon. Friends the Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray).

We are not claiming to be the repository of all wisdom, but we have a point to make. Many of our constituents do not have jobs and many of our future constituents will not have jobs. Like you, Minister, we are concerned about the country's future. We believe that we must create a skilled work force, and we will support any of your proposals that help to achieve that objective.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is a courtesy in the House whereby we refer to "the hon. Member" or "the Minister" rather than to "you".

Mr. Godsiff: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker; and I apologise to the Minister.

It is vital that we create a skilled work force, but the Government are not attempting to deal with the problem. As I said, the number of apprenticeships has been halved since the Government came to power and there has been a massive loss of jobs in the construction industry. At the same time, in constituencies such as mine, there is a desperate need for improvements to the infrastructure, for the construction of new homes and for improvements to school buildings and health facilities. The Government, however, are presiding over a country in which apprenticeships are declining and in which there is massive unemployment in the construction industry.

I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) who is parliamentary adviser to the Federation of Master Builders. He spoke with great authority, but there was a contradiction in what he said. He painted a supposedly bright picture of the economy, but also mentioned the opinions of the organisation that he represents. That opinion is, in effect, that small builders are in a desperate plight, are on their knees and need help. The two pictures did not match. I have spoken to many small

[Mr. Godsiff]

builders in Birmingham and I believe that the picture painted by the hon. Gentleman of their being in desperate need of help is the right one.

Most small builders are desperate for work. Many have held on for one year, if not for two years, in the hope that there will be an upturn. For many, there are no reserves left and there is no fallback position. If there is no increase in public investment in Birmingham and areas of great deprivation, small builders will go out of business. I do not care what the so-called official statistics are because I believe in living in the real world, not in the world of statistics concocted by Government Departments—their statistics have been conveniently massaged. I am interested in the real world, and in that world many small builders face losing their businesses because there are no more orders.

Opposition Members do not seek merely to score cheap political points against the Government. We are trying to express a genuine concern and to ensure that we have a skilled work force for the future. I hope that the Government have listened to the valid points made not only by Labour Members but by members of other parties, especially by my very good friend the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. I hope that they will not view our comments with contempt in the belief that only they can be right.

We owe it to future generations to provide them with the opportunity of employment, of obtaining skills and of leading a fulfilling life. If we are not prepared to address the need for a skilled, trained work force, I fear that the future of Britain will not be bright and that the country which at one time led the industrial revolution in the world will be relegated to the status of a third-world country.

6.19 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I begin by congratulating the Minister on upholding what seems to be becoming a fine old tradition of opening debates on training levels with a short speech. I was interested to note that there only were two other speeches from the Government Benches, from the hon. Members for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) and for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), both of whom have specific interests in training. The hon. Member for Romford is a representative of the Federation of Master Builders and the hon. Member for Norfolk North-West has a constituency interest—the siting of a Construction Industry Training Board college in his constituency. They both hinted that they did not agree with the Government's voluntary approach to training and they agreed that there must be intervention in the market to ensure that training takes place.

I associate myself with the passionate comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), and for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) about the useful and effective intervention that planning for training has and the disaster that occurs if it is left to the market.

I was contemplating the meaning of the Secretary of State's recent speech, in which he claimed that going "back to basics" in the labour market would bring us success, with special reference to our debate on training, and I came across something that may enlighten us. It is a book called "The British Common People 1746 to 1946", a classic of its kind, by G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate and it gives an account of one of first apprenticeship systems in the country: the parish apprenticeship system.

That system was introduced at the beginning of the 19th century to try to deal with some of the effects of rapid industrialisation. The book states:

"many thousands of children from London and other large towns having become inmates of pauper institutions were shipped in droves to the new factory areas, there to be bound apprentices to some cotton Lord who undertook to feed and clothe them in a barrack built specially for their occupation."

It states that that kind of bonded slave labour

"died out rapidly as soon as local supplies of child labour became available; for the factory owners soon found that 'free' labour which they could engage and discharge at will came cheaper than pauper labour which they were bound to maintain throughout the period of apprenticeship, whether trade was good or bad."

That "back to basics" theme still exists in the Government's training policies today.

In many ways, it is remarkable that we are having a debate at all after 14 years of a Government who are notable only for their dogmatic adherence to laissez-faire economic doctrines. Indeed, the period has seen the abolition of no fewer than 21 of the 23 industrial training boards, leaving only the two that we are considering in the debate.

Conservative Employment Ministers come and go, with all due respect to the hon. Lady, but they all intone the same dogma: the state must get out of the way of the private sector, voluntary private provision is always better than statutory provision and the market will, as their gurus always predict, provide whatever the circumstances. We knew what nonsense that was before they tried it and now we have the evidence to prove it. As a result of their neglect and incompetence, Britain now has the worst-trained work force in the European Community. Training has been starved of resources and has suffered a £1·5 billion cut before the past election and has a budget which will continue to decline following the two Tory tax raising budgets of 1993.

Worst of all, the privatisation of 54 skillcentres led to their complete collapse when Astra, the brave, new, private company which was supposed to do a better job than the state ever hoped, went quickly and spectacularly bust, taking all the training opportunities with it.

While that makes the case for statutory provision more eloquently than hundreds of speeches ever could, Astra's collapse deprived thousands of people of access to any training at all, at a time of historically high and persistent mass unemployment. In addition we have seen a 60 per cent. reduction in apprenticeships in manufacturing between 1979 and 1990—a castastrophic fall, which has condemned hundreds of thousands of young people to a life on the dole. Britain cannot hope to complete in an increasingly high-tech world with the low skills base which we have inherited from 14 years of leaving it to the market.

As Sir John Cassels, formerly at the Manpower Services Commission, said in 1990:

"left to itself, the market will function in such a way as to cause a great deal of harm to the interests of young people, companies and taxpayers."

How right he was, and what a pity it is that the Government have chosen not to admit to the wisdom of those statements and act on them.

That is why the Labour party believes that the retention of the two remaining training boards is desirable at the margin; but, to be effective, it must be accompanied by the

creation of a national strategy for training with the work done by the boards being improved and extended to other areas of the economy. We shall vote against the orders because we feel that training provision is inadequate at all levels and is failing the economy.

However, some aspects of the structure of the boards point to the way ahead, some of which were pointed out by Conservative Members in speeches that praised the boards. The work of both boards amply demonstrates the advantages of a collective approach to training, based on co-operation and financed by a levy on employers. It is an approach which we should like to see extended and one which would allow for counter-cyclical measures to be taken in a recession—planning, in other words. At a time when companies are shedding labour and may have insufficient work to justify taking on trainees, special measures could easily be taken to protect training and to ensure that there would be no skills shortages once the recession ends.

That is precisely what the CITB did in 1992 when it spent £6·5 million on doubling the number of entrants to the industry's youth training scheme in the midst of the recession. Before we congratulate the boards too much, we must realise that they managed only to raise the number of places from 5,000 to 10,000. Such planning and counter-cyclical activity is done as a matter of course by our industrial competitors.

The collective active approach which would allow a national strategy of training to be developed and delivered, including adequate provision of the right skills and real achievement in equal opportunities policies, would also allow us to plan for a flexible and well-trained work force. That approach would prevent firms from poaching already trained people and would guarantee that training occurs. That would ensure, importantly, that every firm would accept responsibility, either for financing or for providing training, so there would be no freeloading in an a deregulated industry. That approach would also guarantee the quality of training, and would provide an efficient way in which to deliver high-quality, meaningful and recognised qualifications.

The two boards that we are discussing today ensure the continuing collection of statistics for their industry and their work also include developing databases of trained practitioners for prospective employers to consider. They also do valuable careers advice work to attract school leavers into their industries. Unfortunately, this important work is not going on elsewhere in the economy.

We believe that there was an implicit recognition of the superiority of this interfering in the market, over leaving the market to decide for itself which decimated training last year, in a Government press release announcing the retention of the CITB last year. Hon. Members will recall that, when the House last debated these orders, the CITB was subject to its periodic review. Many of us feared that it would be abolished in yet another spasm of free market frenzy. Significantly, the Government backtracked when faced with the overwhelming support of the construction industry for the board and the levy on employers which finances its activity. Rather than abolish it, the Government reconstituted it for five years.

To reconcile that flight from Thatcherite orthodoxy the then Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), commented in the official press release:

"Whilst it remains government policy that sector training arrangements should normally be non-statutory, the government is persuaded that different considerations apply in the building and civil engineering industries."

Those different considerations" turned out to be the casualisation and deregulation of the industry, which has led to a massive increase in subcontracted labour, making it cheaper and more economically rational to poach than to train. Of course, we all know that the outcome of that is a catastrophic collapse in training to the detriment of the whole economy.

Yet, the Government's "back to basics" policy in the labour market is to casualise and deregulate the rest of the British work force. By their own logic, that implies a massive extension of the training board system or a further catastrophic collapse in our already dismal training record.

That press release and the decision to retain the CITB are recognitions of the fact that the Government simply cannot leave the provision of training on a voluntary basis to the whims of the free market. I note that the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board is also currently subject to review and I await its fate with interest.

It is frightening to realise how far behind our major competitors we are in training. In 1989, the then Secretary of State for Employment, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), now the chairman of the Conservative party, where I hear he is doing a wonderful job——

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): He has not had enough training.

Ms Eagle: Yes, he has not had enough training.

He reacted to a major report "Training in Britain—a study of funding activity and attitudes" by saying:

"It's mindboggling—we still have a mountain to climb."

Five years later, we are still in the foothills and our attempts to scale the peaks have been fatally hampered by a guide who thinks that it will be easier if we all find our own way up.

I do not care a jot for the fate of the Conservative party. Indeed, I hope that it follows the example of its Canadian counterpart into well-deserved oblivion at the next general election. However, I care about our young people and the future of our country. I know that training is vital to ensure the future prosperity of both. As the youngest Labour Member and the youngest woman in the House perhaps I have the advantage over some hon. Members in that I still remember what it was like to be young.

It angers me more than I can say that I regularly meet people in the mid to late twenties who have never worked, and not for want of trying. Their prospects of working are still not improved. The fact that entire generations of our young people have been written off, fobbed off with Mickey Mouse training schemes, denied benefit, and blamed for their predicament by this Government is a matter of record and a serious indictment of Government policies.

I cannot stand the poverty of this Government's ambitions for our young people. They are content to jeopardise all our futures in pursuit of a profoundly mistaken dogma which has brought us nothing but mass unemployment, economic failure and a breakdown of social cohesion. They are content not to strive for the gold medal in training provision and to unlock future prosperity for Britain, but instead settle meekly for the wooden spoon.

[Ms Eagle]

It is time to end the experiments with voluntarism. It is time to admit that they have not worked. It is time to create a real and serious national strategy for training.

6.34 pm

Mr. Widdecombe: This has been an interesting debate, if a somewhat wide-ranging one. I am surprised to hear the Opposition say, first in the person of the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and then in the person of the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), that they intend to oppose the orders and to divide the House.

That statement has been made by Labour Members who, throughout the debate, have stood up and said that they represent the "working class". I would not use that phrase because I find it patronising, but they have. *[Interruption.]* It does not matter how they pronounce the word "class". I think that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) would not say it quite like his colleagues. I look forward to hearing how an hon. Member with his slender majority can explain to his constituents why he will vote against these orders and cause the training boards in question to have less funds for training.

Let us work through what would happen if these orders were defeated. We know that it will not happen because Conservative Members will ensure that the measures are not defeated. What are the Opposition trying to cause to happen by voting against the measures? First, the industry training boards concerned would be able to raise a levy of under 1 per cent. only, because they would not have permission to go ahead with more. Therefore, they would need to use their reserves to maintain a training programme.

Nevertheless, it would lead to a massive reduction in training, a reduction in apprenticeships and a reduction in the adult training work force. It would contribute to skills shortages. There would be no advance towards training for the recovery and for emerging from recession, which several Labour Members told us that they consider, rightly, to be important. There would be redundancies and the board would lose highly skilled staff. If that is the outcome that Labour Members want to achieve by defeating these orders, I look forward to hearing how they will explain that in detail to their constituents.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: First, I will take the Minister outside afterwards and explain to her how this place works. If the Government were to agree with us that the orders should be withdrawn, we would expect them to table orders making proper allowances for those boards. The hon. Lady makes an excellent point in justifying the existence of the training boards in all those industries where the Government abolished them. Does she agree that training was stopped in those areas?

Miss Widdecombe: Given the arrangements that are in place for training within the construction industry and the engineering construction industry, if the boards are not allowed to raise the sums that they wish to raise in order to deliver training that they assess to be necessary, we shall face the situation that I have just outlined. The hon. Member for Stretford says that if the Opposition defeat the order, the Government will come back and do something different. *[Interruption.]* What we have done is what the industry——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We need a little training here, or at any rate a reminder that seated interventions, particularly when they are constant, are not acceptable to the Chair.

Miss Widdecombe: I am delighted that such training is being given to the Opposition.

We are doing what the boards have asked us to do. That is what we endeavour to deliver in the House tonight. If Opposition Members are seriously trying to defeat the order, they are going against the wishes of the boards, whom they have been lauding as necessary. Of course they can vote against it, because they know that they will be defeated. That is precisely the sort of irresponsible attitude that has cost them four elections and which causes them to sit in the thoroughly deserved position of the Opposition Benches, where they will stay.

I have been challenged to talk about Astra. The hon. Member for Wallasey stood at the Dispatch Box and said that the collapse of Astra has denied training to hundreds of people. It has done no such thing. It did not have a monopoly. When various branches of Astra were closed, it became the immediate duty and responsibility of the training and enterprise councils to provide replacement training through other providers.

We made a point of asking the TECs concerned whether there were difficulties in finding that training provision. The reason why we asked that was because of Opposition assertions that many people would be without training. We have not received any indication from those TECs that they have had difficulties.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister tell us a little more about Astra? When she asked the TECs whether they could find training places after the collapse, did she also ask them to give details of the way that they conspired with Astra to cheat? They were making up non-existent trainees and inventing non-existent jobs for them. All that is well documented. Has the Minister done a single thing to bottom out those allegations?

Miss Widdecombe: We have no evidence of cheating by TECs. What we do have, and what it is right that we should put into place, are proper audit procedures. We audit what the TECs supply, what they claim for and what the outcomes are of what they are claiming for. That system is in place.

Mr. Lloyd: If the Minister is so confident that the auditing procedures are accurate, why has a recent report been highly critical of the TECs and waste? But more importantly, it is well known and well documented that Astra was fiddling. I can provide the information, but the Minister has already had it. Why has she not asked the TECs what went on? When the TECs were happy to allow that to take place and public money was corruptly being abused by that company, why did the Government not ask those questions?

Miss Widdecombe: I part company from the hon. Gentleman. What I was trying to indicate, and my reply was precise, was that there was no evidence of cheating by TECs. The hon. Gentleman has just asked me how TECs could allow that to take place. I do not think—there is no

evidence to suggest it—that there has been deliberate malpractice by TECs. But where anything of that sort arises, and where there is ever any evidence to suggest that public money may have been misused, or that the value for public money may not have been met, that is something worthy of investigation, which would come up through the ordinary audit procedures.

Mr. Lloyd: We are making a little progress. Let me ask specifically whether the Minister accepts that Astra cheated. If so—there is no doubt that it did—why did she not undertake any investigation into what took place? It was public money. It was our money—taxpayers' money. She should have looked after it for us.

Miss Widdecombe: I have already said to the hon. Gentleman that we have audit procedures that trace the money that TECs use, and what it is used for. Those audit procedures are in place.

Mr. Tony Lloyd *rose*——

Miss Widdecombe: If the hon. Gentleman cannot understand that when I have said it three, four, or even five times, I do not think that a sixth intervention will take him very much further forward. I should like to answer the rest of the debate, including the points that he has raised.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Miss Widdecombe: No. I am sorry, but I should like to make progress.

The one thing that has come through consistently as a theme from the Opposition tonight has been a picture of gloom and doom about employment and training prospects for young people. I must tell the Opposition that if they had adopted the reasoned tone of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) and said that they wanted to put proper training in place and that they have criticisms about some of the things that are happening, that would be a rather different story.

National vocational qualifications are new. I would be the last to say that there is no further refining or improving to be done. It is quite obvious that there must be. But that is very different from saying that the whole of the Government's strategy and training programme is a Mickey Mouse set-up.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: What strategy?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, which I understood that Madam Deputy Speaker had forbidden, asked, "What strategy?" I shall tell him. The reason why I want to tell him is not because I do not think that he does not know, but because I want to put on the record exactly what the Government are doing, not only for the young people of this country, but for those of later years. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Any hon. Member who has the Floor is entitled to be heard. It is getting to the point where I am finding it difficult to hear because of mutterings on the Benches. That is not good enough.

Miss Widdecombe: What do you, Madam Deputy Speaker, expect? There are no arguments from the Opposition. Indeed, when the hon. Gentleman started his speech, I thought that I was hearing him reading the same speech that he gave last year. There were no new ideas coming out.

The Government's training strategy is to develop a system of several routes to be available to young people when they leave school, which are then continued throughout life. We want a system where matching vocational training and vocational qualifications run alongside the more recognised route of academic qualifications. What worries me about those who pour scorn on NVQs, and those who deride the skills revolution and the training programme, is that they are encouraging young people and, more importantly, their parents to think that those qualifications and courses—the vocational as opposed to the academic route—are somehow second-class or worthless. They are neither.

At a time when we are trying to encourage parents to look seriously at vocational as well as academic qualifications, it is grossly irresponsible to try to portray NVQs as some sort of unmitigated failure. Even in the critical reports that have emerged recently, there has been a recognition and encouragement of, and total support for, the overall strategy of NVQs.

The skills revolution is recognised by the construction industry. It will be our policy to pursue that skills revolution. But it would be far more beneficial for the people of Britain, for our work force and development, as well as for those who have to teach and train within it, if we could at least go forward with a positive attitude, rather than trying to persuade every young person that there will be no training and no jobs when they leave school. Neither of those statements is true.

We heard many statistics earlier——

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister give way?

Miss Widdecombe: I am longing to come back to the hon. Gentleman, but will certainly give way.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister reiterating that we are guaranteeing every school kid wherever a training job? By the way, Minister, just for your information, I understand that my boundaries will be changed and that my seat might be safer.

Miss Widdecombe: What we guarantee young people is that there is a choice. They can stay on in education, but the Opposition always pour scorn on that option. It is a solid choice, because 77 per cent. of young people choose to do, or they can find work, and 13 per cent. do that. They can also take up a training place. I have consistently given the House the figures relating to the number of young people who wait more than eight weeks for those training places. That number is going down and I now believe that it is controllable, although I look forward to further improvements. That is the essence of our guarantee.

I want to draw attention to one Government training scheme, Investors in People, which has not been mentioned in the debate. I look to the Opposition to support it, so I shall study their reactions to my remarks carefully. That scheme is designed to train every person within an organisation, whether management or worker, whether he is a full-time, casual or part-time employee. It is geared to train those people in the aims and objectives of their business and to bring on their personal development. It is centred on NVQs level 3. No such programme has ever been introduced by any Labour Government. It is light years ahead of what many of our competitors are practising in Europe.

[Miss Widdecombe]

I have been waiting to see the nods of welcome for that scheme from the Opposition. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde almost managed to nod, but he changed his mind quickly when he saw that none of his colleagues was doing the same. We should all welcome it.

I want NVQs developed to the extent where it should be possible to have two people at a university, one of whom got there via the ordinary academic route while the other gained his place through work-based training and competence. I will not argue that there is no such thing as a further necessary refinement to NVQs. It is a bit of an insult to the lead industrial organisations, however, to those within the Business and Technician Education Council and those connected with City and Guilds to pour scorn on NVQs, which those people may have developed.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): The hon. Lady said that she was waiting for a reaction from the Opposition, but I suppose that we have been absolutely stunned into silence by her statement that we are light years ahead of all other European countries. I do not believe that anyone, even those who have greater faith in the Government's training schemes than we do, believes that we are light years ahead of the German training system.

Miss Widdecombe: As *Hansard* will show, I did not say, "all other countries". I actually said, "many of our competitors . . . in Europe". Few of our competitors have the equivalent of our defined national education and training targets. They were the subject of a debate a few weeks ago when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education made it clear, target by target, how the Government were managing to achieve the targets set not by us, but by industry. It knows what targets should be set.

Mr. Spellar: Can the Minister tell us which of those major countries we are ahead of?

Miss Widdecombe: The trouble with the hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I will. The hon. Gentleman interrupted just as I was getting to the point that I was trying to make. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] If hon. Members really want to hear the answer, they should listen.

As I was just explaining, we are light years ahead in setting defined targets and having a system of matched vocational qualifications and academic training. The hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) is perfectly right to pick out Germany as a leading example in Europe. What is the essence of the German system? It is designed to run vocational qualifications alongside educational ones. They are given equal esteem. Vocational qualifications are not considered as second class or second choice, but that is what the Opposition have suggested, patronisingly and rudely throughout the debate. They have suggested that those who do not opt for the academic route have chosen a second-class option.

The essence of the German system is respect for NVQs. If we want to compete with Germany, it is time that the Opposition caught up with that sentiment. It is time that they welcomed the measures that we have taken to introduce NVQs.

Mr. Tony Lloyd *rose*——

Miss Widdecombe: If the hon. Gentleman is about to welcome the NVQs, I will willingly give way; if he is going to whinge, I will not give way.

Mr. Lloyd: Despite what the Minister believes, the Germans do not have NVQs. They operate a high-quality vocational training system. Many people enter it after they have already completed high-quality academic training. The Minister said that industry supports the current levy system. Can she confirm that it was Ministers from the Department of Employment who told the CITB that it has to raise the small firms exemption? It was not the other way round.

Miss Widdecombe: As usual, the hon. Gentleman has not even bothered to understand the workings of the system. Once NVQs are fully developed, it should, of course, be possible for people to take them after they have undergone academic training and for them to feel no shame about working for that qualification. However, as long as the Opposition portray NVQs as a second-class, low-grade alternative to academic training, people are not likely to want to take such a qualification. That will make the job of making that transfer from academic training to NVQs even harder.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Does my hon. Friend accept that NVQs are one of the greatest sources of blessing and that hundreds of thousands of people have benefited from that training? Would she care to reflect on where she was on 19 November, when she presented an award for an NVQ to a company in the constituency that I have the honour to represent?

Miss Widdecombe: I will take my hon. Friend's word that that ceremony took place on 19 November, because my memory is not so exact. I remember the occasion, however, and I congratulate the firm.

In the short time left, I wish to answer the hon. Member for Stretford, who asked me about Scotland. He expressed a great deal of derision and asked me whether I knew what would happen in Scotland, because he said that he did.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I did not say anything about Scotland.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, he did. He said in so many words that what we have proposed will not apply to Scotland. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that he is anxious to rush in without ascertaining the facts, whereas I am a bit wiser. In case he has forgotten, he mentioned modern apprenticeships.

Model schemes will be developed by industrial training boards and industrial training organisations to cover Scotland. My hon. Friends in the Scottish Office will meet to consider carefully how best to develop corporate and comparable arrangements in Scotland, based on SVQs, Scottish vocational qualifications. That is the answer for which the hon. Gentleman asked.

The hon. Gentleman said that young people have nothing to look forward to except long-term unemployment. He should note that one quarter of those unemployed leave the register within one month, half leave it within three months and two out of three leave the register within six months. He should stop spreading doom and gloom. He should start putting heart into our young people. He should welcome what we are doing and cringe with shame at the lack of ideas from the Opposition.

6.59 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister might like to care to listen to what I have to say. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because she was pressed on the issue. She seems to be having an argument with the Whip at the moment about why she sat down early. We want to know why there has not been a full investigation into what happened in Astra. She was asked that specific question by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

The Minister said that auditing arrangements were in place to allow auditors to follow the use of public moneys by training organisations. If so, are we to presume that the people who are responsible for auditing the TECs are equally responsible for going to what remains of Astra to establish precisely what did happen concerning the phantom trainees and the other schemes that it established for the purpose, in effect, of robbing the taxpayer? The Minister herself identified the fact that taxpayers' money was used, and was not fully accounted for in that particular case. Perhaps the hon. Lady will, in the one minute that remains, say whether auditors will examine what happened in the Astra case.

Miss Widdecombe: With the leave of the House, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain how the comments made by two Labour Members can be compatible. The hon. Member for Wallasey said that as a result of Astra's collapse, hundreds of people will no longer receive training—but the hon. Member for Stretford said that training was not real, it was all Mickey Mouse stuff, and we were putting taxpayers' money into nothing. Does the hon. Lady want to maintain a Mickey Mouse set-up, or are we to accept the hon. Gentleman's version? Which is it?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am here to ask questions, not answer them. I put this to the Minister the fourth time. Will an investigation be undertaken of what happened at Astra? The hon. Lady has 30 seconds left to answer from the Despatch Box.

Miss Widdecombe: I might be more impressed by the hon. Gentleman's intervention if he had been present for the debate, which he was not.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to order [14 January]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 320, Noes 272.

Division No. 80] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick

Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*

Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER then put the Question on the other motion requiring to be decided at that hour:—

The House divided: Ayes 320, Noes 267.

Division No. 81] **[7.16 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus

Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackay and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hulton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg

Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 2 December, be approved.

British Waterways Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

7.30 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I recall that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, were in the Chair when we debated the Second Reading of the Bill. We therefore seem destined to be bound together by British Waterways. It is not a bad thing to bind us together. It is an admirable organisation and I am delighted to be associated with the Bill.

British Waterways does a great deal of good work. The canal system is close to the hearts of many people in Great Britain because it is the oldest canal system in existence and because many people derive a great deal of recreational enjoyment from it.

Since Second Reading, two significant events have occurred. The first is the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The second is the retirement of the then chairman of the British Waterways Board, Mr. David Ingman. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all his work as chairman of the board. He has been a doughty champion of the waterways and there is no doubt that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's conclusions are a reflection of his contribution.

The conclusions of the MMC report found that there had been a transformation in British Waterways since its 1987 report. The MMC finds that British Waterways has made good progress in the development of business planning, the introduction of waterway standards, the revision of project control guidelines and the introduction of a new computerised accounting and reporting system. It has changed from a centralised organisation orientated towards administering a grant to one developing a strong commercial outlook. The MMC commends British Waterways and its staff for their work and I, too, commend them.

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

I said on Second Reading that the Bill was about safety. The key to the revival motion is that those issues are just as important as they were then, if not more so. Therefore, as the Committee has spent so long considering the various issues, there are strong arguments for it to complete its work and let the House decide.

Technically, it is not the function of the House to debate the merits of a Bill on a revival motion. As in all cases, they were examined in some detail on 17 May 1993. Hon. Members drew attention to several elements which were causing them or their constituents problems, and I will explain in due course what British Waterways has done to help resolve them.

British Waterways is responsible for maintaining the fabric of our 200-year-old inland waterway system and its inheritance from the original canal proprietors included 2,000 miles of waterways, 1,500 miles of continuous towpaths, more than 4,700 bridges, 450 tunnels and aqueducts as well as 2,100 listed structures and monuments and 64 sites of special scientific interest.

The Bill is about securing the future of that inheritance and of the availability of the waterways for public use. It is promoted by British Waterways primarily to safeguard waterway users and the owners and occupiers of adjoining land to create new conservation, environmental and recreational duties and to enable British Waterways to manage the waterways more effectively and to generate more income for reinvestment in them.

The House will appreciate that the timely repair of waterways and associated works is essential in the interests of public safety, particularly in emergencies which give rise to the risk of serious dangers to persons and property. It is generally accepted that there is a need for specific powers granting those authorised by the board the right to enter land for such purposes. Landowners' and farmers' representative bodies such as the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union agreed a code of practice as to how entry should be effected in such circumstances.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Everyone accepts that there is a need for that power. I wonder whether there are any instances where the power is not being granted in practice. Some of the first canal Acts go back to about 1730. It seems puzzling if in all the time since then that power was never needed. No one has ever been able to quote to me an example where the lack of that power resulted in difficulties.

Mr. Jones: There have been some close-run incidents. It is necessary to take the appropriate level of risk assessment and it is therefore important to have those powers.

Hon. Members will recall that the subject was referred to in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of May 1987 which drew attention to the fact that British Waterways has no effective statutory rights of access over private land, even in the direst emergency when life and property might be endangered. In that respect, the board is unusual among statutory undertakers in having no general powers to enter land even to deal with such emergencies.

In contrast, the National Rivers Authority can effect entry on to premises for the purpose of carrying out its water resources function and to act without notice in an emergency. Is its capacity as a navigation authority, the NRA is in a different position from that of British Waterways because the natural rivers for which it is mainly responsible—it has only a few canals—do not present the same risks.

Of particular concern is the stability of canal embankments where serious difficulties can occur if there is over-topping and erosion of the embankment, or if tree roots penetrate the lining of the canal, leading ultimately to instability and collapse of the embankment. In my speech on Second Reading I mentioned the example of the breach on the Lancaster canal caused by tree root penetration.

Since that debate, it has come to my attention that Scottish National Heritage, which was formed in 1991 by the amalgamation of the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland, was given express powers of entry to land in the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991, even for such apparently mundane activities as surveying land and estimating its value. The Act also conferred similar powers on river purification authorities and others for the purposes of discharging their functions, including entry on to land in emergencies.

Given the volatility and destructive power of the water in the canals, it has to be equally or more important for British Waterways to have the same powers and that the obstruction of their exercise should be deterred, as proposed in the Bill, by the risk of prosecution as in the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991.

Part III of the Bill would impose new minimum fire and safety standards on boats and prevent pollution of the waterways. Home Office statistics show that between 1983 and 1988 there were more than 500 fires on boats on inland waterways.

I referred to a particular spectacular example in my speech on Second Reading. It occurred on the River Thames at Radcott in the April 1993, when a cabin cruiser caught fire and was completely gutted. The fire endangered other craft moored at the site and the owners of the vessel suffered burns. It was only due to the heroic efforts of an off-duty ambulanceman who got into the water and pulled the flaming boat away that a much more serious incident was averted.

The cause of the fire is believed to have been the escape of excess fuel from an ill-fitting carburettor. The fuel was ignited by the ignition spark of the engine. If the vessel had complied with the boat safety standards, the electrical system in the engine space would have been ignition protected and the excess fuel would have not ignited.

The boat safety standards will require all hire and pleasure boats on British Waterways' system to meet minimum safety requirements before they are permitted to come on or stay on the waterways. They are now referred to as harmonised standards as they have been adopted by the National Rivers Authority and the Broads Authority as well as a number of other navigational authorities.

There have been other incidents since the boat safety standards were last debated in the House. On the Aire and Calder navigation at Stanley Ferry in August 1993, a 35 ft long narrow boat exploded, blowing off a 15 to 20 ft section from the back of the boat. The explosion blew a transom across the canal. It was fortunate that the boat was not moored facing in the opposite direction as the transom would then have blown into the pub adjacent to which the boat was moored.

It is believed that the explosion was caused by a leak of liquid petroleum gas from a gas bottle. The gas locker in which the bottles were stored was not gas-tight and therefore did not vent the leaking gas overboard as will be required by the boat safety standards scheme. As a result, the gas leaked into the body of the vessel and was ignited by the pilot light of the gas refrigerator on board. That explosion would not have occurred had the vessel complied with the board's safety standards scheme.

Another incident involving a leaking gas bottle occurred on the Bridgwater canal at Agden wharf in December 1993. Here again, the boat safety standards scheme would have required overboard venting as in the case of the Stanley Ferry incident. There was no such venting and an explosion and fire destroyed a 70 ft narrow boat.

Fortunately, no one was hurt in either of those explosions. The Manchester Ship Canal Company which operates that waterway has for several years been following the lead of British Waterways in implementing the boat safety standards scheme, which is clearly desirable in the interests of all the users of waterways, whether or not they are on vessels.

Environmental and recreational duties are close to my heart. Clause 23 will discharge an obligation, which has been accepted and supported by the Government, that British Waterways should be subject to the same general environmental and recreational duties as the NRA and the privatised water and sewerage companies. The clause is directly adapted from section 8 of the Water Act 1989 and it uses the same language.

The report on British Waterways by the Select Committee on the Environment, which was published in August 1989, recommended that a duty similar to that under section 8 of the Water Act 1989 should be applied to the British Waterways Board. The Government endorsed that recommendation in their response in February 1990 and it is now before the House.

Following Second Reading, British Waterways had further discussions with those who at the time still had outstanding petitions. The majority were concerned about proposals embodied in clause 27 for the extinguishment of a variety of unexercised rights which had been conferred on landowners and others at the time of the original canal enabling Acts passed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The extinguishment of those rights was designed to create certainty where there was none and to permit the board to make the best possible use of its property assets. Those provisions in clause 27 were often, the only remaining barriers to the withdrawal of a considerable number of petitions, including several on which the parties had otherwise reached agreement. Therefore, the board decided after careful consideration to propose to the Select Committee the deletion of clause 27 in its entirety. Having given the petitioners concerned assurances to that effect, virtually all the outstanding petitions were withdrawn immediately after the Committee proceedings opened.

It would be idle to assume that the withdrawal of clause 27 has solved any difficulties other than those encountered in the promotion of the Bill. The problems which the actual or theoretical existence of the ancient unexercised rights created for British Waterways will not go away. A vivid example of that was given to the Select Committee when the Bill was in the other place.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): The hon. Gentleman said that the vast majority of petitioners have now withdrawn their objections. Are some petitioners still objecting and, if so, why?

Mr. Jones: I will address those points in due course.

As I was saying, a vivid example was given to the Select Committee when the Bill was in another place. It concerned a 30 acre site intended for comprehensive redevelopment adjoining the Trent and Mersey canal. The developer wished to drain the whole area into the canal, which was on a steep embankment, by means of an existing outfall and claimed to be entitled to do so as a right under the enabling Acts for that canal.

British Waterways' engineers calculated that in a one in 25 year storm the available freeboard in the canal at the lowest point on that pound would have been used up within 15 minutes, leading to the immediate over-topping of the towing path by the storm water and to the failure of the embankment. A breach there would have had catastrophic results which would have affected houses, a public house, a filling station and a factory on the road below, posing serious risks to life and property.

To avoid those consequences, British Waterways calculated that an overflow pipe would need to be installed to carry the surplus water to the nearby River Trent. At a conservative estimate, it would have cost more than £85,000 for the engineering works alone, the cost of land acquisition being in addition. The only beneficiary would have been the developer himself, and no benefit whatever would have accrued from the expenditure to the waterway or its users. It is perhaps fortunate that the Japanese backers of that development decided to invest their funds elsewhere, so the problems did not materialise.

Nevertheless, such problems could arise again, either at that or many other locations on the waterways system. For that reason, and because British Waterways believes that the existence of such rights and the exercise of them in modern conditions could be actually harmful to the maintenance and integrity of the waterways, the following statement was made to the Committee when British Waterways sought to withdraw the clause:

"Clause 27 of the British Waterways Bill would have extinguished certain rights conferred on riparian owners and others by early Canal Acts passed in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The rights in question included rights to construct works affecting canals, drainage and abstraction rights and also sporting and fishing rights and rights to use pleasure boats which by now are unenforceable or else incompatible with modern legislation.

The clause was included in the Bill as claims to exercise such rights could lead to severe operational and other difficulties, including the impairment of safety. It is moreover extremely difficult in modern circumstances to determine who, if anyone, is now entitled to the rights. For all these reasons the Board decided that clause 27 should extinguish the rights completely.

After a full hearing before the Opposed Committee of the House of Lords, the Committee found that the case for the clause was proved. The clause was further amended following third reading in the House of Lords but was allowed to remain in the Bill.

Following the First House Committee stage, clause 27 continued to be controversial. Petitioners and others have represented that they would be prejudiced by the clause, if it were to become law in its most recent form. Attempts to reach some form of agreement with all those who opposed the clause have in most cases been unsuccessful. All these factors have required the Board to re-examine the basis of the clause and the wider questions related to it in the light of representations made. In

[Mr. Jones]

these circumstances, it has been decided to seek leave of the Select Committee of the House of Commons to withdraw clause 27.

In seeking to withdraw the clause, the Board are conscious that the difficulties which it was intended to remove still have to be resolved. They therefore wish to emphasis that they may have to promote legislation in the future on the subject of ancient rights, and works and activities affecting inland waterways. Any such powers will be sought following a wide consultation exercise which will enable those who have petitioned against clause 27 to express their views on any new proposals."

Clause 27 petitioners apart, when the Committee stage began on 26 June 1993 the possible maximum number of outstanding petitions was seven, of which five were lodged by individuals and two by fringe houseboat groups. I say the "possible" number because some of those concerned did not reply to correspondence and the board was unable to determine whether they were minded to continue their opposition. In the event, four individual petitioners presented themselves to speak to their petitions.

So far, the Committee—under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie)—has sat for a total of 13 whole or part days and the record of its proceedings extends to more than 800 pages of transcript. It is almost at the end of its examination of the Bill, but it is understood that the members of the Committee may rightly wish to go out on visits to see something of the canal system and to take further evidence from two of the petitioners, who are no doubt as anxious as the promoters to see the resumption and completion of the Committee's examination of it.

All concerned have invested considerable time and money in the project—a point well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), who is a member of the Private Bill Committee and who asked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for this debate.

In the form in which the Bill went into the Opposed Committee, it had the support of all British Waterways' principal user groups, including the Inland Waterways Association,, the British Marine Industries Federation, the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators, the Royal Yachting Association, the National Association of Boat Owners and the Residential Boat Owners Association, which are all completely independent of British Waterways and are rightly regarded as the representative bodies of users.

They are all frustrated and perplexed that the Bill Committee cannot be allowed to get on with and complete its job unless this motion is passed tonight. Any hon. Member who continues to have reservations about any elements of the Bill will have an opportunity to raise them at the next stage when it returns to the Floor of the House for further debate.

Quite apart from the energy that has gone into the promotion of the Bill, 1993 has been a busy and eventful year for British Waterways. The appointment of the ombudsman, which I announced in my speech in opening the Second Reading debate, was made later in the summer and took effect from 1 September. The board's choice for the appointment was Lady Ponsonby of Shulbrede, a practising barrister and fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, who has considerable experience in the resolution of disputes—even if they are not related to waterway management. Her appointment was welcomed by the users of the board's waterways. She is accepted as entirely independent. I am told that she already has a modest case load of complaints to investigate. Unlike other organisations investigated by other ombudsmen, British Waterways has agreed to be bound by the waterways ombudsman's findings.

The year 1793 marked the height of canal mania, when 62 different canals—more than half the canal system—were being planned or built, and dozens of private Acts authorising their construction were passed by Parliament. The construction of the canal system, Britain's first transport network, was one of the main factors leading to the industrial revolution. Many major towns and cities, such as Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent, owe their existence to canals.

One of the Acts was for the Grand Junction canal, now part of the Grand Union canal, which last year celebrated its bicentenary in a number of diverse ways, including cavalcades, rallies and the opening of the long-distance towpath walk from London to Birmingham. "Canals 200", as British Waterways called those year-long festivities, was devised and organised by British Waterways to celebrate that significant bicentenary. It was the largest nationwide celebration ever held on the canal system. As the Grand Union canal runs the length of my constituency, I was particularly delighted at that.

There were 175 "Canals 200" festivals, open days, exhibitions and events throughout the canal system in 1993, attended by 620,000 people. British Waterways had a presence at all the events, ranging from banners and small display and information units to the major "Canals 200" exhibition. In May, major festivals were held simultaneously in Gloucester, Rickmansworth and Nottingham to launch the celebrations. In July, the Royal Mail issued the first inland waterways commemorative stamps. The "Canals 200" touring exhibition is visiting major museums. "Canals 200" has been extremely successful in raising the profile of inland waterways in the minds of the public.

The campaign has quadrupled British Waterways' national media coverage, reaching an estimated 14 million people. The promotion has been a great success, and links have been formed with local canal societies, inland waterway groups, hire boat operators, museums and others. That has encouraged British Waterways to extend the celebrations through 1994—the bicentenary year for 14 Acts of Parliament. British Waterways is currently working with volunteer groups throughout the canal system to help publicise and organise boat rallies and festivities in celebration of "Canals 200".

British Waterways is also planning to extend its network of cruising waterways by applying for a ministerial order to upgrade the Sheffield and Tinsley canal from remainder to cruising status. The almost derelict canal basin, lying virtually in the centre of the city of Sheffield, is at the heart of an overall redevelopment scheme that will lead to the refurbishment of historic buildings, the dredging of the adjoining waterway and the repair of its walls, and the total regeneration of that part of the city.

The canal and basin are integral to, and a vital component of, the regeneration project, which has the active backing of the Sheffield development corporation and Sheffield city council. The reclassification of the waterway and the guarantees it holds for its future management by British Waterways will be a crucial

element in the attraction of investment for the overall redevelopment, as has been the improvement and upgrading of the waterway itself.

The year 1993 also saw the return to British Waterways of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which published its report on 7 January this year. It found that there had been a transformation in British Waterways. The report, which was nearly 300 pages long, contained almost 50 recommendations that British Waterways hopes will help it to continue to make improvements. That is the purpose for which British Waterways embarked on the promotion of the Bill in 1990.

While the promotion has not been without its difficulties, many of us are now aware of the considerable groundswell of opinion in favour of its enactment. Many hon. Members have received letters to that effect from British Waterways' representative user groups, which generally regard the intervening years of debate and negotiation as having been well spent. From that, a much greater understanding has grown among users of the board's problems, and vice versa. It has given solid commitments to the citizens charter, a leisure and tourism strategy, and other commitments on which all users can rely.

An enormous amount of progress has been made on a system that, as I said, provides a great deal of pleasure for many people, but the main considerations that underlie the Bill are ones of safety. That matter has rightly been addressed at considerable length by the Committee. It wants to complete its deliberations, which is important for the future of the canal system. I therefore have no hesitation in commending the revival measure to the House, and I hope that the House will support it.

7.54 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I declare an interest because I have sat on the Committee for 13 sittings encompassing more than 50 hours of careful consideration of the facts. I ask the House to continue to place faith in my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) and the hon. Members for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

I think that it is in order to use the word "colleague" in referring to the three other people who sat on the Committee with me. I pay tribute to their painstaking conscientiousness and the courteous manner in which they dealt with a difficult private Bill. As you would expect, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to speak about the merits of the Bill, but I ask the House to give my three colleagues and me the opportunity to complete our work and to give the House the opportunity to consider whatever decision is reached by the Committee.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I understand that my hon. Friend and his colleagues on the Committee wanted to make a number of inspections as part of their work on the Bill. I understand that some difficulties arose in that regard. I find it incredible and shocking that a parliamentary Committee that wants to conduct investigations at its own cost and through its own organisation should have any impediment put in its way.

I understand that the Committee has made several attempts to organise that search for information. As British Waterways is seeking a carry-over motion, now is the time to ensure that there is maximum co-operation from every conceivable party, or difficulties may arise over that motion. My hon. Friend could help the House by outlining the difficulties that have arisen.

Mr. Etherington: My hon. Friend has stolen some of my thunder. I agree with what he said and shall explain the matter further. I had an impression throughout the Committee that there was a sense of haste among the Clerks in the Private Bill Office. I am not aware of who decided how long the sittings on the Bill might take, but whoever it was underestimated the Bill's complexity and the work involved, with members of the Committee wanting to cross-examine and clarify every possible issue.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend mentioned the Clerks in the Private Bill Office. I have always found them extremely helpful in the way that they conduct their business, especially in dealing with problems on private Bills, as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is aware. Given that accord exists among members of the Committee—they have been spoken of in glowing terms—who objected to the visits? If it was British Waterways, it ought to know better. I cannot believe that the Clerks stopped hon. Members from paying visits that would help them in their deliberations.

Mr. Etherington: I must agree that the Clerks have been very helpful, but coming up with an acceptable decision or advice can sometimes be a different thing, as I am sure hon. Members are aware.

A majority of hon. Members on the Committee thought that it would be necessary to pay a visit because the legislation in Scotland differs from that in England and Wales. We felt that many issues required us to see for ourselves what was experienced. Even though they might have the best imaginations in the world, no members of the Committee have had much experience of canals or canal people.

The people concerned with this matter, whether they were in favour of or against the Bill, have done their very best and have been most helpful, and I praise them all. We felt that it was necessary to have a site visit. We were told categorically that visits were not allowed in respect of a private Bill. We persisted informally with that line and we were told that the Chairman of Ways and Means would not sanction such a visit. At that stage, our proposal was fairly tentative.

The Chairman of the Committee—my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie)—and I, with the permission of the two Conservative Members involved, approached the Chairman of Ways and Means. As always, he was very sympathetic, helpful and courteous. We came away with the impression that the matter would not require further clarification and that we would get satisfaction, but time rolled on and no arrangements have been made. For a variety of reasons, sometimes two or three Committee members were not available. On other occasions, we changed our hours to suit petitioners, many of whom came to the House at their own expense and at great inconvenience. We are no further ahead.

Mr. Cryer: I wonder whether I might suggest a solution. All that my hon. Friend's Committee wants to do is to travel within the United Kingdom to look at canals. There is a very big industry in fact-finding tours from this place to the far ends of the earth. My hon. Friend should apply to the Liaison Committee to go to, let us say,

[Mr. Cryer]

Macclesfield to examine the canal there. He might be able to go there via Japan, Australia and America, financed by the Liaison Committee on a round-the-world tour, because that is the sort of facility that the Committee provides. It would be a long way around. It is staggering that my hon. Friend cannot find a way of travelling inside the United Kingdom when jumbo jets carry hon. Members all around the world.

Mr. Etherington: I enjoyed my hon. Friend's intervention. Members of the Committee have never dreamt of such a thing. I should have spoken to my hon. Friend earlier. Perhaps I have been unfortunate.

My colleagues and I regard ourselves as having been appointed to the Committee by the House. We are not on the Committee for the Government or for the promoters; we are on it for the benefit of the people whom we represent collectively—not only our constituencies but our nation. We have tried to do a thorough, proper job. I feel very strongly about the matter. It is a serious matter, although there is an amusing side to it.

If the Private Bill Committee becomes inquorate, those responsible could be brought before the House to explain themselves. I regard myself as an honourable person. I should rather explain why I shall do something than try to make excuses after it has been done. I should like to hear the rest of the evidence. There is only the case for the promoters to be summed up, after which we shall deliberate and reach a conclusion, but I am not prepared to deliberate and reach a conclusion unless we can make a site visit. That is not blackmail. I ask the House to resolve the matter so that I can carry out my duties in the way that I should.

Mr. Redmond: It is important that clarification be given, and my hon. Friend has partly done so. The Clerks in the Private Bill Office were in order in the conduct of their business, and I assume that the Chairman of Ways and Means is in order. Obviously, whoever controls the purse strings has delayed the progress of the Bill; otherwise, we would not be debating this matter tonight. If inspections had taken place as requested, the Bill could have been dispatched.

Was British Waterways requested to finance the trip or to make arrangements for it? The people involved have been most helpful to members of the Committee in letting them find out at first hand what is involved.

Mr. Etherington: I shall correct a misapprehension for my hon. Friend. The issue of the visit has not delayed the Bill's progress in any way. We would be in exactly the same position: if the visit had been allowed, we would still not have had time to deal with the matter before the end of the Session. As I have explained, we have tried to accommodate petitioners. Occasionally, the promoters' barrister was not available when we were. We have also had duties to carry out in the House. When we have two full days of business and we have other commitments in the House and our constituency work, we do not have much flexibility left for what we are required to do during the week.

I want the matter to be resolved tonight. I feel strongly about it, as do the majority of my colleagues. I hope that the House will not cause us to stand at the Bar of the House and be judged as felons—that is what it would come to—for not carrying out our duties properly. If the procedures of the House make much a visit difficult, hon. Members have sufficient faith in the Officers of the House and in the Chairman of Ways and Means to sort out the problem fairly speedily so that there is no undue delay in our coming to a conclusion.

In no circumstances would I have dreamt of approaching the promoters to arrange for us to make visits. I am employed on the Committee by the House. The responsibility lies with the House. I am aware of the excellent advice from the Chairman of Ways and Means, who pointed out that, when sitting in judgment, we cannot be seen to be in the pockets of the promoters of private Bills. I totally agree, and that is why we must try to resolve this matter. Please give us the opportunity to complete the work on which we have spent much time, conscientiously trying to help all concerned, so that the Bill can be brought back before the House and dealt with.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The hon. Gentleman's remarks are very interesting. It is fairly rare for hon. Members to be appointed to that Committee. It is a wee bit ironic that it is in the nature of the House that, when dealing with such a complex matter, it actually consciously appoints hon. Members who do not know anything about it. Of course, as well as not knowing anything about it, they have no axe to grind and they have no bias. That is the good side of it.

The hon. Gentleman says that he wants to visit parts of the canal system. Is that for the purpose of seeing on the ground, or in the water, exactly how the legislation would work and what effect it would have, talking with canal users, or what? Will the hon. Gentleman give some examples?

Mr. Etherington: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention. I shall try to answer in reverse while the questions are still in my mind. The Committee felt that it would like to see sites that exemplified the evidence, especially when there was some contention. I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman—one of the finest principles ever expounded is that justice is blind. In many cases, those who sit in judgment know very little or nothing about a subject. For many years, experts on all sorts of subjects have made judgments, and sometimes they are not always the best, as we notice every day.

I shall refer to a matter I raised earlier. Many Bills, byelaws, amendments and statutory instruments reflect the differences between Scottish law and English law. Obviously, the hon. Gentleman is well aware of those differences. The Committee felt that it should see some circumstances that were unique to Scotland. For example, if we had been able to spend a couple of hours at Paddington basin to see what we wanted, that would have been helpful. I am sure that my colleagues on the Committee will agree with me when I say that we do not want to give ourselves any extra responsibilities. My time is already curtailed somewhat. I always seem to be running round at top speed. I do not have much time to stop and think, and collect my life in many respects.

The Committee felt that visits were necessary and wanted to have a look at three specific places. We wanted to look at the Caledonian canal, which has specific local problems. We also wanted to go to Braunston lock because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the question of

houseboats is of paramount importance to this issue, and we wanted to look at certain aspects of the Grand Union canal.

Several hon. Members said that they could not understand the problem. I cannot understand it either. Throughout the sittings of the Committee, I had the impression that there was a misjudgment. There seemed to be gentle coercion to proceed with the Bill with all speed. I do not consider that I am an obstructive or awkward person, but that sort of atmosphere is not helpful. If that is a criticism of the way in which the House works, so be it. That is the way I feel. The House should hear all the details of this serious matter.

I hope that the House will give us the privilege of continuing the work that we are doing and that we can resolve the matter. As I said, unless the matter is resolved, I am afraid that I might have to stand in this fine Chamber in a different position from where I am now. I do not issue threats—that is not my way of life. But being honourable, I feel that it is only right that that should be pointed out. I know that a majority of my colleagues feel exactly the same.

8.12 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to catch your eye in this debate. I shall start by expressing my disturbance that we have reached this position, because the subject has been studied in enormous depth by a large number of people. Before I go any further, I pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), and the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). We had a very cordial Committee, as I shall explain in a moment. My two Labour colleagues on the Committee have been helpful and constructive in every possible way.

As I said, I am sorry that we have reached this stage. The whole subject of the regulation—basically, that is what the Bill is all about—of the powers of British Waterways with regard to inland waterways has been studied in great depth. It was first studied by the Select Committee on the Environment in 1987, from which arose the idea of this Bill. It was deposited in the House of Lords in November 1990. Their Lordships had 11 very detailed sittings on the Bill.

As a result—the House has heard that all of them involved a barrister leading the British Waterways case, solicitors leading for the petitioners and the petitioners themselves—a number of major improvements were made to the Bill, not least of which was the provision of a moratorium for houseboat owners who had not already applied for a licence. A number of constructive changes were made to the Bill in another place, and the detailed debate was concluded in May 1991. Thereafter, there was a Third Reading and the whole subject was given yet another airing.

As happens in the normal course of events, the Bill came to this House for First Reading—there was no debate—on 13 March 1992. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) for his actions in promoting the Bill and his work for British Waterways. In his erudite speech this evening, he proved that he is immensely knowledgeable about the subject of canals and the workings of British Waterways. He referred to the Second Reading of the Bill. Thereafter, a Committee was appointed by the House which comprised the hon. Members for Leeds, East and for Sunderland, North, my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and me.

Sitting on the Committee was no mean task, as the hon. Member for Sunderland, North explained. As I look round the House, I see a number of hon. Members who have been here a long time but who do not understand how the private business procedure works.

Four of us sat on the Committee for more than 50 hours, which produced more than 800 pages of transcript. The Committee had to have a quorum of three, which meant that we could not leave the room without having a detailed discussion about who would stay. Intensive work took place in the Committee. We had to concentrate every moment because we were responsible for reporting to the House at the end of the day. Unlike other Committees, we could not leave, do some work and return. We had to be there the whole time, we had to concentrate and we had to ask pertinent questions.

This subject has been debated at enormous length and in enormous detail in the Committe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West explained, as a result of the deliberations in another place, and the deliberations in Committee and debate in this House, the number of petitioners has been whittled down to four. Of those four, one has not appeared before the Committee. We have taken detailed evidence from three of the 44 original petitioners. The Chairman of the Committee has been immensely patient with those petitioners. At all stages of the proceedings he allowed them to cross-examine the witnesses for British Waterways and its counsel. They could not possibly have wished for a more courteous Chairman. They have had every opportunity to examine the Bill in any way they wished.

We have almost come to the end of the evidence. What took place in Committee is not a secret because it is open to the public. The proceedings were published fully in *Hansard* and they are fully available. It is fair to say that the petitioners feel that they received a fair hearing. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Sunderland, North would agree with that.

Mr. Etherington: Yes, I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful for that helpful and constructive intervention, which merely shows that I am giving a fully factual account to the House.

It is important to realise where we have got to. I believe that there will be a summary from British Waterways. The Committee will then deliberate on all the evidence and the submissions, and will hopefully come to a conclusion. I understand that we are looking at about three more days of sittings. Having had 13 sittings, we have almost come to the point where we can see the end.

I should perhaps mention the subject of the requested visit, which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North spoke about at length. As he said, the four Committee members know very little about British waterways. Certainly that is true in my case, but I am not able to speak for the other Committee members. After listening to the evidence and questions in the Committee, I do not believe that the other Committee members are particularly knowledgeable about canals.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I do not want to do my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) an injustice. He was a member of the Select Committee on the Environment when we investigated British Waterways at considerable length. The Committee produced a unanimous report, and most of the report's recommendations have been implemented. Few hon. Members can claim to be experts, because experts are people who avoid small mistakes on the road to the great fallacy. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke can be regarded as an expert.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting me straight on that point. I had forgotten that my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke was a member of the Committee which reported in such detail on the matter in 1987.

The Committee is within sight of finishing its deliberations. I watched this measure put on the Order Paper day after day. I was amazed that, after going through all that procedure and having deliberated the matter in such depth, there should have been objections. I have tried to discover from one or two people what it is that they are objecting to. I have talked to people who have objected and discovered which parts of the Bill they are objecting to or which of the petitioners' points they wish to be upheld. I can explain to them what has gone on in the Committee, and I have found that they have been satisfied. I find it very strange that we have to use up the House's valuable time deliberating the measure.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The only objector, as I understand it, to the revival motion on 13 January was the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), who has now left the Chamber. Like him, we are obviously anxious to know what lies behind the objections. British Waterways has written to him on several occasions without receiving a response, so we are in the dark as much as anybody else about why there should be objections to the Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend clarifies the matter. I think that it is sad that we could not have gone back into Committee. After all, the whole process involved a barrister leading for British Waterways, not to mention other senior members of the board and the staff of British Waterways. I do not know what the cost to them would be, but I should not be surprised if the procedure to date had cost British Waterways more than £100,000.

British Waterways is supported by a large number of people in this country. I understand that 9 million people are associated with the inland waterways and canals of the country. They want to see the waterways properly managed and providing a better service. I pay tribute to British Waterways in that respect. It has come a long way in the past few years, as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report makes clear. Quite honestly, however, if it has to meet this type of expense and to take this length of time to get such a Bill through the House, I would not blame it if it started to ask whether it was worth while.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have certainly no brief to object to the cost of the procedure, and obviously my hon. Friend has made his own point. I am worried, not about the price in financial terms because one cannot put a price on democratic involvement, but about the price in terms of potential tragedy through safety measures which cannot be addressed until the Bill is on the statute book. That is why it is absolutely vital to get to the end of the process as soon as possible, consistent with allowing people their say in a democratic society.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I totally agree, but I have not yet come to the question why the Bill is desirable. Much of the time of the management of British Waterways has been invested in the process, quite apart from the monetary aspect and the other vital issues which the Bill addresses.

The inland waterways are enjoyed by a huge number of people in this country. People generally have more leisure time, and they can enjoy the waterways in a number of ways. They may walk along the towpath with their dogs, go boating on the canals either by owning their own boat or by taking a pleasant holiday, or they can live on the canals—let us not forget that a large number of people do so.

A number of vital powers in the Bill require British Waterways to enhance its management. As I and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West have explained, British Waterways has come a long way in updating its management procedures since the Select Committee reported in 1987. Many of the report's recommendations have now been implemented. On the whole, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was complimentary to British Waterways, and particularly to its chairman, Mr. David Ingram, from whom we heard in Committee. Mr. Ingram was an impressive witness. He showed determination and he knew the business backwards, and his enthusiasm to see an improvement was clear for all to see.

I hope that Mr. Ingram's successor will enter a new era for British Waterways. I hope that when the Bill has passed all its stages he will be able to regulate the waterways with greater effect.

British Waterways obtains a grant of more than £40 million a year from the Department of the Environment. It is a large organisation, covering over 2,000 miles of waterways up and down the country. The Bill applies to England, Wales and Scotland. What does the Bill do? As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West has stressed, it deals with safety and the regulation of the waterways. Basically it gives British Waterways powers which all other statutory undertakers have had for years.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked why British Waterways needs powers to enter private land. In the canals there are hundreds of thousands of tonnes of water. If there were a breach in a canal and there were dwellings downstream, the result could be catastrophic. The last thing an area manager of British Waterways will want to do in those circumstances is to have to find an owner who may be away on holiday. If the manager cannot get the relevant powers, emergency powers are needed to deal with such an incident.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is a question not simply of property, but of life and limb. I recently had the opportunity to go along the Llangollen canal. One section there had broken away, sending water down to the valley below which swept away the railway line. My hon. Friend can imagine in such circumstances what would happen if there was a crowded train, perhaps in a different part of the country. Such a tragedy could occur if powers to intervene were not available when the danger became apparent.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The Committee was shown photographs of one or two instances where there had been breaches of canals.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am a little hesitant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman because I realise that, as he sat on the Committee, he has every right to pass information to the House. However, as I understand it, members of the Committee are not supposed to take part in the debates, certainly on Second Reading, or express their views until consideration of the Bill has been completed.

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is in danger of straying into expressing his views on the Bill before the Committee has reported. It would be unfortunate if that happened and he had to be discharged from the Committee —he may want to escape from the Committee, I do not know—and someone else had to be appointed at this stage. What is the position on a carry-over motion about someone who is on the Committee, in a judicial role, commenting before the Committee has completed its consideration?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is a matter for the hon. Member who has the floor. It will be a different Committee.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Thank you for that advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am also grateful for the stricture placed on me by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. I have not expressed any opinion on the clauses of the Bill. I have merely reported factually the case that has already been well made by the British Waterways Board. It is important that the House has a flavour of what the Bill contains and hears about a small amount of the evidence that was given in Committee. Otherwise, how can the House decide whether to vote for the revival motion this evening?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West has made clear, it is in the interests of British Waterways and the petitioners that the democratic process of the Committee should be allowed to proceed to a conclusion. I am not saying what that conclusion will be. It is important that democracy should prevail.

Part II of the Bill deals with powers that are already granted to every other statutory undertaker. We have studied at length in the Committee how the powers have been granted to other undertakers. I know that there are doubts among certain of the petitioners about the powers given to British Waterways. We have had a large amount of evidence from British Waterways to the effect that the powers are necessary.

Part III of the Bill is particularly important. I suppose that it has given rise to more anxieties among petitioners than any other part of the Bill. It deals with the regulation and management of the inland waterways and canals of Britain. It gives powers to the British Waterways Board to license the two major types of boater on the canals—houseboat owners and pleasure boat owners.

Houseboat owners in particular are anxious about what will be their future on the waterways after the Bill is enacted. The Committee has spent a great deal of time considering their interests. It is fair to say that every aspect has been considered in detail. I believe that the petitioners would accept that they have been given a fair hearing.

The crux of the matter is where houseboat owners will moor their boats. You will understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is necessary to make proper provision for houseboat owners who live a major part of their life on the canal. They have to comply with the various health and safety regulations and planning regulations. It is right that they should have to do so and that their safety should be ensured by British Waterways. It is right that they should not obstruct the waterways and that they should inhabit the waterways in a safe manner.

I see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are looking to see whether I am outside the terms of the debate. I should be grateful——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman would be mistaken if he thought that.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have no doubt that you will advise me if I stray outside the terms of the motion.

As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish said, although we did not come to the Committee with much prior knowledge of waterways, we shall leave it with a great deal of knowledge. We may not have become experts, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West said, but we have certainly acquired a lot of knowledge.

Part III is the critical part of the Bill and it causes most anxiety among petitioners. It deals with the business of moorings. As you can imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in certain areas such as Islington and London there is enormous pressure on the waterways and it is absolutely necessary for British Waterways to regulate the moorings and to license boat owners so that the waterways can be run efficiently and safely.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West said, part IV of the Bill imposes environmental duties on British Waterways—the same type of duties that are imposed on every other statutory undertaker. They are enshrined in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and are regulated by the various environmental bodies.

That is an important provision, because we want to make sure that the environment on the waterways is congenial and pleasant for those who want to use the waterways in one or other of the ways that I have described. I stress that the waterways are an amenity for every person in Britain. I cannnot stress that too much. The waterways are an integral part of the great historical heritage of Britain. It is vital that they are regulated in the best possible way in the interests of all who are associated with the waterways.

Part IV of the Bill deals with Scotland. We heard a lot of evidence from one petitioner who deals with Scotland —Lord Burton. I should perhaps explain what gave rise to the need for the visit about which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North spoke so eloquently and at such length.

In Scotland, the British Waterways Board needs different powers. There have been problems because Scottish law on how British Waterways can enter land and what notices it has to serve on landowners before it enters that land is different from that in England and Wales. There have been several difficulties in the past years. Those difficulties are a good example of how the Bill will help British Waterways to deal with landowners and occupiers in Scotland. It will also help the landowners and occupiers because it will clarify exactly the powers of British Waterways. It clarifies them for that part of the Caledonian canal and the four lochs on the canal that are excluded under the Bill.

[Mr. Clifton-Brown]

Let me explain what gave rise to a request for the visit. The Committee heard some disturbing evidence about what had gone on in the past. It is all very well to hear evidence, but, when we and British Waterways had been to so much trouble, it seemed reasonable that, if members of the Committee wanted to make a visit and ascertain for themselves at first hand what was involved, they should do so. There is a great deal of difference between looking oneself at first hand and hearing evidence.

When one considers the time and trouble that had been taken, it was not an unreasonable request to visit a canal in London, a marina in the midlands—to see the problem of dealing with moorings in a private marina—and the Caledonian canal in Scotland to see the problems in relation to Scottish law, especially as so much evidence was given on Scotland. From the evidence that we heard, it appeared to the Committee that the point was particularly poignant for that petitioner.

We have considered the issues in great detail. It is a thoroughly worthwhile Bill, which I commend to the House. The Committee clearly will have to reach a conclusion, and I do not know what it will be, but I urge hon. Members to vote for the revival motion. It is essential that, as we have considered the issues in such detail and depth, the democratic process should be allowed to proceed to a conclusion so that we can grant the Bill a Third Reading and it can then receive Royal Assent. British Waterways can then get on with the task of improving the already excellent job that it does in managing the 2,000 miles of inland waterways and canals.

8.39 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on the diligence with which he has pursued the legislation. I also congratulate the hon. Members who have given their time and energy to serve on the Committee that examined the Bill. We have, indeed, just heard from two of them. They gave us an interesting glimpse into a not terribly well-known aspect of the House's activities. As has been made clear, they carried out their duties most thoroughly and enabled people who had objections to the Bill to air them fully. I shall be brief, because I do not want to detain the House too long.

The request to be able to make visits—to visualise the law, as it were—sounds perfectly reasonable. It does not seem excessive to demand to visit three areas where there have been special problems. I do not entirely understand the difficulties, but I suspect that there are some regulations that preclude such visits. This might be a good opportunity for the usual channels to display their capacity to allow common sense to flow back and forth, even if that is not the norm at the moment. I should have thought that the case for such visits was strong.

The hon. Members for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) and for Hertfordshire, West fretted about the delay caused by people objecting. I was one of the people who objected, although, as the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West said, I did not do so on 13 January. Those of us who have objected have done so largely to put pressure on the British Waterways Board. That is not unreasonable, and it is not often that we in the House have the opportunity to put pressure on anyone. I am not quite prepared to let British Waterways off the hook.

The procedure has been drawn out because there was a failure by the board, especially at the beginning, to consult effectively. People felt that certain things were being imposed on them. That was perhaps especially true in Scotland although Lord Burton, who was a constituent of mine, is not someone on whom anything can be easily imposed—quite the contrary. Nevertheless, some people felt that Scotland hardly needed to be covered in the Bill because Scotland does not have a true inland waterways system. We have "through" waterways; the waterways are not confined but are routes to the sea.

It seems that whenever I speak about this subject, including the occasions when I speak to Lord Burton—although it is sometimes he who speaks to me—I find that some confusion remains about clause 39 which was added following the objections raised by the Highland regional council. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong but my understanding is that the Bill will not extend to the lochs —Loch Lochy, Loch Oich, Loch Ness and Loch Dochfour —but that the British Waterways Board does have powers in respect of passage through the lochs and that those powers are derived not from the Bill but from the Transport Act 1962. Therefore, even without the addition of clause 39, the Bill had no effect on the lochs, although the clause makes that clear beyond peraventure, as lawyers are wont to say. I hope that I am right; if I am not, perhaps the Minister will be kind enough to correct me.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): We are discussing a revival motion for a private Bill and I am not conducting the Bill through the House. In fairness, the hon. Gentleman's request should therefore be directed to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) who is its sponsor and is responsible for its conduct. I am sure that, in due course, my hon. Friend will be able to answer the hon. Gentleman's question.

Sir Russell Johnston: With respect, I thought that, although the Minister is not conducting the Bill, he is here to be a fount of information, knowledge and guidance to help us in our travail.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am not going to deal with the hon. Gentleman's legal point, but I said that the four lochs were excluded from the terms of the Bill. However, the Committee heard a great deal of evidence to the effect that it was the locks that were causing problems.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I shall not pursue that issue as I do not wish to detain the House.

I agree that the British Waterways Board has learnt from the experience of dealing with the Bill and that the process has had a considerable effect on the board. I willingly associate myself with the tribute paid by the hon. Members for Hertfordshire, West and for Cirencester and Tewkesbury to Sir David Inman, who was until recently the chairman, and to Jeremy Duffy, who is the secretary, both of whom have gone out of their way to be helpful, to hear and discuss my constituents' objections.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It might be convenient if I confirm at this stage that the hon. Gentleman's

understanding was correct. The board's licensing powers stem from the Transport Act 1962 and the Bill confers no additional powers. I hope that that is helpful.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

The board has learnt that it needs to consult regularly and to have devolved and responsible management which is accessible to users and can make decisions without continually referring to some distant place. It has learnt from the experience of going through this long and complicated legislation.

A group of my constituents raised legal arguments about who owns what at Gairlochy at one end of the Caledonian canal, but I am satisfied that a procedure has been found that can establish the veracity or otherwise of the claims being made. I am confident that the difficulties will be resolved satisfactorily.

Reference has been made to the board's stronger commercial outlook. I do not argue that such an outlook is not necessary but it is a little ironic that a publicly owned enterprise, such as the British Waterways Board, may be compelled by law to behave in a harder, more rigorous and, perhaps, more profiteering way than a private landlord, who has the discretion to be generous if he wishes. It is rather contradictory and I do not know what can be done about it, but there is no doubt that it contributed to the general unease that followed the introduction of the Bill.

Much of the unease was related to the fear that the Bill might ultimately result in perhaps expensive regulation and that the cost of rents or licenses would increase considerably. It is in the scope and powers of British Waterways to act in a reasonable fashion in regard to those questions and that is something it is aware of, and I am sure that it will do so.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): If the right people are on the board.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, it is all a question of the right people, as the hon. Gentleman perspicaciously remarks. I think that he would probably define himself as one of them. *[Laughter.]*

I have expressed my concerns and will not delay the House much longer. It is common cause among us that the system should develop and prosper and above all that it be safe and, as the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury said, agreeable to the users.

8.50 pm

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I rise to speak on the Bill as the chairman of the parliamentary waterways group. One function of the Bill has been to revive that group, because all the petitioners hurriedly came to see us when we had meetings in Committee Rooms and other parts of the House, because they were concerned about the Bill in its early stages. We had some lively and interesting meetings of the group, which is not always that active. I have had some interesting times as chairman of the parliamentary waterways group.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) in the motion that the Bill should proceed. I wish to speak on behalf of two bodies to reassure the House that those bodies that had reservations have now withdrawn them.

The British Marine Industries Federation, a trade association representing more than 1,100 firms in the recreational boat industry, was initially concerned by several aspects of the Bill, but, after constructive discussions, British Waterways agreed to propose amendments to the Bill and provide various assurances to the BMIF and other bodies representing navigational interests.

As a result, the BMIF withdrew its petition against the Bill, as did the Royal Yachting Association, the Inland Waterways Association, which I wish to mention in a moment, and other groups representing waterways users. The BMIF's view, which is shared by many other navigational interests, is that the enactment of the Bill, with the amendments and subject to assurances, would be positively beneficial to waterway users.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West has said, some of the matters that caused concern included the rights of those in houseboats, with which the parliamentary group had meetings.

The Inland Waterways Association negotiated with British Waterways for many months. The association consulted its members, as it represents all the people who use the waterways, and it supported three items of the Bill in principle: emergency powers of entry, of which we have heard discussion, standards of construction and insurance, and houseboat regulation.

The safety aspect, which has been mentioned, is absolutely vital. I have a boat in my constituency on the River Thames. I was down in the hold doing a bit of work when there was a most enormous explosion and a tremendous bang shook all the boats around. I rushed out from my boat and on to the jetty to see that a boat had blown up, it had flames coming from it and people had been flung into the water. It was a very dangerous incident. The boat had broken down in navigating the Thames, had been towed in by a narrow boat, had tried to come alongside, the rope that had been thrown had been missed and the man who held the boat turned the engine and there was an explosion because the hold was full of petrol fumes. Luckily, because there was free access, the fire brigade was able to arrive quickly, the ambulance was there in no time and the owners of the marina were on the spot to help.

It was a nasty incident and a lot of the people who were travelling in the boat were badly burnt. We managed to get them out of the water and the fire was put out as the boat sank. There were no fatalities. There was a little dog on board, but he headed straight for the shore of his own initiative and got away as fast as he could. That incident illustrates the need in a leisure pursuit which has dangerous elements for access enabling people to get to the waterway as quickly as possible.

One of the reasons why problems have arisen with British Waterways is that when the original Acts were made, creating waterways was a new departure. It occurred before railways existed and everybody's interest had to be safeguarded. An original waterways Bill of 1793 states:

"Canal may be made through Mrs. Seare's Pleasure Grounds under certain Restrictions. No lock to be erected within in a Mile of Mrs. Seare's at Bulbourne without her consent. No Injury to be done to the Mills of the Honourable Mrs. Leigh."

All such instructions used to enter the Acts on an enormous scale, which restricted the owners of the canal in what they could do and their access to it. British Waterways is trying to regularise that position so that it can get access to the waterways for safety when boats get into difficulty and when banks burst—a point made by other hon. Members.

[Sir Anthony Durant]

The association has a plain commitment from British Waterways on a number of other points in the Bill, which are on the record. The association also considered other aspects of concern, such as powers to prevent mooring, to refuse a boat a licence because its moorings are not suitable —which was dealt with—and powers to dispose of property and subsidiaries which could lead to loss of heritage and continuity in the waterways system, which were considered and agreed. Powers to limit opening of locks on the River Severn and powers to permit the association of the boats standards appeal panel were also examined.

The number of boat users on the system is growing at a great pace. It is a great leisure pursuit, which is usually enjoyed by families who go out for weekends or for the day, often going up and down the same stretch and getting great pleasure from it. It may seem boring to other people. When I come out of my marina, I have the opportunity to turn left or right. I have a choice, but that is the only choice I get on one beautiful stretch of the River Thames. I enjoy it, I relax and there are thousands of people who do the same every weekend.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech and I am delighted that he is contributing to the debate. Would he advise the House of the view of the people who have constructed and operate marinas that feed in to our inland waterways system, because, in the past, they have expressed criticism that they have been expected to make excessive contributions to British Waterways?

Sir Anthony Durant: My hon. Friend is correct. There were discussions of access to the navigation from marinas, but that has now been dealt with satisfactorily and most of those who run marinas are well satisfied that they get a reasonable deal from British Waterways. I believe that that is working perfectly satisfactorily. I have no recent evidence that it has caused any difficulty. My hon. Friend is right to say that, for a period, those who run marinas were greatly concerned about access to the waterway, but I think that that matter has now been satisfactorily settled.

The British Marine Industries Federation, the Inland Waterways Association and many houseboat owners now feel that the Bill should proceed. There will be opportunities to have another look at the Bill in Committee and when it comes back to the House. I am sure that, if we pass the motion, we can proceed and give the British Waterways Board, which has battled with the Bill for a long time at considerable cost and difficulty to itself, the opportunity to achieve a Bill that will safeguard and regularise the waterways and at least improve them for the benefit of those who use them. I support the motion.

9 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I shall be brief, as I am aware that two or possibly three of my hon. Friends wish to contribute to the debate. I shall make two quick points and then advise the House of the official Opposition's position.

It is fairly evident from the debate so far that at the beginning of this process the British Waterways Board would have been well advised perhaps to hold more vigorous consultations before trying to promote the Bill. One of the petitioners against the Bill, Janice Christianson of Helensborough in Scotland, made that very point in her petition. She states:

"The preamble of the Bill states at part 3 'It is expedient that further provisions should be made for the regulation and management by the Board of the Inland Waterways owned or managed by them'. Your Petitioner requests that this be amended by adding 'on behalf of the people of Great Britain.' The preamble of the Bill continues 'and that certain statutory provisions relating to the Board or their undertaking should be amended or repealed.' Your Petitioner requests that the words 'after due consultation with concerned and interested parties' be added."

That might have been a better way to proceed and perhaps would have saved time and prevented many of the problems that have cropped up, but that is with the benefit of hindsight.

I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). I am mindful of the fact that the Committee sat for 50 hours and, indeed, I tried to go through the 800 pages or so of evidence that it produced, although I do not claim to have done so exhaustively. I am persuaded also by the sponsor of the Bill that it would not be proper at this stage for the Opposition to oppose the Bill. My recommendation is that we should not oppose the revival motion. That is not an official position and I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will take a contrary view, as they are free to do. At this point, I just want to make it clear that I do not recommend that my hon. Friends oppose the motion, although they are free to do so if they wish.

9.1 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Hon. Members may wonder why, representing the Isle of Wight, I should speak in the debate this evening.

Once, I chartered a small vessel on the River Thames with my brother and father to go and watch the proceedings at Henley. I was was unused to piloting a craft without a compass. When we left the marina, we had rather a heated debate whether to turn left or right. From the Isle of Wight that is quite simple, because one reaches either Holland or America. We could not decide, but eventually we turned left and came to an idyllic lock with cows munching the grass nearby. We went into the lock, and coming down in the opposite direction was a delightful chap in a punt with a pretty young lady who carried a parasol. We bade him good morning. He asked where we were going, and when we said, "Henley," he said, "So am I and I am going in the opposite direction." We realised that we were going in the wrong direction so we turned around, went back and had a jolly time.

The other reason why I am taking part in the debate is that, every month, somebody from the Inland Waterways Association sends me *Waterways*. I do not know whether he thinks that the Solent has been redesignated or that it is narrower than it is, but I always read its news with great interest. In a previous incarnation, I was in the Territorial Army. It had a strong connection with inland water transport. In the last war, the Royal Engineers had one of the largest units under command in the whole of the British Army and that was the inland water transport group. I had the good fortune to join it, sadly just after it ceased to be the Royal Engineers and became the Royal Corps of Transport—sadly, no more. Unusually for the British Army, I was commissioned into my own troop.

As a result of that, I got the territorial decoration, of which I am very proud. I also became a Thames lighterman and waterman, and became a member of the Thames Watermen and Lightermen Company, which I also enjoy, because it took not one but two Acts of Parliament to subdue them, as they were such an unruly lot.

I am commodore of the House of Commons yacht club. Something of an earthquake was caused when it discovered that I had a yacht. That is almost against the rules of the club and it almost had to change them just for me. I think that we all agree that, although in aquatic terms the club house is slightly underused, it is certainly the best yacht club in the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) referrred to the British Marine Industries Federation and the excellent work that it and the Royal Yachting Association have done in shaping the Bill.

I suppose that the real reason why I am speaking in the debate is that my claim to fame is that I hold the record, I believe, in Parliament for chairing the highest number of Committee on private Bills. I shall make that claim and, as always in this place, leave it to others to try to knock me off my pinnacle. I have volunteered on many occasions to chair Committees and am rather sad that, in this Parliament, the tradition whereby a Member who volunteers to chair a Committee can do so out of turn with the co-operation of the Opposition seems to have gone out of the window.

I volunteered to chair the Committee on the Bill but, as often happens, it fell to the Opposition to appoint a chairman on that occasion. So far, the turn and turn about rule has continued throughout this Parliament. That is sad because, as we know, Committees on private Bills are fairly onerous things to chair and to be involved in and we always thought that one volunteer was worth 10 pressed men. I am pleased to say that I chaired the Committee on the first private Bill of this Parliament that came before us, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) was on it, as was the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). I am pleased to be able to tell the House that they said the most delightful things about my chairmanship of it.

Some hon. Members may remember——

Sir Anthony Durant: I am following closely my hon. Friend's comments about presiding over Committees on private Bills. Is there another private Bill on the horizon for which he is making a bid?

Mr. Field: It is funny that my hon. Friend should say that, because I have already put in a bid for the Poole Ferry Bill, which is before the House, but whether it will fall to our turn remains to be seen.

The danger of volunteering is that one ends up with one of those horrid Bills that sits for ever and that one does not get the Bill that one hoped for. Time will tell. Hon. Members may remember—I know that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will remember the period well, because, like me, he takes an interest in that murky area of the Commons and its procedures—the Bill to amend the Isle of Wight Act which was introduced by my illustrious predecessor, Mark Woodnutt——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is all very interesting, but I have been trying for the past few seconds to ascertain what it has to do with the debate. It will be helpful to the debate if the hon. Gentleman would get back to the debate on the revival motion.

Mr. Field: I was just coming to that point. The purpose of the Isle of Wight (Amendment) Bill was to control pop festivals on the island and the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish was blocking private Bills, as was his prerogative. At that time, *The Times* accused me of wrecking the Paddington-Heathrow Link Bill. It subsequently published an apology, because that was quite unfair.

As a result of the arrangement that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish was making at the time, I did eventually wreck every single Bill that came before the House. I did that because Opposition Members would not pass the amendment to the Isle of Wight Act. That matter relates to the revival motion, because, as a result of my action, I received an amazing quantity of correspondence from right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber. I am sure that you would agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are here to debate not the contents of the Bill but the revival motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is my view.

Mr. Field: I received correspondence from fellow Conservative Members the like of which the Opposition could hardly imagine. I was threatened with being hanged, drawn and quartered, because I was putting at risk Bills connected with the Star and Garter home, redundant lighthouses and even a delightful little estate somewhere——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I would welcome it if the hon. Gentleman now spoke about the British Waterways Bill.

Mr. Field: My point is that I found that hon. Members did not know anything about the way in which private legislation is dealt with. They were quite unaware that there is what is colloquially known as a Lazarus motion, or, as it appears on the Order Paper, a revival motion. It is given that colloquial term because it does exactly what that name implies—it brings a Bill back from the dead.

When a new Parliament is opened with the Gracious Speech, the private Bill procedure must fall. There is no mechanism to initiate that procedure in the new Parliament unless it is subject to the revival motion. Private Bills cost the promoters, and sometimes the petitioners, a great deal of money.

Mr. Bennett: How often does it happen that promoters are so slow to negotiate with the objectors that we have more than one revival motion, which may carry a Bill not just from one Session to the next but, as in one case, through three Sessions?

Mr. Field: I had intended to mention that fact, with your patience and forbearance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is clear from the correspondence that I have received that hon. Members were unaware of the revival motion. The Bills with which they were involved were connected with their constituencies. I remember one that related to a town in the Medway area and involved a bridge over a river. Those hon. Members were all unaware, however, that it was possible to table revival motions to bring all the Bills back. They did not know that they did not have to start the whole process all over again. It is not possible to

[Mr. Field]

do that, however, when a general election intervenes and Parliament is dissolved; then, sadly, as I know to my cost, Bills fall and the process must start all over again.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish asked how many times a Bill can be and has been revived. The answer lies in part with Lord Howe, who, when Leader of the House, did away with a large proportion of Back Benchers' rights when he piloted the Transport and Works Bill through the House.

Mr. Bennett: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House. The Bill before us proves that a Bill can be revived after a general election, because it was originally introduced in 1990. We have, of course, had a general election since then.

Mr. Field: I stand corrected. I believe that the hon. Gentleman will find, however, that the Bill had not progressed far before the general election and that its reintroduction in the new Parliament was not prejudiced. If it had been considered in Committee and then fell because of the general election, its legislative process would have had to start all over again. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to make that absolutely clear.

The Transport and Works Act 1992 impinges on the revival motion, because it took away a vast chunk of the private Bill procedure from the House. I told Sir Geoffrey Howe that his belief that such Bills should, in future, be subject to a public inquiry as opposed to the private Bill procedure was untenable. Anyone familiar with public inquiries will know that they are not a way of resolving expeditiously the many problems encompassed by the British Waterways Bill. Such a Bill is an expeditious, if expensive, way of sorting out many knotty legal problems that cannot be solved by the courts, and of establishing ownership rights.

The reason that that procedure was denied to the House was that there was once a whole raft of private Bills, and some of them had dragged on—such as the Felixstowe Docks and Harbour Bill, which detained the House late at night. I told the Leader of the House at the time that there would be fewer such Bills in future because there had been a plethora of them as the economy improved—as had happened in Victorian Parliaments—but that if we bided our time, their numbers would fall. The Private Bill Office says that they have. The situation would have resolved itself, and right hon. and hon. Members would not have found themselves so inconvenienced.

It is sad that a huge tranche of rights was taken from Back Benchers. Having served as Chairman during the passage of private Bills, I know that they provide the only opportunity for a Member of Parliament to make a decision that will affect the lives of the citizens of this nation.

Sir Anthony Durant: I remind my hon. Friend that the Select Committee that examined the private Bill procedure —in which the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) had some involvement—recommended that it be changed. That is why the then Leader of the House took the matter up.

Mr. Field: My hon. Friend is right, but modernisation of the procedure was needed, not its almost total abolition.

You rightly reprimanded me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for straying from the revival motion. I want to be particularly helpful because I know of a particular problem that arose in visiting various sites. I will tell the House of my experience when I chaired the Committee considering a Bill concerning Tees and Hartlepool. Such legislation falls into two categories—works Bills, which the Transport and Works Act 1992 abolished, and powers Bills or measures. The British Waterways Bill is a powers Bill.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend deploys an extremely interesting argument, but a number of us on this side of the House, and probably the House as a whole, seek to ascertain whether he supports the revival motion. I am listening to his arguments with care as a member of both the Standing Orders Committee—which has some interest in the matter—and the Chairmen's Panel. I respect my hon. Friend for making it clear that the establishment reduced the powers and authority of the House. However, I am interested to know whether or not my hon. Friend favours the Bill's revival, because that is the purpose of this debate.

Mr. Field: My hon. Friend will have to maintain his keen anticipation a moment longer.

I want to tell the House about my experience in respect of visits, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) referred.

Two members of the Committee asked whether we could visit. We were advised by the Clerk in the Private Bill Office that, because this was a powers Bill, not a works Bill, that was not possible—there was no tradition of, or authority for, going on such visits——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all very interesting, but it does not take us far towards finding out whether the hon. Gentleman thinks that the Bill should be revived.

Mr. Field: You have been very patient with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during my tour of private Bill legislation. You have a reputation for patience, and it does you great credit.

I was going on to say that a slight frisson was felt by the Committee because of those visits. Had it not been for that, the Bill might already have been out of Committee and this motion would not have been necessary. I had intended to read the motion out to the House, but I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would rule that unnecessary——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Necessary or not, the fact is that the motion is before the House, and I invite the hon. Gentleman to get back to it.

Mr. Field: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The fact remains that we have a revival motion owing to the problems that occurred in the Committee. The solution that we found showed that it was quite possible for hon. Members to make visits while considering a powers Bill. So that was done, eventually the hon. Members concerned rejoined the Committee, and the Bill went on its way.

I share these thoughts with the House because this aspect of our procedures is shrouded in cobwebs—not everyone understands these things. I hope to have added to the sum of human knowledge this evening by what I have had to say. Curiously, however, the Bill in question was suddenly dropped, and the trust ports legislation was taken up by the Government and became an Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has asked me whether I am in favour of the motion: I most certainly am. It is a worthwhile Bill. As my

hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) says, our inland waterways give great pleasure to many thousands of people. As old Ratty said in "The Wind in the Willows", there is nothing—but nothing—like messing about in boats.

9.22 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Donton and Reddish): I have a somewhat ambiguous view of this motion, because it seems to me that the promoters of the Bill have not piloted it through the House efficiently. I spoke to them back in 1991 and pointed out that some of my constituents were unhappy about the powers contained in the legislation. I advised them strongly to hold rapid negotiations with the people who were objecting to the Bill, suggesting that if they did not, the danger was that as the Bill proceeded through the House it would get caught up in all sorts of other problems.

Interestingly, because the promoters did not enter into those negotiations at an early stage, they have run into many difficulties during the passage of the Bill. One other hon. Member and I have been objecting to this motion for some weeks now. Last week we were persuaded not to object but, of course, the Bill has now run into other problems. That is the reason for the debate. People who promote such Bills should start by trying to negotiate objections out of the way. That is the message that the debate should send to such people.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes an important point. If a private Bill is supported by the Government they will obviously do everything in their power to push it through. The arrogance of Conservative Members who promote Bills shows that they are not interested in democracy. They have shoved every private Bill through. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that it is important to speak to people who will be affected by such Bills so that the provisions can be altered before they come to the Hosue. Conservatives should bear that in mind before they start preaching about democracy.

Mr. Bennett: I accept my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I sympathise with the general point made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), but I was rather shocked by the intervention of the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). In many ways the board has done a great deal to try to find out people's worries. I asked about the position of the hon. Member for Don Valley and I was told:

"He did not respond to correspondence from the Agents for the Bill in both 1992 and 1993 seeking a meeting to discuss his concerns and has at no time been in any other firm communications with the promoters . . . No record can be found, either at Headquarters or Regional office levels, of correspondence from Mr. Redmond with complaints or criticism of the way in which those waterways are managed by the Board."

I am still baffled as to what the hon. Gentleman's objections are. It is obvious that he is not taking up the consultation opportunities that are available to him.

Mr. Bennett: I do not want to go along that path because I know that some of my hon. Friends want to take part in the debate and I should like to make some substantive comments.

As I have said, anyone considering the promotion of a private Bill should start negotiations at the earliest possible stage and not wait until the Bill has been delayed in the House. I hope that this is the last debate on this matter and that it will be possible for the Committee, if it resumes, to come to a speedy conclusion. I hope that it will amend the Bill to meet the criticisms of the remaining objectors, so that, when it emerges from Committee, everybody will be satisfied on Report and Third Reading.

I would be unhappy if I had to table amendments and take up more time. Many of my constituents feel that it would be more appropriate for the House to debate matters such as the Child Support Agency or Yugoslavia than to engage in another debate on inland waterways. The board should have met objectors at an early stage to thrash out amendments to meet their concerns.

It is clear that the board has moved so slowly in this matter that it has created a chain reaction among people who are interested in boating. One or two still write expressing concern about difficulties in the Bill that were resolved six months ago or more. I have a funny postbag at the moment because some people write about current worries while others express concern about issues that have been resolved. I make a plea that people should get such issues out of the way at the earliest stage.

One specific issue concerns my constituents on part of the Ashton canal. The Wooden Canal Boat Trust has done important work trying to preserve the old wooden canal boats. Those boats have an interesting tradition. One of the best remaining folk crafts in Britain is preserved in the boats, in terms of the carving and traditional painting of the barges. They are interesting craft. I am not certain where they originate, but there is a great deal of artistry in the designs on those old wooden boats, and it is important that they are preserved.

Back in April, the board eventually decided that it would have to meet the objections of one of the petitioners on behalf of the Wooden Canal Boat Trust and agreed to set up a new body to work out a mechanism by which any old canal barges or parts of barges which were found sunk on the canals and had any prospect of being re-used, either in whole or in part, could be notified.

The procedure was supposed to have been set up, but I understand that six months later at least two old barges have been broken up. One was because the trust did not act, although it had been told about it in time, and the other because the Inland Waterways Board acted precipitously in dredging or some other activity which resulted in the boat becoming beyond repair.

I had hoped that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) would give an undertaking on behalf of the board that the negotiating machinery and consultation process would ensure that what remains of those historic boats would be preserved in future and that there would be all speed in getting the process into operation.

My second point concerns people with houseboats on the canals and the problems that exist, particularly for people on low incomes. There is a substantial difference between people in the south of England, who generally have a reasonable income, and people who live on canals in the north and are on extremely low incomes. They enjoy owning boats and travelling around the canals more slowly than people having a fortnight's holiday and wanting to travel a substantial distance.

Those people like to travel for a few months around the canal network and then stop and find employment for a few months. They feel under pressure because of the sensible concerns about safety. I hope that when the Committee considers the issue we will be assured that people on low incomes will not be penalised if they do not have

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permanent moorings, and that if they progress around the canal system and do not need a permanent mooring they will not be in difficulty.

There is also the question of insurance. I understand all the arguments for safety and that the boats have to meet certain standards. I understand why people are reluctant to insure them if they do not reach those standards, but I have heard about the problems caused by having to take a boat out of the water to get an insurance certificate. That can involve considerable costs.

Although I agree with the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) that it is important that the boats are safe, there is a difference between being safe and being modern. It is important that the legislation contains measures to ensure that the promoters do not demand high standards which would be desirable, but difficult for people on low incomes to achieve.

Mr. Barry Field: How might the hon. Gentleman resolve that position with one of requiring small craft not to pollute the canals and to meet the most modern standards in terms of drip trays for carburettors and engines and in respect of human waste and sinks?

Mr. Bennett: The people who are concerned about that would claim that their boats are perfectly capable of meeting those requirements. I realise that there is a difficult balance between what it is reasonable for British Waterways to propose and what is reasonable for people on low incomes to achieve. It would be very unfortunate if many of the old traditional craft were to be forced off our waterways.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman and I share several waterways, not least the Cheshire ring and other canals in the north-west, and I respect the stand that he has taken on this matter. When deciding whether to support the revival motion, is it not important that the board should establish a balance between tradition and commercialism? I share the hon. Gentleman's concern that too often commercialism seems to take precedence over tradition. Tradition on our waterways is very important indeed.

Mr. Bennett: That is a very important point, and we must get the balance right. I understand that the board has agreed that there should be a consultative conference some time in March to try to thrash out some of those issues. Why did it not hold that consultative conference back in 1990, instead of waiting until the very end of the process?

As many of my hon. Friends wish to make contributions, I will not delay the House further at this stage.

9.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): It may be convenient for the House if I intervene at this stage on the technical motion tabled by the Chairman of Ways and Means. I do not intend to speak for long, as I am conscious that other hon. Members may wish to intervene.

On Second Reading, I said that the Government have no objections to the proposals of British Waterways, which include important measures relating to the board's powers and duties. Since the House gave the Bill a Second Reading, it has been under detailed consideration in the Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie). Two members of that Committee told us this evening of the care and diligence that they have taken in considering the Bill. The House owes the Committee a debt of gratitude for its careful work.

I hope that the House will believe that it is right that the Committee should be allowed to complete its work on the private Bill so that the House can reach a decision based on the Bill's merits. The House should also be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) who has steered the Bill through with considerable care.

The Bill has provoked and promoted considerable interest throughout the country. From representations that I have received, I am aware of the considerable concerns. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West has devoted a considerable amount of time, energy and effort to the Bill and that is very much to the credit of the House as a whole.

As you have made clear, on several occasions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not for us tonight to consider the detailed provisions of the Bill. As I have said, and as the House knows, that is a matter for the Committee. On Second Reading last May, I welcomed the opportunity for a debate on Britain's waterways heritage. We have had something of a debate on that this evening although, by definition, as this is a technical motion, it has been more of a technical debate.

In many ways, the Bill is timely. It has coincided with the bicentenary of the canal network taking a grip in this country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) said, canal mania first gripped the country in 1793. In a very short space of time, Parliament passed no fewer than 24 enabling Acts for new canals. One wonders what the parliamentary timetable at that time must have been like, particularly as there is detailed reference to various ladies' pleasure gardens.

It has also been appropriate that the Bill has not only been part of the bicentenary celebrations, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West said, has had the beneficial impact of reviving in the House an interest in waterways and canals. It has been particularly good news that we have seen the revival of the parliamentary waterways group under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West.

I hope that the Committee will be able to finish its work on the Bill. I hope also that the debate has prompted continuing interest in waterways and canals. There are about 2,000 miles of waterways in Britain. They are a great part of our heritage. The Government invest nearly £50 million a year through grant in aid, and other sums are also invested in the canal network. I hope that we can maximise the contribution that the canal network can make to our nation. I hope that interest in canals will continue.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I apologise for not having been able to be present throughout the debate, but I had other duties in the House to attend to.

I share my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the many hundreds of miles of waterways. He will be aware of great concern about the Ouse north of York, in my constituency, and all the waterways to the north of Linton lock, which is in serious disrepair. Unless it is taken over by British Waterways, 50 or 60 miles of canals will effectively not be connected to the rest of the waterway network. I should

like my hon. Friend's assurance that, if the motion is agreed, the Government will seriously consider British Waterways having the resources to take responsibility for that lock.

Mr. Baldry: In fairness to other hon. Members who wish to speak, whether or not that stretch of water is subject to the British Waterways Board is a matter for statute. The board has a clear statutory definition of which stretches of canals and other waterways it is responsible for and which are remainder waterways. I will certainly check my hon. Friend's point and write to him on it.

9.42 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The House has just heard an intervention by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who has just walked into the Chamber, whereas other folk have been waiting all night to speak.

As a Scottish Member of Parliament, I represent a part of the River Clyde which is well used by the boating fraternity—yachting, the lot. Last week, I visited the Earl's Court boat show and I was delighted to see a strong contingent of Scottish boats at that exhibition. I have a genuine interest in the matter. I welcome the developments, albeit very late, that are taking place on our canals. However, I oppose the Bill because we should start afresh. I feel great anxiety when I see how the Government are carrying on in respect of other matters.

I also regard the commercial aspect as very frightening. Will people have the right to walk along river banks? Will the environment be improved? Will there be walkers' rights? Will there be sewerage systems for boats so that people will not throw crap into canals? I want to ensure that such services are provided along waterways. I am not sure whether we are getting assurances. I have not just barged into this debate; I have sat in the Chamber all night. I am not sailing by the skin of my teeth. We must have assurances from British Waterways about the environment.

I was fortunate the other week to watch the Sky Television Discovery channel programme about barges on our waterways. It was an absolutely fabulous programme. It showed what could be done with canals.

I hope that our canals will be improved, that they will be returned to the people and that the people will be able to use them properly. All those matters should be considered along with the Bill. These are not simply commercial considerations; we should think of the public —although, if things are handled properly, there may be tremendous spin-offs. There may be a regeneration of the small boat industry for which Britain was once famous; that includes Scotland, of course.

Scotland is very interested in boats. Since Windermere got rid of all its speedboat fanatics, they have come up to Scotland to have fun playing on the banks of the Clyde. We in Scotland do not mind spending a day or two on the canals. The boating community and industry are very mobile: this is one of the fastest growing leisure sports in Great Britain. I am not opposed to improving the waterways; indeed, I strongly support the idea, and I believe that the Government should put more money into it.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is clearly concerned about environmental issues. One of the Bill's purposes is to enshrine in law the recommendation made a few years ago by the Select Committee on Environment that the British Waterways Board should have a specific environmental duty. The hon. Gentleman, surely, will welcome that.

Mr. Graham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that helpful intervention.

I am worried that, following the privatisation of the water industry, many people have not been given the right to walk on ground that is actually owned by the public. I am deeply concerned about the possibility that a similar unfairness will result in this instance. We may end up paying a fast buck to walk along a canal along which donkeys used to walk free.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) has considered the environmental issues. The environment is dear to my heart; as a Scottish Member, I am fortunate enough to live in the countryside, and to have the opportunity to walk free and unhibited along the banks of the Clyde. There is nothing finer than to walk along the banks of the Clyde and watch the yachts and pleasure boats moving up and down. That experience is free, and I hope that it will remain so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is Scottish, but, as far as I know, the Clyde is not a canal.

9.47 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): It is very difficult to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), and congratulate him on his sponsorship of the Bill. I believe that the carry-over motion will benefit the canals, particularly the Forth and Clyde canal, part of which is in my constituency.

It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman mentioned enabling Bills passed some 200 years ago: at that time, a Mr. Lawrence Dundas, a Member of Parliament, promoted an enabling Bill involving the Forth and Clyde canal. Given our current preoccupation with the Registration of Members' Interests, it is also interesting to learn from the history of the canal that Mr. Dundas owned the Forth and Clyde Canal company, and saw no reason why he should not promote the Bill in the Commons.

The canal stretches from Dumbartonshire—a town called Bowling—to Grangemouth, in the Forth estuary. I understand that Mr. Dundas also owned a good deal of land in Grangemouth, and wanted to make it into a port.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the leisure facilities that canals can offer. It is not necessary to own a boat to enjoy such facilities.

In my constituency, many people, including myself and my family, enjoy a walk along the towpath of the canal which can stretch for many miles. Those people enjoy not only the canal itself but the wildlife which the canal nurtures. It is important in an industrial city like my own that people have little oases where they can see a part of the countryside that exists within a city centre. I know that that is a contradiction in terms, but the canal within my constituency has created a stretch of urban countryside.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) mentioned commercialisation. The Inland Waterways Board has made the Forth and Clyde canal navigable from Port Dundas in my constituency—named after the hon.

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Member I just mentioned—to a stretch called Kirkintilloch. Pleasure craft can now go on to that stretch, and there is talk of a marina on the boundary of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on a stretch called the Hamiltonhill basin. There is concern that, if that marina goes ahead, the general public may be denied access to that part of the canal.

The Minister cannot reply to the debate, but I wonder whether I could put on the record the fact that it would be helpful if those involved with the canal were able to give assurances that if a marina is to be built for well-off people, the general public will not be denied access to a part of the canal which they have previously enjoyed.

The carry-over motion and the Bill will give the House the power to examine the work of British Waterways. I am sure that the Minister will give British Waterways a free hand, but the Bill will allow him to consult its board and see that it is carrying out its duties.

Over and above the walking facilities that the canal can offer, many young people and their parents get out on the canal for a spot of coarse fishing. That is becoming increasingly popular in Scotland as access to some rivers and lochs becomes more difficult because of the high cost of permits. Many young people go on to the canal to fish, and I hope that the carry-over motion and the Bill allow that type of activity to be encouraged.

The general public do not realise that British Waterways not only owns the canal and the towpath, but, in some places, owns large stretches of land on each side of those towpaths. That can include acres of valuable land, which British Waterways inherited from the old canal companies. The board has recently sold some patches of land, and entrepreneurs have built pubs on the canal bank. Walkers may enjoy a refreshment there, and the boaters will do likewise when boats start going on to the canal.

I hope that any sale of the land will not deny people access to the canal. I also hope that perhaps at a later stage the Minister will give assurances that the proceeds from any of the land that is sold by the board will go back into maintaining the facilities of the canal, renewing the lock gates that have been lying in disrepair and ensuring that not only the canal banks but the towpaths are not in a dangerous condition. I hope that the Minister will not encourage the board to dispose of land, but if it does so, I hope that it will do so in such a way that whatever finance is raised goes back into the canal and does not go to the Treasury.

Mr. Redmond: May I point out that the Government's record—the Government support this private Bill—is to deny the public access to lots of public land? I was told, "Get it in black and white. Do not leave it until after you have signed on the dotted line. Get it included in the Bill. Get it included in any agreement before you accept." My hon. Friend is making important points. Before he agrees to the Bill, he must ensure that those points become part and parcel of the Bill.

Mr. Martin: That is why the carry-over motion is important. That is what the Bill is all about. We should get things in black and white so that the general public—the people we represent—know exactly where they stand. That is important. I hope that safeguards will be given.

Let us consider the commercial aspect. When I first discovered the canals as a boy of 10, there were tenements on the banks of the canal belonging to the workers who serviced and looked after the canal. Thankfully, those tenements have gone. They were very badly maintained. In other words, they were slums. We now have some beautiful developments on the banks of the canal.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The new system used on the annunciator, which has been in operation since we came back from the Christmas recess, shows the item purely as a Division, whereas it always used to be shown as a Division on the closure. I believe that some hon. Members are mistaken over on what the House is dividing at the present time. Does not that matter need clarification, not only for tonight's business, but for future occasions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point and it will be brought to the notice of the House's authorities. However, I understand that what is currently shown on the annunciator is perfectly all right.

The House having divided: Ayes 271, Noes 151.

Division No. 82] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas

Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Barry Field and
Mr. Alan Duncan.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hardy, Peter
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara

Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Cunningham and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put accordingly:
The House divided: Ayes 297, Noes 104.

Division No. 83 **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
Gillan, Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Oiner, William
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William

Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wise, Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Barry Field and
Mr. Alan Duncan.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Tipping, Paddy
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.

Education

10.24 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (Mandatory Awards) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2914), dated 26th November 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be annulled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to consider the following motion:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (Student Loans) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2915), dated 29th November 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be annulled.

Mr. Foster: I am sure that the House welcomes the hon. Member for Oldham Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) on his first outing on Labour's Front Bench in an education debate. However, this debate was initiated by Liberal Democrats, demonstrating once again the high degree of importance that my party attaches to education. This debate concerns a broken Government promise. It will highlight the way—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am seated only a few feet from my hon. Friend, but because of the noise beyond the Bar of the House I cannot hear him. Will you have that noise stopped so that the House can hear my hon. Friend?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right. I am also having difficulty hearing the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). I hope that the House will settle down.

Mr. Foster: This debate will highlight Government attempts to transfer part of the debt created by their economic mismanagement to students in higher education.

To understand the impact of the regulations on students, it is important to consider a number of related higher education issues. This debate is taking place at a time of increasing uncertainty, created in part by the Government's stop-go policies on the expansion of student numbers and frequent changes to the relationship between tuition fees and funding council grant—described only today by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals as policy on the hoof. Universities do not know whether they are coming or going, and they find it almost impossible to make long-term funding planning decisions. The regulations will have the same effect on students.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The hon. Gentleman is attacking Government policy on higher education support, but does he not agree that the United Kingdom's system of student support is the most generous anywhere in the free world?

Mr. Foster: On that matter, I will take the advice of the Secretary of State for Education, who told the House only a month ago that we should be wary of making international comparisons of that sort. My next point is relevant to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, so I hope that he will listen.

This debate is also taking place at a time when it is becoming apparent that the Government's much-vaunted expansion of higher education has been done on the cheap.

Mr. Marshall: That is not so.

Mr. Foster: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will listen to the examples I shall give of the way in which students suffer as a result.

Last month, the Secretary of State boasted to the House that the recent increase in student numbers was the equivalent of 12 new universities——

Mr. Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Foster: I shall not give way again to the hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State failed to tell the House that he had not made available the capital required for those new universities.

Mr. Marshall: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member who is laying a prayer to refuse to answer yes or no to a basic question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The hon. Gentleman's speech is entirely in order so far.

Mr. Foster: Figures provided by the Library demonstrate that expenditure per higher education student has declined 22 per cent. over the last four years. An analysis of the November Budget by the CVCP shows that it will reduce a further 4·5 per cent. next year. It is no wonder that students are having to face worsening staff-student ratios, overcrowded lecture theatres, inadequate library and other facilities——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: No, I want to make some progress—then I will give way to the hon. Lady.

Students are having to cope with inadequately maintained buildings—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Lady will recognise that we have time for only a short debate and many hon. Members wish to contribute.

I undertand that the current repair and maintenance backlog in higher education stands at £1 billion and stories of the problems are legion. For example—I hope that the Minister will respond to this—students at Mid-Kent college were told just before Christmas that some of the courses on which they had embarked could no longer be continued at their college.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*——

Mr. Foster: I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Hon. Members: Sexist.

Mr. Harry Greenway: In deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), may I say that I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that I visited the new Thames Valley university for half a day this week? It has problems, but buildings are on the way to accommodate all students properly. I met thousands of students, not one of whom said that he or she was not happy. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that they all said that they were happy to be there, and thousands more would like to be there, despite what he says?

Mr. Foster: I was not aware that the hon. Gentleman had made that visit, but he may wish to know that I have visited a large number of higher education institutions in the past 18 months, and his experience has not been replicated by mine.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Foster: I shall give way to the hon. Lady, but that must be the last time I do so.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It would have been easier and more courteous for the hon. Gentleman to do so in the first place.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the superb St. Martin's college and Lancaster university have both completed exceptionally good building programmes which I was happy to take the Minister round a couple of months ago? Those programmes are magnificent. The hon. Gentleman referred to capital spending; the total capital grant overall will be £322 million, £382 million and £424 million between 1994-96. That is a 20 per cent. increase, and I do not know how it can be said that those institutions are being starved of funds.

Mr. Foster: I apologise to the hon. Lady for not giving way earlier, as she has now enabled me to make a point that I might otherwise have been unable to make. The hon. Lady is right to say that there is to be an increase in capital expenditure in higher education—I acknowledge that. Next year there will be an increase of 1 per cent. in real terms. That increase and the increase over three years mentioned by the hon. Lady will go no way towards compensating for the increased dereliction in our university buildings. Will the Minister be good enough to respond to my claim that there is a backlog of repair and maintenance of £1 billion in higher education?

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: No, I cannot give way any more.

The regulations are part of a double whammy on students. First, they have to suffer the vandalism of the appalling attack on student unions; secondly, they have to suffer the Government's broken promise as contained in the regulations. I will explain how the Government have broken their promise.

When student loans were introduced, the 1988 White Paper said:

"The maximum grant and the average contribution will be maintained at the 1990-91 cash level."

That commitment was underscored by the Baroness Blatch in another place, when she said in 1990:

"The grant will be maintained in cash terms at its 1990-91 level."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 19 March 1990; Vol. 517, c. 57.]

At the same time, it was made clear that the value of grants and loans would broadly equalise in the year 2007-2008. But despite those undertakings, the regulations will bring forward the expected date of equalisation by 10 years and would cut the cash value of grants by 27 per cent. over the next three years. That will require an increase over the same period of more than 120 per cent. in the loans necessary to compensate.

What will be the effect on students of these broken promises? They will accelerate the growing problem of student debt and poverty. Students already face significant problems in that respect. Even with grants and loans, almost all students would be better off if they registered as unemployed. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has estimated that this year the average shortfall in students' incomes will be £1,100.

Not surprisingly, students face ever-mounting debts. The Barclays bank survey published in August last year was based on a sample nearly twice the size of that used for the Department's recent survey of students' incomes and expenditure. The Barclays survey revealed that 81 per cent. of students ended the last academic year owing an average of £1,672.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Does the hon. Gentleman regard that survey as more authoritative and comprehensive than ours, one of a continuing series, which was supported by a committee including representatives of the National Union of Students?

Mr. Foster: I am happy to tell the Minister that I have seen that study; there have been a number of other studies, too. Credence must be given to the Barclays survey because its sample size was nearly twice that of the Department's survey.

The survey showed an increase in student debt of 22 per cent. in one year, and the figures ignored many other kinds of debt, such as debts owed to parents.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of a widely based survey about which I learned today from a group of students at Sheffield university? Oddly enough, they were more interested in meeting Labour Members here than Liberal Democrats —I cannot think why. This intensive professional survey showed that Sheffield students, after paying housing costs, are left with £100 to live on for a month. That has to pay for heat, light, books, travel, food and everything else.

Mr. Foster: I am aware of that study. The hon. Lady will be interested to know that those same students faxed me some information yesterday.

These regulations, if agreed to, will make student debt worse—the more so in view of the additional pressures created by rising accommodation costs and VAT on fuel. The pressures will bear down heavily on the 5,400 full-time home students aged over 50 who cannot even obtain student loans. They will also affect the thousands of part-time students who—wrongly, in the view of my party —rarely obtain grants, let alone loans.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Foster: I will not give way.

The one thing that students in higher education are guaranteed from their courses nowadays is practical experience in the management of rising debt.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre) *rose*——

Mr. Foster: All this is particularly unfair to students already on courses, who find that they will have to borrow more money than they had planned to. The effects of the debt problem are well known to all hon. Members. An increasing number of students have to take jobs, not just during vacations, but during term time too. The effect on their studies is becoming increasingly apparent.

[Mr. Foster]

I remind Conservative Members who see no problems arising from term-time working of the view expressed less than four years ago by the noble Baroness Blatch:

"the Government provide an adequate level of support for a student to be maintained without work during the course of study."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 June, 1990; Vol. 520, c. 1790.]

Those words will certainly bring hollow laughter from present-day students.

At least two other problems will be exacerbated by the regulations.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: No, I will not.

First, there is likely to be a further increase in drop-out rates. Already there is an alarming all-time high of 8 per cent. of higher education students failing to complete their courses. Secondly, it will inhibit the further widening of access to higher education. While numerically more students from social classes four and five have entered higher education, as a percentage of the student population the increase has been extremely modest. If the regulations are accepted, no increase in that percentage is likely to occur. University education will remain predominantly for the children of the better off.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: I will not give way.

I will conclude with some comments about the loans system. The Student Loans Company received more than £16 million from the Government last year to cover administrative costs, but that does not reflect the true cost of the scheme. The CVCP has estimated that the average cost to universities per application is £7, but the company provides institutions with £4 per loan application. That leaves the university to pick up the tab of £3 per application.

There is little evidence that higher education will benefit financially from the shift to loans. Original Government figures allow 25 years to break even. However, bearing in mind the Minister's written answer to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 4 November and his correspondence with me prior to the debate, the House will be interested to know when the Minister thinks the student loan scheme will break even and when it will have a negative effect on the PSBR.

There are certainly some worrying trends. According to the Public Accounts Committee last month, the number of students now deferring repayments has reached 40 per cent. That 40 per cent. provide ample evidence, if such was needed, of the difficulty encountered by graduates in finding jobs and of the waste of talent caused by the Government's economic policies.

The CVCP has revealed some other startling figures. It claims that of borrowers in repayment status, 8·8 per cent. —that is, 12,786 students—were in arrears on 31 July 1993, and that 6·6 per cent. were in default, more than two months late in repaying. We may have to wait until the middle of the next century before the scheme breaks even. I hope that the Minister will pay particular attention to my next comment, which is that that forecast is based on what we presently know.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: No, I will not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appeal to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) to recognise that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way to her.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am distressed that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is misleading students who are over the age of 50. Some 5,500 are being misled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Lady wishes to catch my eye later in the debate, I shall do my best to call her.

Mr. Foster: I am sure that the House will be interested to note that the figure to which the hon. Lady refers in her point of order was provided to me by the Minister.

I hope that the Minister will comment on the following important point, if he has a chance to speak. We are all concerned about when the Student Loans Company will break even and when it will have a negative effect on the public sector borrowing requirement. Even the information that we have been given so far, which may lead us to the middle of next century, is based on what we know to be the Government's intention.

There is a possibility that the Government intend to phase out maintenance grants altogether. Some Conservative Members have referred to the possibility of introducing a top-up fee system. It is important that we have assurances this evening on both those matters, not least because of the anxiety caused by yesterday's announcement that the student awards branch in Scotland is to transfer from direct Scottish Office control, paving the way for the amalgamation of the Student Loans Company and the ultimate abolition of grants. The House deserves a response from the Minister.

The House will be pleased to know that I am about to conclude by referring to a Department of Education press release dated 16 December 1993 which shows the lengths to which the Government are willing to go to put a gloss on their appalling policies towards students. In describing what the broken promise that the accelerated switch from grants to loans will mean, the press release claimed that it would

"enhance still further the flexibility of our system of student support".

Most hon. Members know that for the words "flexibility of" we should substitute "cuts to". In view of what is contained in the regulations, students may well wish to reflect on the flexibility of Government promises.

10.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Those of us who are familiar with the speeches of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) and who retain some sympathy and affection for him cannot help feeling that he is a latter-day Malvolio, not so much intellectually challenged as merely intellectually cross-gartered. He produced a typical modern speech from a Liberal Democrat, a speech of virtual reality whereby the performer or propeller flails around in all directions but somehow the aeroplane never manages to get off the ground. It is entirely unsafe and unchallenging.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): That is a mixed metaphor.

Mr. Boswell: I am delighted to mix metaphors in support of the official Opposition, who will no doubt have an opportunity to clarify their policies.

Among all the stuff was a heavily disguised plea for more resources. There was no mention of where they were to come from or how they were to be applied. There was a grudging concession that, because we were prepared to face the issues, we were prepared to provide an extra 20 per cent. on the capital budget for higher education.

I may be able to help the hon. Gentleman on one specific point. I was surprised that he was not familiar with the authoritative international study of comparative student support carried out by the Australian Government economist Bruce Chapman called "Austudy: Towards a more flexible approach". It concluded by stating that the average United Kingdom student is the most grant-subsidised of all.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Just before we leave my hon. Friend's point about the amount of money spent per student, I hope that the Minister does not deny that, given that there has been a significant expansion in numbers—nobody denies that—capital expenditure on buildings, plant and equipment has not kept pace with the expansion in numbers. That is why vice-chancellors and principals are arguing that expenditure per student is falling.

Mr. Boswell: That is because the university sector has an enviable record of achieving greater efficiency and greater productivity. I am surprised to hear the Liberal Democrats denying that.

These are the latest in a series of annual regulations. I remind the House that their approval is essential to ensure that students receive from next autumn the significant increases in maintenance support that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget statement on 30 November. Their timing is influenced by the new arrangements for the financial year.

Aside from including the new grant and loan and fee rates for 1994-95, the regulations are largely unchanged from previous years. We have made a few purely technical changes, and we have made two specific changes to the regulations on loans to make the scheme more student friendly. The first change provides for a simpler application process for students who have already taken out a loan. If they want to apply for a second loan——

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Did the Minister hear the Chief Secretary to the Treasury's recent statement that students should perhaps pay course and examination fees? That would obviously limit access to higher education. On behalf of his Department, will the Minister specifically rule out the possibility that students might be made personally liable to pay course fees?

Mr. Boswell: I will not be tempted, by York or Durham, to speculate on matters that go beyond our very clear proposals that are set out in the regulations. That also applies to the questions of the hon. Member for Bath. We have set out plans and I am doing my best to explain them to the House.

The second technical change is that borrowers are to be notified promptly of their entitlement to defer repayments. I am sure that all reasonable Members would want to welcome those important changes.

Quite understandably, the hon. Member for Bath focused on wider issues of student support. I am perfectly happy to stand by the Government's record and to explain it to the House.

"The loans scheme is a success"

are not my words; they are the words of a national newspaper, normally thought to be on the left, when introducing its student finance supplement some months ago.

The loans scheme is an accepted part of the higher education landscape. More than 1 million loans have now been taken out——

Mr. Enright: The words came from *The Guardian.*

Mr. Boswell: Indeed.

We are already receiving a significant volume of repayment, amounting to £18 million to date. That money is coming in and it is available to the Exchequer for the support of students and the university sector.

Despite attempts to rubbish it, the Student Loans Company is also a success. Its performance matches the best of private sector standards. Its unit cost per account managed was less than £21 last year and is continuing to fall. We have made it clear that any justifiable, reasonable administrative costs of the universities can be underwritten. The figure that is charged is essentially a matter for negotiation between the universities and the Student Loans Company. However, I am willing to receive a case if it was felt that the figure was inappropriate—for example, in relation to volume which continues to expand.

The loans company's collection performance is impressive by any standards. Only 4·1 per cent. of borrowers are currently in default. That is a good record when compared to many commercial companies. It gives the lie to those terrible warnings we heard when the scheme was introduced. The regulations build on the success of that scheme.

We have always intended to replace grants progressively with loans until the two elements were broadly equal in value. As the hon. Member for Bath knows, if any progress were to be made beyond that—and we have no plans for that—it would require an affirmative resolution of the House.

As the hon. Member for Bath said, so far we have moved towards that goal by freezing the level of the maintenance grant and uprating the loan facility each year. But he will have noticed our success in bringing inflation under control. The very fact that we have been so successful in doing that means that that progressive shift would be extremely slow, so we have decided to accelerate the process by reducing the level of main rates of grant for the next three years and making corresponding increases in the loan rates. By 1996-97, the values of the two elements will be equal.

Mr. Enright: What estimates have been made of the number of students who have been put off by the fact that they would have to take out loans?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman will hear in just a moment what has happened to student numbers since the introduction of the loan scheme.

[Mr. Boswell]

We hear much propaganda from the Opposition parties about allegations that we are cutting the total level of support available to students. Next year, through the main rates of grant and loan, the total amount available to students will not be lower but 4 per cent. higher than it is this year. That is a good and fair increase in a difficult economic climate. Supplementary allowances payable to older students, disabled students and those with dependants will also be increased by 4 per cent. while the average value of the loan facility itself will be increased by 44 per cent.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Boswell: No. I should like to make progress, in fairness to hon. Members who wish to speak.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) would not let me speak.

Mr. Boswell: If I may ask for a little patience, I want to press on with explaining the matter.

It is wrong to suggest that the shift from grant to loan will cause financial hardship or will force students to drop out of their courses. Students do not need to repay anything while studying. The money that they actually receive, as long as they choose to take out the loan available, will be the same in real terms next year as this year. It is scaremongering to suggest that graduates will be weighed down with enormous debts. Borrowers pay nothing back until their income reaches a reasonable level. This year, that is about £14,000. There are very few starting salaries, even in London, at that level. We keep repayment terms under review to ensure that repayments for those earning more than that amount are manageable. The average is currently a modest £11 a month.

Mrs. Campbell: Is not the Minister being a little disingenuous in supposing that all students take out loans? What percentage of students are presently taking out a loan, and what percentage are existing entirely on the grant?

Mr. Boswell: I do not know what goes on in the Labour party, but we believe in freedom of choice. It is open to students to take out a loan or not. The figure has been rising towards approximately 50 per cent. I did not say, nor did I imply, that all students avail themselves. If they do not, one wonders whether their situation is as bad as all that, just as one wonders, bearing in mind the disgraceful attack on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the London School of Economics, whether some students are so ill financed that, instead of spending their money on eggs for personal consumption, they decide to sling them at the Secretary of State. I hope that the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) will repudiate that disgraceful action.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) correctly alluded to the fact that students over 50 might not obtain a loan. He omitted to say that a student over 50 who starts a course is, in common with other mature students, entitled to a basic means-tested maintenance grant of up to £1,045 for which he can apply to his local authority. That fact should be on the record. The hon. Member for Bath might have put off people of that age.

Mr. Boswell: As ever, my hon. Friend is entirely right. It is clear that the hon. Member for Bath would benefit from further study.

Of course there will always be a small number of students who find themselves in financial difficulty. For those, and for the small minority who are not eligible for loans, institutions can and do use the access funds to help. For the coming year, we have increased those funds by 10 per cent. Nor should we forget the impact on parents. In the coming year, the contribution from parents whose earnings rise in line with the national average will continue to fall in real terms; for parents whose incomes rises more slowly, even the cash contribution will fall.

The most absurd claim made by many about the loans scheme is that it would have a disastrous effect on access to higher education. In October 1993, for the first time ever, more than 30 per cent. of young people entered higher education. We have reached our target for the year 2000 in 1994-95: that is a triumph. It is more than double the participation rate of five years ago, and 60 per cent. higher than the rate when the loans scheme was introduced in 1990. Is it not interesting that student numbers really began to take off at precisely the time when the scheme was introduced?

There is no evidence to support claims that students from lower-income backgrounds are disadvantaged. Our recently published survey—which, unlike the Barclays bank survey mentioned by the hon. Member for Bath, was not self-referred; it was a representative survey—found that students entering higher education from less well-off backgrounds had shifted from being the minority in 1988 to being the majority now. The loans scheme reduces students' dependence on their parents, and in so doing it widens access.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): I believe that my constituency contains the highest proportion of students in the country. Does it not concern the Minister and the Government that the expansion of student numbers has taken place largely in such subjects as humanities, rather than in science and technology? The country desperately needs more people qualified in those subjects.

Is that not partly because it is far more expensive to educate people in science and technology? The Government claim that there has been a reduction in costs for students. That is partly because we are educating those who are cheaper to educate, rather than those who are more expensive to educate but whom the country badly needs.

Mr. Boswell: I am astonished: the paranoia is the paranoia of the Labour party, but the attack on sociology from that quarter is entirely new. Moreover, is it not remarkable that the hon. Gentleman did not give us credit for our new engineering bursary scheme, which deals with our joint concerns?

The Government want a high-quality higher education system that is not confined to an elite. We are not closet elitists.

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): The Minister has talked about the expansion of student numbers since the introduction of loans. Will he explain why the

overwhelming majority of those extra students come from social classes 1 and 2? In 1992, only 7 per cent. of university admissions came from social classes 4 and 5. What increased access is there for the poorest members of society?

Mr. Boswell: I have already given the overall figures from our study of participation. I am very glad to note the increase in participation. I am also surprised that the hon. Gentleman gave us no credit for the huge increase in the number of part-time and mature students. That, too, will deal with our joint concerns.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I remember taking part in a similar debate nearly 20 years ago. Did not the massive expansion in the humanities and social sciences take place in the 1960s, under a Labour Government?

Despite the view expressed in the Robbins report, and echoed consistently by Opposition Members, that a grant scheme would bring in far more from the so-called working class—or blue-collar workers—it never did. Throughout the years of the grants-only system, the increase was marginal and statistically unimportant.

Mr. Boswell: I agree with my hon. Friend. We now have the practical means of access, and the national curriculum, which has been led so well by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friends, will deliver high-class education even in the deprived urban areas from which we want people to go to university.

Let us not forget that we do not want to put insupportable burdens on the taxpayer. We cannot will the expansion without providing the resources. Undoubtedly, higher education provides a benefit to the economy and to society, but the main beneficiaries—let us not mince words—are the graduates themselves. Is it not right that they should be expected to contribute? The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals thinks so, the Royal Society thinks so and even some of the more enlightened Opposition Members think so. The Government agree with them, and that is why we made the proposals.

I suppose we shall hear the truth about Labour party policies—"now you see them, now you don't." It is time to come clean about the Labour policies, as has been suggested by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). I wrote to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 17 November, and I have not yet had a reply. It is four months since the Labour party's so-called "Green Paper" on higher education was prepared and printed. However, it was withdrawn at the eleventh hour on the explicit instructions of the Leader of the Opposition. No wonder, as he was obviously embarrassed to associate himself with it. The document floated such crazy ideas as the introduction of a corporate levy on business to help to pay for higher education. The Labour party's priorities, shall we say, were not quite in that direction.

We need to hear from the Labour party tonight, and I will give it time to tell us what it proposes. There would be no clearer contrast than with the Government's clear policy on higher education. The regulations which we are debating are central and fundamental to that policy. Taken as a whole, the arrangements for student support are fair and generous, and many students in other European countries such as Germany—which I know well—would give their eye teeth for such generous support as we give.

The regulations allow a fair level of financial support for students while they are studying. They provide equal support for all regardless of background, and they share the cost of a student's attendance in higher education more fairly between graduates, parents and taxpayers. The regulations are good for parents, good for taxpayers, good for students and good for higher education, and I commend them to the House.

11.7 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): I remind the Minister that the debate is about regulations which will become the law of the land once the Government's supporters are driven through the Division Lobby this evening. We are not engaged in a general debate about higher education; we are dealing principally with the Government's appalling legislative proposals which will make life more difficult for students in higher education. In my view, they will reduce the opportunities for students to enter higher education.

In passing, I will mention that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) commented on the fact that tonight's debate has been made possible because of a Liberal party prayer, which of course it has. Prayers are debated on the Floor of the House when they have the agreement of the Government of the day, and some collusion is therefore necessary. The last period in which we were accustomed to having Liberal prayers debated on the Floor of the House was when the Conservative Government thought that the rise of the Social Democratic party might do damage to the Labour party, as indeed it did. I must give a warning to the Liberal party: "Timeo danaos et dona ferentes"—it should watch that lot once they start handing out a few free gifts.

Mr. Don Foster: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I have only just begun my speech, and I will give way in a moment.

The Government's measures are born of panic. They are not about enhancing opportunities in higher education. They are a response to a £50 billion public expenditure deficit and an attempt to restrict expansion, which the Government regard as out of control. The demand of students for opportunities in higher education—a demand to which we would have thought that the Conservative party, with its free market principles, would seek to respond—has to be choked off by deliberate Government attempts to restrict opportunities next year.

For example, it is clear that there will be 10,000 fewer places in higher education next year than would have existed, because of the 3·5 per cent. cut in the Government's——

Mr. Boswell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Indeed I will.

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. First, I apologise. It was remiss of me not to welcome him formally to the Dispatch Box for his first Front-Bench speech.

Would he care to tell the House how many students there were in higher education when the Labour Government of which he was a member left office, and how great the proportion is today if, for the purposes of hypothesis, I accept the likely student numbers next year that he suggested?

Mr. Davies: There is growing awareness, even in the dimmer ranks of the Conservative party, that we need to enhance our skills in this country. We can do so only by increasing the education budget. It is palpably clear from the public expenditure White Papers that the Government are not prepared to fund the continued rate of expansion in higher education numbers that we have had in recent years. The chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, reacting immediately to the Government's proposals of public expenditure in November, said:

"Having stoked up the aspirations of young people and encouraged them into further education, the Government are now attempting to deny them the opportunity for which so many are now clamouring."

I fail to see how the Government can deny that fact.

Mr. John Marshall: The hon. Gentleman was asked a question a moment ago. Will he confirm that, in 1979, one in eight were in higher education and today it is one in three? Is that not progress that he should welcome?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman ought to recognise that we still have a considerable way to go. The number of people that we are educating in higher education is below the average for advanced countries. It will remain below the average under the Government's present proposals.

The Government are involved in cutting the maintenance grant. That is what the regulations do. Originally, the plan was to create rough equality between the maintenance grant and student loans in the year 2007. That was the proposal in the 1988 White Paper. Why the sudden dramatic acceleration? Is it because the Government have rethought their higher education policy on the basis of fresh principles, or is it a panic reaction to the costs of higher education and a determination that they should be borne out of the private resources of the students, many of whom are those who are least well placed to meet such costs?

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. I, too, welcome him to his new responsibilities. Is he aware that, in a society such as ours, it was possible under the earlier arrangements for people from much poorer backgrounds and families to have to contribute through their taxes to the cost of student support? Does he accept that this rebalancing, putting a greater emphasis on loans, is a fair policy?

Mr. Davies: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's premise that there is inequity in higher education, in that students from relatively prosperous backgrounds are subsidised by the taxes paid by the less well-off. We have not argued that higher education is part of a redistributive welfare state. I believe, however, that there are important gains to the community from the development of higher education. Those gains should be recognised in the way in which we finance higher education, but thrusting the loan system on to the individual student will lead to inequity.

Under the Government's solution, students will be expected to incur substantial debts. The Minister says that such debts are of no concern to students, because the loan element has not deterred them. As the Minister recognised, however, loans have been only a small part of the total resources available to students. Moreover, in a slightly more relaxed vein, the Government's intention was that the period over which the loan would increase as a percentage of the resources available to students would be almost two decades. Now, with brutal suddenness—within the next three years—students will find that half the resources on which they are individually dependent will have to come from their own pockets or take the form of a loan.

Dr. Hampson: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, if a student takes the full loan and also receives a maintenance grant, he is well over 20 per cent. and even 30 per cent.—it depends on the balance—better off than he was before the loan was introduced? Was not that one of the main arguments of the first proponent of the loan system in the then Department of Education? Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do—because we attended a conference together many years ago—that the first proponent was Lord Peston when he was the special adviser to a Labour Secretary of State.

Mr. Davies: I am being asked to commend the idea that a student with a loan facility has slightly more resources than under the Conservative Government's grant arrangements in the mid-1980s. Well, I accept that fact. In the mid-1980s, British students' maintenance awards were below the level that obtained throughout the 1970s when my party was last in government.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Is my hon. Friend aware that I have received figures from Durham students' union? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am not reading; I am merely giving some figures. A Durham student's maintenance bill this year is £1,900. In 1995-96, the student grant will be £1,834, so by 1995-96 a Durham student's college bill will be higher than his grant and he will have to take out a student loan simply to exist, after having paid all his bills. A student arriving in Durham in 1996 will have to borrow £4,156 just to survive.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that graphic illustration of my case. To his illustration I would add the obvious statement that, although the loan scheme may not have been a deterrent to entry into higher education when it formed a small part of student entitlement, it will become a great deterrent in future.

The loan scheme is fatally flawed. Private enterprise would not touch the loans for students scheme. We all remember the noble Lady Thatcher, the previous Prime Minister, touting the scheme around the banks with all her authority and their reluctance to have anything to do with it. We all recognise that higher education institutions subsidise the loan companies because the loan companies receive less in resources than it costs them to process the loans for each student. The scheme costs £11 million to administer, and it has been condemned as inefficient by no less a body than the Public Accounts Select Committee.

The system, which the Conservative party suggests is the basis for expansion of higher education and for raising our skills level, offers nothing to part-time students, who account for 35 per cent. of students in higher education. The Government have no proposals to offer support or encouragement to such students.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): The hon. Gentleman was having a short sabbatical when we passed the loan scheme legislation. However, he will see, if he looks back at the debate, that it was difficult to get anybody on the Labour Front Bench to commit himself to the pledge to which he now wishes to commit it—that the Labour party will do away with the loan scheme when it returns to office,

and put grants in its place. May we have that commitment from the hon. Gentleman this evening, or is he talking humbug?

Mr. Bryan Davies: Let me remind, or perhaps inform, the hon. Gentleman that I may have been taking a sabbatical but I was keeping a fairly beady eye on the proceedings of the House from a vantage point that gave me a clear analysis of the horrors which the Government have been visiting on the British people in recent years. The loan system does nothing for part-time students. It does nothing to help the growing crisis in post-graduate education. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Of course, it does nothing to deal with the problems in further education, which also need our attention to develop the skills of our people.

Even the Minister suggested that he could not explain why 57 per cent.—*[Interruption.]* I repeat the figure, if I may, over the hubbub.

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to make what will probably be my last intervention. May we have a statement clearly on the record: would a future Labour Government abolish the loans and return the value to a full level of grant—yes or no?

Mr. Davies: I sought to point out to the Minister earlier that we are addressing the debate to the proposals of the Government. *[Interruption.]* We are in the process of developing clearly—*[Interruption.]* Let me commend to Conservative Members for bed-time reading the extremely well thought through, well written paper by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker).

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): From his vantage point of the past few years, I wonder if my hon. Friend has been able to make any assessment, as I have, of just how long it would take to repair the damage to education and to other areas that the Government have inflicted on the country in the past 15 long years? My estimate is that, even with an incoming Labour Government, it would take a little bit of time. Does he share my mathematics?

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you noticed that we have not been able to obtain an answer from the Labour Front Bench on the question whether a Labour Government would do away with loans?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The House must quieten down a little this evening.

Mr. Davies: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was referring to the Minister's astonishing statement that he though there was little wrong with circumstances in which only 43 per cent. of students entitled to take out the loan facility do so. I will tell him why such a small proportion take out a loan. It is not because they are awash with personal resources. If the Minister thinks that, it is about time that he met a few students and talked to their teachers; then he would recognise the fallacy of that position.

The reason why such a large percentage of students are not prepared to take out even the small amount of loan at present available to them is that they are, rightly, properly, judiciously and intelligently, scared of debt. They share that fear with the vast majority of our people who, once burnt, are twice shy. The Tory party must recognise that the Lawson boom of 1988, the subsequent collapse and the development of negative equity in the housing of many of our countryment have produced in our nation a desperate concern about debt. Students come from families who are anxious about that.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): The hon. Gentleman is too craven to say what Labour party policy might be on future loans. He was about to commend the comments of his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) who, in a paper last October, which was suppressed by the Labour party, argued that people who benefit from higher education should make some contribution towards it.

Does the hon. Gentleman also agree with his hon. Friend? On 8 November 1993, he wrote in *The Times* that Labour is in danger

"of becoming a professional Opposition"

in that it

"never risks upsetting the vested interests",

and that the world of education has a right to expect politicians, particularly in the Labour party,

"to show some awareness of changing realities. A responsible political party"—

which obviously the Labour party is not—

"cannot hide its head in the sand."

Mr. Davies: It is a forlorn proposition for the hon. Gentleman to try to drive a wedge between my hon. Friend and me. As my hon. Friend will show in the Division Lobby tonight, he utterly detests the Government's policy and this loan system. If Tory Members will be satisfied this evening and otherwise will rest uncomfortably in their beds only by listening to a little bit of Labour party policy, let me give them some.

The Labour party—I quote no less an authority than the leader of the party—is opposed to student loans because we believe

"Students should not be forced to live in poverty whilst they are studying and then carry a heavy burden of debt with them for years afterwards.

The student loans policy is clearly failing and damaging students' ability to study in the process."

Every member of the Labour party shares that belief. None of tonight's interventions and the gloss that the Minister put on student loans will convince us otherwise.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that the Labour party would do away with student loans but not give any additional grant?

Mr. Davies: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but unless I am greatly mistaken, I gave way to him earlier in my all too short speech. I therefore did not consider that I would be regarded as behaving excessively discourteous if, on this occasion, I did not give way to him again.

Tonight, the House has had the opportunity——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)):—*

The House divided: Ayes 276, Noes 305.

Division No. 84] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Matthew Taylor and Ms Liz Lynne.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew

Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'ford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mackay.

Question accordingly negatived.

PETITION

Commercial Products (Animal Testing)

11.45 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of many of my constituents who consider that certain goods sold in shops should be labelled in such a way that those who purchase them know whether they have been tested on animals. The petition contains 3,333 signatures, and declares

that there should be mandatory labelling of all cosmetic, household and garden products with the letters TA or NTA, to show to the consumer whether a product has been tested on animals, or not tested on animals. (Ingredients or finished products since 1987).

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons allows debate and free vote in Parliament on this matter.

They trust that their petition will be given careful and sympathetic consideration.

To lie upon the Table.

Bank of England (Supervision)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

11.46 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): The House will recall that, on 6 May 1992, the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), who I am delighted to see in the House tonight and who will endeavour, with my encouragement, to catch the Chair's eye before the Minister replies, in *Hansard* at columns 113-16, raised the disturbing case of Mr. Joseph. At the time, I knew nothing about the matter, but was naturally interested in what the hon. Gentleman had to say. I was lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and followed the hon. Gentleman in that debate, which was on the Loyal Address. I started my remarks by expressing the hope that matters raised by the hon. Gentleman would be thoroughly investigated.

In the circumstances, I had expected that Barclays bank, conscious of my remarks and those of the hon. Gentleman, would have sought to reassure me almost at once. In fact, no notice whatsoever was taken of what the hon. Gentleman had to say. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that what is said in this House should be taken very seriously—not only by Ministers of the Crown, but by other relevant bodies affected or involved in parliamentary observations.

Accordingly, with no sign at all that Barclays was intending to take the hon. Gentleman's remarks seriously—save that it took the ruthless action of seeking summary judgment against Mr. Joseph on the very next day—I wrote to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Trade, the then Governor of the Bank of England, and others implicated in the hon. Gentleman's remarks, seeking assurances that appropriate action was in fact being taken.

The Governor replied on 25 June 1992. The banking ombudsman sent me a typically unhelpful reply on 11 June 1992. The then Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote to me personally on 28 July 1992, and the noble Baroness, the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, on 27 June 1992. I understand that Mr. Joseph, concerned at the cavalier way in which the serious—and as we now know, restrained and understated—remarks by the hon. Member for Stockton, North, had been ignored, also wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

I am quite satisfied that all the replies received were drafted and signed in good faith. Information had been sought—ultimately from Barclays bank—and I was to be reassured by the fact that judgment had been obtained against Mr. Joseph. Unofficial word was also passed to me that nobody was to take seriously what the hon. Member for Stockton, North had said, because he was a person of no importance. I could be satisfied, therefore, that matters were properly under control.

In the light of subsequent developments, those replies to which I have referred are completely ludicrous. The observations about the hon. Gentleman could have been flippant, or arrogant, but they were certainly inappropriate. What is said in this House by any Member deserves far greater responsible consideration than that given to the speech of the hon. Gentleman on 6 May 1992. Indeed, he had been brushed aside in a wholly insulting way—a matter which I regard as disgraceful.

I say "ludicrous", because subsequent court decisions have all, including in the Court of Appeal, been in favour of Mr. Joseph, and judicial observations about the conduct of Barclays bank have been most unflattering. Nevertheless, no effort has been made by any of those to whom I wrote to correct the situation or to look at it again. In particular, the Bank of England, with its statutory responsibility for the supervision of this country's banking system, could and should have re-approached me to assure me that, in the changed situation that was unfolding, neither it nor I could rely on the then Governor's letter of 25 June 1992; that it was now reviewing the situation and would be in touch again when appropriate.

The Bank was first made aware of what I can only describe as a very considerable scandal in September 1991. The speech of the hon. Member for Stockton North, plus my letter, together with many articles in the financial and other press, should have made it alert to allegations of serious wrongdoing, including breach of trust, deception, blackmail, and the theft of intellectual property.

During my years in the House, I have devoted considerable time and energy to fighting the pirates and thieves of intellectual property, most particularly in computer software. I declare an interest as a determined opponent of all who steal the intellectual property of others. Not the least of the reasons why I have followed up the remarks of the hon. Member for Stockton, North is that I am confident that Barclays bank appropriated the property of Mr. Joseph—the rabbit logo—and that that constitutes as serious a breach of copyright law, so extensive has it been, as has occurred in this country during the 20th century.

I am conscious of the seriousness of what I have just asserted, but I have considerable experience in the field, and it is for that reason that I am so disturbed—as should be the Bank of England, together with the shareholders and depositors of Barclays bank. Subsequently, Barclays tried to cover up the serious illegality and applied grossly improper pressure to hide the truth. In short, the bank tried to crush Mr. Joseph to ensure that he could not recover his position.

In this unworthy campaign, leading officials of Barclays bank and of its solicitors, Slaughter and May, have played their role to the hilt by preventing any investigation of the substantial claims made in the hon. Gentleman's speech of 6 May 1992, and by trying to strangle Mr. Joseph in a series of tangles of preliminary matters. A combination of futile legal actions—all doomed to failure—together with messages to me that Mr. Joseph was a vexatious litigant, that he is a maverick, that he is not to be trusted and, indeed, not quite straight, have all the hallmarks of a most discreditable campaign.

For completeness, may I say that the hon. Member for Stockton, North also raised the matter in the House during the debate on the Loyal Address in November 1993. As a result, the Bank of England was sufficiently interested to convene a meeting with Mr. Joseph on 11 November 1993. The meeting was attended by Carol Sergeant, deputy head of supervision of the high street banks; Kevin Ryan, deputy head of the supervision department in charge of Barclays bank; an analyst, two lawyers and Mr. Ian Watt, the head of the serious investigation unit of the Bank of England. I have no information about the investigations of Mr. Joseph's complaints, but Mr. Ryan asked at the meeting for extra evidence so that he could add it, as he put it, to the "mounting pile" on his desk.

In the circumstances, I had expected the Bank of England to be more concerned. The allegations, clear enough, related to one of the major British banks, the reputation of which is of the greatest importance to this country. It could not be in the nation's interests, or that of Barclays—both shareholders and depositors—that the claims remain unresolved for any period, yet a smoking gun has now been active for two years.

The Bank of England chooses to exercise its responsibilities under the law in relation to the banking system by what can be described only as informal nods and winks. No doubt there are some advantages in such an approach. However, it means that rarely, if ever, are statutory powers invoked, and the true meaning and scope of the Banking Supervision Act is untested in the courts.

Whatever may or may not have been done by the Bank of England remains a secret and whatever intervention it may have made to resolve a most unsatisfactory situation have undoubtedly been ineffective. As I have already made clear, I regard its slackness in handling complaints by me as particularly unfortunate.

The House will have noted the recent observation by the Governor about the need for an ombudsman. Apart from the fact that there is already such an official, the new initiative will rightly draw public interest. I praise the Governor's initiative. Having started his career and been in the position for some months, he has made a promising start to his duties as Governor and is securing a wide degree of confidence across the system.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will draw to the attention of the Governor the fact that what is really required is a conciliation service, so that disputes can be resolved early and quickly without unnecessary recourse to law.

No doubt the whole case has already earned lawyers —I am a lawyer, although I have not practised for nearly eight years—a handsome sum, and they view the prospect of further litigation with financial enthusiasm. However, there are better uses for their talents and the public interest would be better served by procedures designed to resolve complaints of substance, rather than by the casual manipulation of endless preliminary points. Such tactics reflect little credit on those who instruct or those who pursue such instructions. I hope that Mr. George's new ideas will be given a fair wind and that he will seek a wide range of comment and consideration.

Over the past couple of years or so, I have wondered whether either the Bank of England or Barclays bank has been capable of coming to grips with the situation. Mr. Joseph has been derided as cheeky, a mischievous gadfly, fundamentally unserious and deserving of little attention or significance. Slowly, it has dawned on those who have wronged him that their preconceived prejudices may have considerably underestimated his talents.

In recent weeks, an immense amount of management time in Barclays bank has been spent in trying to resolve the position. The former chief executive, Mr. Andrew Buxton, had two private meetings with Mr. Joseph, and his successor, Mr. Martin Taylor, had two meetings with Mr. Joseph before taking his present position, and one since.

One offer of settlement from Barclays bank was made, the main motive of which was to try to undermine the legal aid order which exists in Mr. Joseph's favour. In no other sense did it address the real issues at stake.

The real reason that Mr. Joseph has pursued his rights is not because he is a maverick or mischievous or any other

[Mr. William Powell]

impertinent suggestions that have been made about his character. It is because he burns with indignation at the manner in which he has been treated.

As those who act on behalf of the bank have observed, the bank does not owe to its customers any duty not to seek to take undue advantage of its economic strength. It has no duty not to exercise economic duress or not to intimidate, propositions of law which are widely rejected in the courts and elsewhere. It is because the House would reject such appalling arrogance that I raise the matter with my hon. Friend.

11.58 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I apologise to the House for not having been present at the start of the speech of the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) this evening. I was delayed between the Division and start of the debate by other more pressing matters and I deeply regret that.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the fulsome praise that I managed to catch when I entered the Chamber and for affording me the opportunity to pursue again matters that I raised in the House in the spring of 1992 and the autumn of 1993.

Any study of the relevant *Hansards* would have made it clear that I was most concerned about serious matters which I regarded as outrageous and deserving of the most urgent Government attention. The case is unquestionably a scandal of historic proportions. The Bank of England was put on notice and, given its unique position, I contend that it was under an obligation to pursue with rigour the matters that I raised on the two occasions to which I have referred.

Lest anyone be in doubt, I remind the House that I referred to events that could legitimately be entitled a "Barclaygate". The central issue of that affair is that Barclays bank, in its position as both client and banker to Mr. Joseph's company Hook Advertising Ltd., took advantage of its dual role for the bank's own financial gain, to the serious detriment of Mr. Joseph and his company.

In its role as client, Barclays bank delayed, for many weeks, the payment to Mr. Joseph's company of more than £500,000 in fees due to that company. Not unnaturally, that caused Mr. Joseph's company severe financial problems. Then, without Mr. Joseph's knowledge, Barclays secretly handed Mr. Joseph's property—the rabbit logo, which is well known to everyone in this country—over to Hutchison Telecom as part and parcel of a secret deal with Hutchison for which Barclays undoubtedly received substantial financial reward.

As a result of that deal, Hutchison Telecom acted as though it owned the rabbit logo and then abruptly ended the advertising contract with Mr. Joseph's company which it had inherited via Barclays. That advertising contract would have provided income to Mr. Joseph's company of possibly up to £6 million had it been allowed to run its full term.

Meanwhile, in its role as banker to Mr. Joseph, Barclays took advantage of that role knowing every particular of Mr. Joseph's predicament, to exert financial pressure on Mr. Joseph and his company by using the stick of threatening the immediate withdrawal of banking facilities if Mr. Joseph and his company did not execute a secret agreement with the bank. That agreement would have exonerated Barclays from all claims that Mr. Joseph and his company had against the bank. Barclays would re-establish banking facilities provided that the agreement was not disclosed to other parties.

When Mr. Joseph refused to sign that secret gagging agreement, Barclays terminated the banking facilities and sued Mr. Joseph and his company for the overdraft—the extent of which was the result of Barclays' own doing, due to the delay in the payment of fees and the secret deal with Hutchinson Telecom. Barclays had plunged Hook into debt by non-payment of fees. It then claimed finance charges for servicing the debt that it had caused.

Barclays bank then vigorously pursued Mr. Joseph and his company through the courts for payment of the overdraft, in the full knowledge that Mr. Joseph and his company were now, as a result of Barclays' actions, destitute. To cap it all, Barclays also fails to pay £43,000 of interest due to Mr. Joseph's company while it displays Mr. Joseph's rabbit logo on all its branches throughout the United Kingdom, again for financial reward. That is incredible.

The bank is penalising Mr. Joseph for a debt that the bank incurred and it is still making a profit from his intellectual property. It is unbelievable.

The time has now come for the bank and the Treasury to pursue those matters. As the hon. Member for Corby has said, Mr. Joseph is not a maverick, he is not a vexatious litigant, and he is not eccentric, dishonest or shady. The only thing bent about Chris Joseph is the implement he wears where his right arm should be—his hook.

The best form of redress, not merely the settlement of that personal dispute, is the establishment of a genuinely independent banking dispute resolution procedure which could help to resolve the many dozens of cases that have come to light through an organisation called SAFE—the Struggle Against Financial Exploitation—which Mr. Joseph and others formed to help settle the many disagreements which bankers generally, not just Barclays, pitch straight into court, effectively clogging the litigation procedure for months or even years.

This afternoon, Barclays offered Mr. Joseph a settlement—of a kind. It told him that it is withdrawing all actions against him and is offering to pay his costs. It has not given an indication of what those costs might be. It is my firm belief and that of Mr. Joseph that that action is taken not to settle the case but simply as a means of trying to counter a counter-claim that Mr. Joseph has against the bank. That is yet another example of how the bank is using the litigation procedure to its advantage, because it holds all the cards in its hands; it has unlimited resources. That is an abuse of the system.

Mr. Joseph has presented the Economic Secretary to the Treasury with an opportunity to help to resolve not only his case but all such outstanding cases which are clogging the litigation procedures. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will offer Mr. Joseph not only his support but his gratitude by helping to establish a resolution procedure.

12.6 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) have raised serious issues of banking principle and practice. I congratulate my hon. Friend on seeking and obtaining the Adjournment debate to champion once more a cause and a case for which he is well known in the House.

Indeed, the hon. Gentleman was very lucky, on 6 May 1992, that my hon. Friend spoke immediately after his speech.

The lesson is this: if hon. Members want a case to be pursued in the House, they should see whether my hon. Friend will speak in the debate, and they can be sure that it will be a runner. I therefore make no complaint about the privilege of the House being used by my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to raise an issue and a case that is a matter of concern to them and, undoubtedly, to the principals involved.

I am sure that Mr. Joseph in particular will be grateful for the committed and conscientious way in which my hon. Friend has pursued the case over many months. He will know that I have been involved in the case, as he wrote to the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), who charged me with the responsibility of making inquiries with Barclays bank, and I did so with the chairman. My right hon. Friend replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby.

I hope that my hon. Friend and others will understand that it is difficult and, indeed, improper for the Government to become involved in matters which are sub judice or might be potentially subject to litigation. I hope that my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman will appreciate at the outset that I cannot comment tonight on the specific dispute between Mr. Joseph and Barclays bank. It would not be right for the Government to attempt to intervene in an individual dispute, and, as my right hon. Friend the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer and my officials have made clear in previous correspondence, especially when matters are before the courts, as my hon. Friend has explained is the situation in this case.

However, it is proper for me to discuss the Bank of England's role in supervising banks—which is relevant to this and many other cases—the steps that have been taken to improve relations between the banks and with their business customers, and the recourse that is available if those relations break down. I am grateful for the opportunity to do so. As hon. Members will know, that was one issue covered by the Governor in his speech to the Scottish CBI and Scottish Enterprise on Monday evening; he spoke of the need for greater understanding on the part of both borrowers and lenders of each other's concerns and points of view.

Let me begin by explaining the legislative background. Parliament has given the Bank of England responsibility for authorising banks, under the Banking Act 1987. The legislation sets out specific criteria for authorisation, which include capital adequacy, and the need to ensure that a bank is run prudently and is controlled and managed by fit and proper persons. The Bank's two main supervisory concerns are to safeguard the interests of depositors, and to maintain the stability and soundness of the United Kingdom banking system. But—and the qualification is an important one—the Bank's responsibility for ensuring that those concerns are met does not extend to the monitoring of individual commercial decisions, or to involving itself in the day-to-day services that banks provide.

In passing the legislation, Parliament acknowledged the principle that commercial banks—we should never forget that banks are commercial institutions—must be left free to make their own business decisions. The Act does not give the Bank the power to intervene in individual cases, or to question commercial decisions that banks make in their normal dealings with their customers.

As a number of commentators have observed, the Bank's traditional techniques of supervision have served the country well. The continuing success of London as a leading international centre for financial services testifies that lenders and borrowers from many parts of the world consider the supervisory regime that we operate here to be conducive to the development of lasting and mutually beneficial banking relationships. In particular, I do not think that the case has been made for the Bank, or any other statutory body, to move into the area of hands-on regulation of banking services.

That does not, of course, mean that the Government are indifferent to the way in which banks treat their customers; quite the reverse. Relations between banks and their customers—not least small business customers such as Mr. Joseph—have been the subject of a good deal of public debate and interest in the past two or three years. That interest twice led my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, to ask the Bank of England to investigate the banks' treatment of their business customers—once in 1991, and again at the end of 1992.

Those inquiries led, in the first instance, to the major banks introducing codes of practice governing their relationships with their business customers and, in the other, to the banks extending the banking ombudsman scheme to small business customers with an annual turnover of less than £1 million. I think that these measures represent a public recognition by the banks not only that fair and reasonable treatment of customers is important in itself, but that it helps them to build up and maintain mutually profitable business relationships.

The reaction by small business representatives to the Governor's speech on Monday night has given further support to the view that relations are continuing to improve —although I acknowledge that there is still more to be done, and that more lessons must be learnt on both sides.

The banks' codes also make specific reference to the complaints procedure available to customers when things go wrong. The bank chairmen have made it clear that they take complaints from customers very seriously. Many have established special complaints units, and the chairmen and their chief executives review a large number of cases personally. When these procedures do not resolve a problem, customers have recourse to the banking ombudsman—for issues within his range of competence —or to the courts.

However, with the best will in the world, problems will remain. I hope that nothing that I have said tonight implies that the banks or the representatives of business are at all complacent about these issues, or that I am. As I go about the country—part of the industrial finance initiative involves me in examining, specifically and regionally, relationships between small businesses and banks throughout the country—I am very conscious of the problems that recur from time to time. I receive representations about those problems, and occasionally exhort commercial banks to do something about them; I hope and believe that those exhortations have some effect.

The work of the Governor of the Bank of England is taking forward in this area and the further meetings between the banks and representative bodies which he mentioned in his speech will no doubt help. I have no doubt

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

that that theme will continue to feature heavily in the initiative, and the Government's officials as well as those in the Bank will continue to look for ways in which communications and education can be made more effective.

The basis of an effective and enduring relationship between banks and their business customers is, I believe, beginning to emerge. It is based on transparency and on a mutual understanding of the constraints on both sides, features which my hon. Friend was good enough to refer to in his speech. However, that relationship is a dynamic one and, of course, there is still room for improvement by both borrowers and lenders.

It is not for the Government to tell commercial undertakings how to run their businesses, but I believe that there is scope for the banks to build on the steps outlined in their codes and to be more open about what they expect of their customers and what their customers can expect of them. I think that more and more bankers believe that, too, but businesses themselves, particularly smaller ones, also have a role to play. They must be more willing to discuss with their banks, well in advance and in terms which can be clearly understood, the problems and opportunities that they foresee. Together, they can build a relationship that will bring benefits, not only to banks and small businesses but to the wider economy on which they, and all of us, depend.

If tonight's debate on a specific case is successful in moving towards that objective, I think that the cause will have been well served by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and the hon. Member for Stockton, North, who have spoken with such distinction tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 20 January 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Republic of Ireland Government

1. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Eire; and if he will make a statement.

7. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the Government of the Republic of Ireland relating to Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I last met the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Spring, on 15 December 1993, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach made their joint declaration. Since then, we have been working within the framework set out in that declaration to carry forward the talks process involving the constitutional political parties as well as the two Governments. We remain in close contact.

Mr. Devlin: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the joint declaration is a fair arrangement for the future and that it is now up to the IRA and other organisations to renounce violence for good and come to the negotiating table?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly agree with my hon. Friend. The joint declaration document sets out and recognises the rights, interests and aspirations of both communities and the safeguards by which they might be protected. It is founded on the fundamental principles of consent, agreement and democracy. It is not a final settlement—it does not pretend to be. It provides a framework for peace. As such, the declaration and the realities affirmed in it will stand. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those who perpetrate violence and those who justify violence should renounce it once and for all, and for good.

Mr. Corbett: Given that there are now two sets of documents on the secret line of communication between the Government and Sinn Fein, will the Secretary of State confirm that, earlier, the British Government were willing to clarify their position to Sinn Fein? Given also that the Prime Minister described the Downing street declaration as a framework for peace, why are the Government refusing to clarify their position again to Sinn Fein, short, of course, of full negotiations until, as the Secretary of State says, there is a clear renunciation of violence?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government were prepared to clarify their thinking quite a long time before receiving the message of 22 February, which was the outset of the exchange of documents authorised by the Government and received by the Government, which were included in the dossier that I subsequently published. A very different situation now obtains. The joint declaration is the result of careful discussion between the two Governments. Those Governments considered it for a matter of months. There is no justification now for entering upon a process of clarification of its contents; that would inevitably lead to a renegotiation, a glossing of it and an interpretation of it. That is a very different matter. Sinn Fein should now agree to a renunciation of violence and of the justification of violence, and it should then enter the process that leads to the exploratory talks, which I set out in a statement on the matter in November.

Mr. Peter Robinson: If the Provisional IRA does not accept the offer contained in and through the Downing street declaration and instead continues its violence, will any of the provisions of the Downing street declaration collapse as a result?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: No. The Downing street declaration is a statement, as I have just suggested to the House, of the fundamental realities and principles that govern relationships in Northern Ireland, the future of Northern Ireland and the future of the island of Ireland in the view of the two Governments. Therefore, they will stand. I should like to make it absolutely clear that nothing is waiting upon the answer that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA should give. We are continuing to pursue them through the security forces and within the law with the full vigour that their crimes demand. Similarly, the talks process is continuing under the guidance of my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), the Minister of State. It is business as usual. The question at issue is whether Sinn Fein decides to join that process, and that is for it. If it wants to do so, it must renounce violence.

Rev. Martin Smyth: In his conversation with the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic, did the Secretary of State impress on him the need to reform its constitution, because in the modern world it is utterly unreal and improper to obtain territorial possession of a neighbouring territory? It has been the cause of problems over the years, and it gives a moral impetus to the IRA, as its members claim to be freedom fighters.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Mr. Spring and his colleagues are under no illusion about the strong significance that is seen in articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. There is a reference to the referendum that would be held in the event of an overall settlement. In the joint declaration, the Taoiseach says that the Government would then bring forward and support proposals that reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland, and that is a clear reference to articles 2 and 3.

Mr. Couchman: When my right hon. and learned Friend met the Irish Foreign Minister, did he have an opportunity to discuss the ban on the broadcasting of interviews with Sinn Fein and paramilitary groups in the

Republic? Did he ask whether the Irish Government had it in mind to let that ban lapse? Did he further ask what impact they thought that that might have on the similar ban that prevails in this country?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As I said, I last met the Irish Foreign Minister when the declaration was signed, and to the best of my recollection that matter was not discussed. We have made known our views about the importance of maintaining our legislation, and we were not told about the decision that the Irish Government proposed to take. Our position remains that it is important that people should be spared the additional grief and gall of listening to people justify acts of inhuman violence when they have to suffer those acts in Northern Ireland. It is known that my right hon. Friend the Heritage Secretary has the matter under review.

Mr. Mallon: In all the concentration on Sinn Fein and the IRA, it might be as well to remind the House that the vast majority of the nationalist people in the north of Ireland do not support Sinn Fein, the IRA or violence. The Prime Minister has said that the Downing street declaration is a balanced document and is fair to each section of the community, and I agree with him. Does the Secretary of State accept that if it is a balanced document, the Government's presentation should also be balanced? If he examines carefully the comments made by the Prime Minister, by himself and by other Ministers, can he honestly say that they have been sensitive to the position and the needs of both sections of the community? In recognising that imbalance, will he take this opportunity to ask the Prime Minister to remember that an unbalanced presentation of the declaration can go a long way to affect the chances of peace in Northern Ireland? I ask him again to remember that there are two sections within that community, each with its own needs and sensitivities.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not think that anybody is likely to forget that there are two sections within that community. It is from that feature and that factor that so many of the difficulties and problems derive. I do not think that there is anything in the way in which my right hon. Friend or I have described the agreement for which we should apologise. What we have said and insisted on is that the agreement speaks for itself. We have been careful not to interpret or put a gloss on any of its terms, for the sensible reasons that I gave the House a few moments ago. Later today, I shall be delivering a lecture, the text of which I shall publish. I hope that it will be seen as giving a fair and balanced account of the joint declaration.

Mr. McNamara: During Prime Minister's Question Time last week, he said that he and the Secretary of State "have gone to great lengths in this House and beyond it to ensure that the joint declaration is fully understood and we shall, of course, continue to do so."
Yet, in answer to another question, the Prime Minister said:
"we are not in the business of clarifying the declaration."—*[Official Report,* 13 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 330-34.]
Will the Secretary of State explain the difference between clarification and promoting full understanding?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Promoting full understanding is well served by pointing out to people that the declaration has been extremely well drafted and carefully considered, and that it bears close examination. It would be a great mistake to enter into interpretations and say, "When it says this on the face of it, it actually means something else." If one does that, the process degenerates quickly and inevitably into one of negotiation. That is a great mistake, and is of no service to anyone.

We see no need for clarification. We see dangers in it for the reasons that I have suggested. Those reasons argue against clarification, and we do not intend to give any. The topic of clarification could be brought forward in the hope that it will serve to muddy the waters and distract attention from the real question that needs to be answered and clarified by Sinn Fein and by the Provisional IRA—will they now give up violence for good? The leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), has said—I will paraphrase him—that any reason that the IRA might conceivably have had for using violence has been removed by the declaration.

Higher Education

2. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the number of students entering higher education in Northern Ireland in 1993-94.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): Approximately 16,000 students entered higher education in Northern Ireland in 1993-94. This represents an 8 per cent. increase on the previous year's intake.

Mr. Marshall: I congratulate my hon. Friend upon his well-deserved promotion. Does he agree that the fact that the proportion of students entering higher education in Northern Ireland is greater than in the country as a whole reflects well upon the Northern Ireland education system? Does he also agree that the upsurge in the number of students entering higher education gives the lie to the absurd forecasts that the introduction of the student loan system would lead to fewer people doing so?

Mr. Ancram: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks, and I totally agree with what he said. It is worth reminding ourselves that an estimated 39 per cent. of young people in Northern Ireland enter higher education, compared with an estimated 31 per cent. in Great Britain. Those are the figures for 1993-94. As my hon. Friend so rightly said, the figures show the results of the high-quality education that is provided within the Province.

Mr. Beggs: I, too, welcome the Minister to the post to which he has been promoted. I trust that he will not be too speedily promoted yet again.

The Minister will be well aware from statistics from the Department of Education for Northern Ireland that 44·8 per cent. of students in Northern Ireland depend on student grants and are in receipt of no parental contribution. Is he aware that many young graduates in Northern Ireland do not earn anything near £14,000 per annum, and that it will be a long time before they are in a position to repay student loans and to reach the national average for earnings? Will he monitor closely future enrolment, especially the impact of the 10 per cent. cut in student grants? Will he seek to ensure that Northern Ireland's young people have the opportunity to realise their full academic potential without the burden of too-heavy loans?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks. The questions of promotion are not for me,

thank goodness, and I find my role as Minister with responsibility for education in Northern Ireland challenging and fulfilling.

The point that the hon. Gentleman makes is important. My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) made it clear that we recognise that, even with the loan system, the number of students has increased considerably. That shows that there is an enormous demand for increased higher education within Northern Ireland by the young people of Northern Ireland, and that demand is being satisfied. Since 1988-89, the number of students in higher education institutions in Northern Ireland has risen by 44 per cent. to about 37,500. That is an enormous increase and reflects the value of education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government will continue to operate the loan scheme and will not withdraw loans? Will he also confirm that the Government reject the policy suggestions made by the Labour party in a debate last night—that it would withdraw loans but not introduce any grant in their place? Is not that a strange way in which to increase the number of people in higher education?

Mr. Ancram: I have not seen the report of that debate, but if my hon. Friend is correct, his comments are significant. We are satisfied that the current system, offering a mixture of grant and loan, is effective. It is giving sufficient sustenance to students and that is reflected in the increasing number of young people who wish to enter higher education.

Dr. Hendron: I, too, congratulate the Minister on his new position. Bearing in mind the fact that several thousand students leave Northern Ireland every year to pursue further education in Britain and beyond, will the Minister reaffirm his support for the proposed plan by the university of Ulster for its new university campus, which would stretch between the west and north of Belfast from Springfield road to Woodvale? That proposal commands the support of a massive number of people in both communities and has the support of my colleague and friend the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) and myself.

Mr. Ancram: Again, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. The Springfield project is still in the early stage of consideration and the university of Ulster is currently carrying out a feasibility study on it. We have made it clear that we would wish to consider the proposal after that study has been carried out, not before. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, however, that we shall have to judge the results of that study within the constraints of available resources.

Mr. Stott: I have already congratulated the Minister in private on his promotion, but I have no objection to doing so formally, once again, for the record.

The Minister said that the number of students entering higher education in Northern Ireland has increased, and the Opposition welcome that. Despite what the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said, the Minister will be aware that recent records show that that number is levelling out, particularly the number of students from poorer backgrounds. They are increasingly deterred from entering higher education because of student loans, which cause them great worry because of the great debts that they cause. Can the Minister therefore explain how his Department intends to attract students from all backgrounds in Northern Ireland to the proposed fifth campus? Will he tell the House when he intends to meet the Northern Ireland Congress of Trade Unions to discuss the matter, because I gather that, so far, he has refused to do so?

Mr. Ancram: I will meet representatives of the congress when I believe that we have an appropriate agenda for discussion.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his public congratulations as well as for those which he offered me in private, which I greatly welcomed at the time.

The issue of the number of students from the lower socio-economic groups who enter university education has been raised on a number of occasions. The relevant number for Northern Ireland compares very favourably with that for Great Britain. As I said earlier, of those students who enter higher education in Northern Ireland, 33 per cent. come from the lower socio-economic groups, compared with 21 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. Once again, that suggests that the university and higher education system in Northern Ireland is producing what is required by those who wish to enter it.

High Technology

3. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps his Department is taking to promote investment by high technology manufacturers in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tim Smith): The Government actively target and encourage inward investment in Northern Ireland by high technology companies and there have been many notable successes in the past year. Companies already located in Northern Ireland are also encouraged to increase their technology base through the provision of assistance for research and development and business expansion.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful for that helpful answer. May I take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister on his promotion to the Front Bench? He will be aware that NTL, the privatised arm of the old engineering division of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, is now a world leader in digital audio processing and is developing techniques to provide 16 channels for satellite broadcasting in just one channel space. However, is he aware that Audio Processing Technology from Northern Ireland is providing a vital element to that research? Does he agree that Northern Ireland is now becoming the silicon valley of western Europe?

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind personal remarks. He has drawn attention to one high technology manufacturer in Northern Ireland, but I am glad to say that there have been a number of successes recently. Seagate Technology from the United States has announced a 500-job project in Londonderry, Valence Technology from the United States will create 660 jobs in Belfast and Daesung Circuits from Korea will create 120 jobs in Ballymena. That is good news for the Northern Ireland economy and for jobs in Northern Ireland and I am sure that the whole House will welcome it.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Without wishing to test the patience of the House, may I congratulate the Minister on behalf of my hon. Friends? He is welcome to Northern Ireland and, although we miss his predecessor, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), we wish him every success.

Naturally, we welcome any inward investment into Northern Ireland that the Industrial Development Board manages to bring in. Will the Minister join me in encouraging and appealing to the media to honour the confidentiality of sensitive business projects that may be under negotiation, and to hold their hand until an official announcement is made? Will he continue, as his predecessor did, to consider the interests of firms in Northern Ireland that require financial assistance?

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and appreciate the warm welcome that I have received in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman made an important point about confidentiality. It is vital that details of confidential negotiations should not be disclosed prematurely, as that could damage the outcome. I share his view that we should pursue a twin-track approach to investment; indigenous investment in high technology is just as important as inward investment.

Sir James Kilfedder: May I join other hon. Members in congratulating the Minister on his appointment? He will not yet be aware that my constituency of North Down has an unacceptably high level of unemployment, particularly among school leavers and graduates. Will he take effective action to encourage investors to establish high-tech factories in North Down, where great skill and talent are waiting to be tapped?

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The Industrial Development Board is keen to attract inward investment to all of the Province, including the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I recognise the importance of what he said about unemployment, although we have recently had the good news that unemployment in Northern Ireland has fallen below 100,000.

Mr. William O'Brien: As the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board plays a keen part in attracting high-tech industries into the region and must provide infrastructure and factories to encourage people to locate there, what is available to the board to ensure that new high-tech factories can be attracted into the region?

Will the Minister take as read the congratulations from both sides of the House?

Mr. Smith: Considerable resources are available to the Industrial Development Board for attracting high technology manufacturers into the Province, but the Province is in competition with many other regions in the European Community for that highly mobile investment.

Security

4. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): Inexcusable violence has continued since I answered a similar question on 21 October 1993 and there have been 34 deaths as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland. Those include 10 civilians killed in an explosion on the Shankill road, Belfast, the murder of seven civilians at Greysteel, and the murder of 12 other civilians, three police officers and two soldiers.

The Government's first priority is to bring terrorist violence to a permanent end in Northern Ireland. They continue to give their full support to the security forces, who are relentlessly pursuing those responsible for terrorist attacks and bringing them before the courts.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Minister recognise that, despite the desire for peace in Northern Ireland, the IRA has already, since the end of December, made its decision to reject the Downing street declaration? Will the Minister unequivocally assure us that there is no reduction in the level of the security services' capabilities, including the deployment of special forces? Does he agree that those who promote the interests of Sinn Fein and the IRA in the House are no less traitors than those who laud middle eastern dictators?

Sir John Wheeler: I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman that those who seek to further or encourage violence in any way do the cause of democracy great harm. The Provisional IRA and other terrorist gangs have not ceased their violence since the publication of the joint declaration, despite the unique opportunity offered to them. I deplore the fact that, only this morning, fire bombs were delivered in Limavady and Coleraine, and the cycle of violence and killing has continued unabated. We utterly condemn that course of action. However, I am glad to tell the House that the security forces also have their successes. In 1993, 366 people were charged with terrorist-related offences—60 of them with murder or attempted murder.

Rev. William McCrea: What deal was agreed between London and Dublin in July 1985 concerning the early release of prisoners in the event of the end of violence? Why was not the House informed of that deal and why was it left to a former Prime Minister of the Irish Republic to unveil British Government policy? Surely the policy of the United Kingdom Government should be announced to the people of the United Kingdom at the Dispatch Box by a Minister of Her Majesty's Government. We should not have to rely on someone from Dublin telling us about such a deal.

Sir John Wheeler: I am unaware of any such deal. We live by the rule of law. Those who are sent to prison for offences in Northern Ireland serve their sentences of imprisonment in accordance with the understood procedures and the rule of law. There are no deals.

Political Talks

5. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his recent contact with political parties in Northern Ireland.

9. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the recent meetings that have been held with representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met the four party leaders together on 22 December. All the parties were subsequently invited to continue the private

bilateral discussions that I have been having with the parties since the autumn and these discussions are now in progress.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister assure us that he will continue contacts with all political parties, including Sinn Fein, with which there have been meetings for a considerable period? Will he also assure the House that as the Government are privy to discussions with Sinn Fein, it is time to lift the broadcasting ban on that organisation's leadership and to lift the exclusion order against the president of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams, so that the possibilities of promoting peace and a ceasefire in Northern Ireland can be further advanced? That would put an end to the 25 years of bloodthirsty conflict.

Mr. Ancram: It is a matter of great regret that today, as earlier this week, the hon. Gentleman has sought to divert attention, and assist Sinn Fein in diverting attention, from the need to renounce violence under the joint declaration and to come to the peace table on that basis. He would be far better served in trying to achieve peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland if he were to say to his friends in Sinn Fein that they should renounce violence today, enter exploratory talks with the Government and come to the table as a full democratic member of the talks, having renounced violence fully and for ever.

Mr. Canavan: On the clarification of the Downing street declaration, does the Minister accept that there is a big difference between clarification and negotiation or renegotiation? Bearing in mind the fact that the Government are supposed to believe in open government and the fact that parts of the declaration are ambiguous, will the Government respond positively to genuine requests for clarification, even if it means consulting the Irish Government about a joint statement of clarification?

Mr. Ancram: I can only effectively reiterate what my right hon. and learned Friend said. The joint declaration was the result of an enormous amount of careful and long-standing work to produce a document that was self-standing and clear. It would not be in the interests of using that document as a framework for peace now to respond to what purport to be requests for clarification, but which would qualify and renegotiate the document. That would not be in the interests of the peace process or of achieving an acceptable political settlement to the problems of Northern Ireland in the longer term.

Mr. Matthew Banks: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on his recent appointment and ask him to make it clear to the House that Britain will not be following the lead of the Irish Government in relaxing the ban on broadcasting on Sinn Fein, unless and until Sinn Fein and the IRA renounce violence or give a clear indication that they intend so to do?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. He will have heard what my right hon. and learned Friend said earlier about the broadcasting ban. If Sinn Fein were to renounce violence permanently, become a constitutional party within Northern Ireland and become part of the democratic process, the implications would have to be considered in that context.

Mr. Molyneaux: As it is abundantly clear that the IRA intends to treat with contempt worldwide appeals for peace, may we assume that the Government will now proceed, having first taken the necessary steps to extirpate terrorism, to use the words of the Foreign Secretary, to speed up consultations with the constitutional parties, ignoring the sheer nonsense of leaving an empty chair at the table for Sinn Fein to occupy one of these days? In my view, it will be a worm-eaten piece of furniture by the time they arrive there.

Mr. Ancram: I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the remarks that my right hon. and learned Friend made earlier. The talks process is not awaiting anything; it is continuing. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear soon after the joint declaration that the talks process would be intensified. It is our intention to move forward with the talks in a more focused way to move the process towards an agreement. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the fact that his party has been participating fully in those talks and will continue to do so.

Mr. Dickens: Accepting that both Governments support 100 per cent. the Anglo-Irish Agreement, may I ask my hon. Friend to confirm that it is perfectly possible that a new, more broadly based agreement and perhaps a new structure could be considered, but not a moment before Sinn Fein denounces violence and the IRA stop violence?

Mr. Ancram: We have made it clear that if Sinn Fein wishes to be a part of the process that is designed to achieve a political settlement, it must renounce violence to become part of that process. But the process will continue nevertheless. It will continue on the three strands which cover the three sets of relationships within Northern Ireland, between the north and south of Ireland and between the Irish Government and the Government of the United Kingdom. It is the hope of the British Government that those talks will eventually achieve an acceptable settlement that will lead to lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Minister confirm that the inter-party talks are clearly and unequivocally based on the agreement made by his right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) on 26 September 1991? If there is a three-strand approach to the overall problem, and taking cognisance of the fact that, up to October 1992, the talks indicated the complexity between them—the interweaving between strands one and two—does he intend to engage all six parties, the two Governments and the four democratic parties, in inter-party talks?

Mr. Ancram: On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, I should stress that, at the moment, I am talking to only three parties and that the door is open to that fourth constitutional party in Northern Ireland to join the talks process at any time. I am referring to the Ulster Democratic Unionist party. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the talks that are taking place at the moment are based on the three strands set out on 26 March 1991. That has been the basis of the talks from the time that they were initiated and continues to be so.

Industrial Development, Belfast

6. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further plans he has for the industrial development of north and west Belfast.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department of Economic Development is setting up an economic working group, comprising its agencies and representatives of local economic development groups, to consider how to encourage more inward investment in north and west Belfast and thus build on recent announcements about new manufacturing projects planning to establish operations in those areas.

Mr. Walker: I, too, congratulate the Minister on his appointment. I trust that he will be able to give the same commitment to Northern Ireland as did his two predecessors.

The Minister's answer reflects the efforts of all those involved in the regeneration of west Belfast, including that of the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), which deserves special mention. We need confirmation of what is happening and the Minister's assurance in that respect would be most welcome.

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and certainly hope to emulate the performance of both my predecessors in my support for investment into Belfast. I pay tribute to the work that he has done in that regard and look forward to working with him.

Trade Unions

8. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how often he meets the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and representatives of the major unions representing employees within Northern Ireland to discuss the economy, employment and related issues.

Mr. Tim Smith: My predecessor met leading trade union representatives from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. The last meeting was in May 1993. I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the trade union movement on its pro-active stance for peace and its efforts with employers to keep the workplace free of strife.

Mr. Mackinlay: While echoing the Minister's comments on the trade unions' view and motives with regard to the peace process in Northern Ireland, may I ask him to reflect that ministerial contact with representatives of the trade unions in Northern Ireland is infrequent and insufficient? When it occurs, Ministers do not listen to representations arguing for restoration of the national health service, full rights in terms of employment protection and the capacity to try to persuade the Government against foolhardy processes such as the privatisation of the port of Belfast and the airport. Will he give an undertaking that the Secretary of State and his Ministers will start regular meetings with the trade unions in Northern Ireland so that the views of working people can be adequately represented to the Government of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman may have underestimated the occasions on which Ministers meet trade union representatives. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met trade union representatives as recently as November. We have regular contact. I should be very happy to meet them if they so request it.

Mr. Trimble: Were the Government consulted about the guidelines that have just been agreed between the unions, the employers and the Fair Employment Commission on the display of emblems, not, as hitherto, enabling a minority to object to emblems within the workplace, but now enabling them to object to emblems displayed anywhere within the premises, a significant and sinister shift when one bears in mind the fact that previously FEC officials have tried to intimidate people into not flying the national flag or displaying pictures of Her Majesty the Queen? Were the Government consulted about that and will they take steps to ensure that the FEC does not attempt again to inhibit people from displaying the national flag and the sovereign's face in the workplace or on the premises?

Mr. Smith: I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about this issue. I cannot offer him an immediate answer, so I shall write to him about it.

Anglo-Irish Joint Declaration

10. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the representations that he received following the Anglo-Irish joint declaration.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The significance of the current declaration made on 15 December by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach has been recognised in the reactions to it from around the world. Most of those share the hope that the declaration can and will provide the basis for a lasting peace in Ireland. I welcome the support for the declaration given in the House. In addition, my right hon. Friend and I continue to receive a great number of letters on the subject from members of the public.

Mr. Hunter: In his recent dialogue with interested parties, has my right hon. and learned Friend commented, or been asked to comment, on the view expressed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland on 10 January that the consent of the majority applies only to the constitutional issue and not to what he called "all other political forms"? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with that point of view?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The agreement speaks for itself. An overall agreement is the objective of the talks process of which the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), has spoken this afternoon. The reality is that, to be lasting and durable, new political structures need to secure widespread acceptance and the allegiance of both communities and that is why the talks process seeks agreement across all three strands.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the Prime Minister join me in paying tribute to the courage of British troops who have

fought so bravely for their country, particularly in Iraq? Does my right hon. Friend share the widespread sense of revulsion in the country at the behaviour of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) in going to Iraq and saluting the man responsible for perpetrating such unspeakable and appalling atrocities against his own people and also at the actions of other Opposition Members who, by their actions, have given succour to terrorists?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend and I believe that the whole House will think that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) was foolish in his action. There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has inflicted suffering on the Shias and the marsh Arabs, is oppressing the Kurds and denying basic human rights, has victimised British citizens and is failing to comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions. There is, frankly, nothing to be said for him and nothing should be said for him, by any Member of the House.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the huge tax increases to be imposed this year and next year will check economic recovery?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman had taken the trouble to listen to my right hon. and learned Friend, he would have heard him say that the recovery is now

"strong enough not to be stopped".

I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman of the facts. The economy has now grown more than 2 per cent. in 12 months and has grown for six successive quarters. Retail sales have grown 4 per cent. in the last year and car production, manufacturing output and export volumes are all up. With low inflation and low interest rates, there is no doubt whatsoever that recovery is under way.

Mr. John Smith: I note that the Prime Minister does not deny that the Chancellor said that the tax increases would check economic recovery. Does not he understand that, as new tax codes arrive in homes all over Britain, people are now seeing the full impact of those increases on their personal standards of living? Why cannot the Prime Minister understand that increases equivalent to 7p on income tax are bound to hit family budgets for six?

The Prime Minister: I reiterate to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the economy is growing stronger daily. It is growing and it will continue to grow.

Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman could remind the House where tax rates stood when he left office. Investment income was taxed at 98 per cent., top-rate income tax was 83 per cent., corporation tax was 52 per cent. and the basic rate was 33 per cent. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is in no position to talk about taxing, either in the past or today. He complains about the spending reductions made in the public expenditure round. Would he keep those reductions? Would he tax to restore them?

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister recall saying, during the general election campaign,

"Greater taxation would kill recovery stone dead"?

If that was true then, why is not it true now—or is this just one of the many things that the Prime Minister finds it easy to forget ever having mentioned?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants to discuss the question of forgetting things, let me point out that he may have forgotten the words of Lord Desai, whom he sacked for telling the truth. Lord Desai said:

"It is good for the"

Labour

"party to have debate about alternatives, competing policy mixes, provided that no one thinks that adopting them or not will make the slightest difference to the actual reality."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has no economic policy whatever and he cannot hide behind that for ever.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is deplorable for a woman holding the post of headmistress to deny her pupils the chance of seeing one of the greatest English plays ever written by the greatest English playwright, on the ground that it depicts heterosexual love? Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring that example of political correctness?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend has spoken for not only the majority of people in the House, but the majority of people in the country. As for the wider question of politically correct ideology, there is no doubt that it is widely unpopular among parents, who want schools to teach their children the basics of English language, English history and all the subjects that will equip them for a proper adulthood.

Mr. Ashdown: On the subject of listening— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I want some order in the House before we make any further progress.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall have to start naming Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—on both sides of the House. This is an abuse of very precious time.

Mr. Ashdown: On the subject of listening to the Chancellor, did the Prime Minister by any chance hear him say on radio this morning that he did not recognise the difference between spending and investment? Could that be the reason why Britain consistently languishes near the bottom of the class of the 22 advanced countries when it comes to investing in education and our future?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman clearly failed to understand what my right hon. and learned Friend had to say this morning. If he examined the text more carefully, he might be able to ask a more credible question on another occasion.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, despite the professional whingers, the vast majority of people want to see more deregulation, unnecessary regulation ripped up and bossy bureaucracy banned and that they want unnecessary form-filling for the sake of form-filling to be a thing of the past?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right, not just for people but also, of course, for business and for many voluntary bodies as well. There is no doubt that the growth of regulation, from the European Community, from this House and from local government, has grown outrageously over the last 25 years and it is necessary to get rid of the regulations. If I had the support of the Opposition in doing that I should be delighted, for we will be introducing a

Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill which will produce the biggest bonfire of unnecessary regulations that the House has ever seen. We will see then which Lobby Labour Members are in.

Q2. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: As parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation, may I ask the Prime Minister whether he is aware of the criticisms of his Police and Magistrates Courts Bill from the police, chief constables and former Home Secretaries such as Lords Whitelaw and Carr, who say that the Bill comes dangerously close to politicising the police? Will he now seek all-party agreement on the Bill and stop introducing things such as the Sheehy report and the Bill which, in the face of rising crime, are undermining police morale?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will have to do better than that if he wishes to keep his new job. One of the aims of the reforms is to put a much greater breadth of experience on to police authorities and, as the hon. Gentleman may know, the intention is to bring the experience of many leading members of the community —head teachers, business men, doctors and others—on to police authorities. The police welcome that and they also welcome the increased individual authority given to chief constables, neither of which points was mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gale: Will my right hon. Friend join me in applauding today's launch of the guaranteed pensioners income bond? Will he accept that the 30 per cent. of my constituents in Thanet, North who are over the retirement age will welcome the Government's recognition of those who have worked hard all their lives, not to be a burden on the state but to be able to provide for their old age themselves?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The new bond will be widely welcomed because it will give pensioners a guaranteed return on their savings month in, month out. The other essential element, especially for people on fixed incomes and those who are retired, is to ensure that the value of their savings is not eroded by inflation. By keeping inflation low, we are helping every pensioner on a fixed income. Not since 1946 has there been such a successful period for inflation as the last 12 months and we intend to keep inflation at a very low level.

Q3. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Betts: Does the Prime Minister accept that, in pursuing its disgraceful housing sales policy which disadvantaged so many people in housing need, Westminster council must have annually reported that policy to the Government in its housing investment programme submission? Does he agree that the Government must specifically have approved all the subsidies for the cash incentive scheme under which Westminster emptied its houses and that the Government must also have given a specific consent to the disposal of all properties for which a general consent did not exist under the Housing Act 1985?

Will the Prime Minister therefore give a clear and comprehensive statement to the House of what knowledge his Government had of those policies and what specific approvals his Ministers and his officials gave to that council to enable those policies to be put into practice?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly is in some dispute with his Front Bench about Labour policy. The hon. Gentleman refers to the disgraceful policy of selling council houses. For much of the past two years, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen have been trying to pretend that they are in favour of selling council houses. *[Interuption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be heard. *[Interruption.]* Order. I shall not proceed until there is some order in the House.

The Prime Minister: As I was saying a moment ago, the hon. Gentleman had better be clear about whether his party is in favour of selling council houses or not, for there is a great difference between what he said and what spokesmen on the Front Bench have been saying. The reality is that hundreds of thousands of people in the country are home owners today because we gave them the freedom to be so, and that policy is undoubtedly correct.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 24 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill.

TUESDAY 25 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY—Opposition Day (second allotted day). There will be a debate on housing on an Opposition motion.

THURSDAY 27 JANUARY—There will be a debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 28 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 31 JANUARY—Consideration in Committee of the Finance Bill.

Madam Speaker, the House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee 'B' will meet on Wednesday 26 January at 10.30 am to consider unnumbered explanatory memoranda from the Department of Employment relating to parental and family leave and to part-time and temporary work.

[Wednesday 26 January:
European Standing Committee B
European Community Documents
a) Unnumbered Parental and family leave
b) Unnumbered Part-time and temporary work
Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports
a) HC 79–xxxvii (1992–93) and HC 48–ii (1993–94)
b) HC 79–xxxviii (1992–93) HC 48–i (1993-94) HC 48–iv (1993–94)]

Mrs. Beckett: May I press the Leader of the House again to find Government time for a full debate on the Child Support Agency? Opposition Members recognise that there will at some stage be an opportunity for debate on the orders that the Government have tabled, but I hope that the Leader of the House recognises that Members on both sides of the House will feel that an hour and a half, very probably, as it means embarrassment for the Government after 10 o'clock, will not be sufficient to explore the many concerns about the matter, especially as such a debate would be only on orders that could not be amended. I therefore press him to find time for a general debate on the matter in advance of the specific orders.

Secondly, can the Leader of the House find time for a debate about the waste of public money? I think that he will recognise that examples of waste, such as the spending of £500 million as a result of the Government's mismanagement of the process of introducing the national curriculum when funds for school building are being cut, are again causing great concern on both sides of the House. We would like the opportunity to explore that in Government time.

Thirdly, will the Leader of the House give serious consideration to increasing the amount of time that is available to the Opposition for debates? As the only debates that we have had about housing or health since the general election have been in Opposition time, obviously it is necessary to increase the time if we are to debate the wide range of issues that concern the country.

Mr. Newton: The Government have provided the House with ample opportunity to debate a wide range of important issues, but the most appropriate comment that I can make, both on the right hon. Lady's first question and on her last, is that it would be a good deal easier to know how best to please her if we could have sensible discussions in the usual channels. The sooner she returns to that the better.

As for the suggestion about the waste of public money, I am quite tempted by that thought, as most of the expertise in the world rests on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May we have an early debate on today's report by the Northern Development Company, which says that home sales and export sales are both up, profits have risen, home orders have recovered, export orders have bounced back, and plant and machinery investment has improved? I am sure that many Conservative Members would like to tell the Opposition about all that.

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether all that would be in order on Second Reading of the Finance Bill, but with ingenuity it might possibly be. However, my hon. Friend would find it difficult to make a better speech more crisply than the one that he has just made.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): May I remind the Leader of the House that our usual channels are still open? Does he recall that he gave the House an assurance more than a month ago, before the Christmas recess, that he would seek time for a debate on early-day motion 134, which refers to the hill livestock compensatory allowances.

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2924), dated 29th November 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be annulled.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that since then the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has issued a press release giving full details of the scheme, before it has come before the House? Does he agree that that is yet another example of government by press release, which is due to contempt for the House?

Mr. Newton: I shall, of course, continue to bear the hon. Gentleman's request in mind, especially in view of what he has said about it being easier at present to do business with him than with the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend consider introducing next week certain recommendations made by the Procedure Committee since 1984—a process that culminated in the Jopling report—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"]—covering the immediate reference to Committee of all affirmative statutory instruments, voting on Ways and Means and money resolutions without debate after a Second Reading, restricting statutory instrument debates started before 10 o'clock to 90 minutes, and—this is perhaps as important as anything—the automatic programming of Bills in Committee so that we can get them through sensibly and properly debated?

Mr. Newton: The reception of my right hon. Friend's remarks by my right hon. and hon. Friends may bring home to others in the House the fact that some of the disruption that the Opposition are seeking to bring about, even if it is aimed at the Government, is actually aimed at, and is beginning to affect, the effective working of Parliament. The Opposition should think about that.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I now make a plea for brisk questions and brisk answers, please. I hope that it does not fall on deaf ears.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As the Leader of the House clearly understands the importance attached in Scotland to our distinctive legal system, will there be an early opportunity to consider how the House deals with separate Scottish legislation, given the fact that we are apparently not allowed to debate the orders pertaining to costs in sheriff courts for civil actions, and that much of the Scottish legal process is being tagged on to Bills with United Kingdom implications, and we are not fully represented on the Committees on such Bills?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has been considering various matters, and I am sure that he will consider her requests, along with many others.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Will my right hon. Friend make time available to debate early-day motion 358, dealing with the explosion in organised professional crime involving heavy goods vehicles, trailers and cargoes?

[That this House is alarmed at the ever increasing number of thefts of and from heavy goods vehicles and other commercial vehicles and trailers and from associated warehouses; notes the consequential increases to insurance premiums which are now being charged to hauliers in order to meet the cost of such criminal enterprises; is appalled at the general damage to commerce which results and deplores the reduction in the number of police officers and the Metropolitan Police Serious Stolen Motor Vehicles Investigation Squad, SO1 (6); and calls for a national campaign to be co-ordinated by the Home Office and to involve all police forces as well as representatives from insurance companies and the road haulage industry in order to defeat this most serious explosion of organised, international crime.]

That epidemic is taking on the most serious proportions for the commerce of our country.

Mr. Newton: The importance that the Government attach to reducing and fighting crime was made clear in the Bill which was debated last week. I have no doubt that further proceedings on that Bill will give my hon. Friend an opportunity to expand on what he has said.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Leader of the House been approached by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) asking to be given the right to make a personal statement telling the House——

Madam Speaker: Order. Personal statements have nothing whatever to do with the Leader of the House. They are my responsibility. If the hon. Member for Workington has a question for the Leader of the House, I shall be prepared to hear it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: —asking whether an opportunity might be given to the hon. Gentleman to tell the House that he may be intending to repay to Westminster council ratepayers the £50,000——

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Did you tell him?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes. I am talking about the £50,000 profit that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton made by buying the council house next door at a discount. I tell the Leader of the House that I intend to keep raising this issue because I believe that it is fundamentally important.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has clearly explained what occurred. I do not propose to add to what I said when I last answered on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): May I press my right hon. Friend for a debate on the Child Support Agency? Has he not had representations from his constituents, as I have, that the formula for assessing income does not leave a person enough money to deal with present commitments? Unless we are to have a resentful underclass in the country, should not we fully debate the operation of the agency, because there is great resentment among all sections of the community?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is of course right. Like other right hon. and hon. Members, I have had representations that I have passed on to my right hon. and hon. Friends. He will be aware of their responses to those representations which have led to regulations, which, as the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said, we shall be debating relatively soon.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Following on from the question about government by press release, will the Leader of the House arrange for statements to be made when press releases are issued during the holidays? Will he especially ask the Secretary of State for Employment to make a statement on public holidays and the possible replacement of May day, and tell us why Trafalgar day has been ruled out? Some of us suspect that Lord Nelson failed to meet the criteria of "back to basics".

Mr. Newton: At least I can reject the hon. Gentleman's ingenious explanation. As for the rest of his question, I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Is the Leader of the House aware that the past week has been extremely bad for industrial jobs in the Southampton area, with 200 job losses at Aerostructures at Hamble and 200 job losses at British Rail Maintenance Ltd, which both employ many of my constituents? May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the repeated requests from Members on both sides of the House for a debate on the future of the aerospace industry, which is at the heart of our manufacturing base and which has suffered more than 100,000 job losses in recent years? In pressing for that debate——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have asked for brisk questions as many hon. Members wish to ask questions. We shall by no means cover all of those who want to speak if we have long statements. A brisk question is required.

Mr. Denham: I wish to raise the plight of the rail industry as well—both industries are in a serious state—but I think that I have made my point.

Madam Speaker: Well done. I am sure that you have.

Mr. Newton: That is a better answer, Madam Speaker, than any that I can give.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is it possible to have an early debate on the senior appointments which have been made by left-wing Labour councils in the light of the announcement yesterday of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that at least one senior education officer was appointed to his post because he was a member of the Labour party?

Mr. Newton: As with the request of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) for a debate on waste, I am sympathetic to my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Bearing in mind the fact that concern has already been expressed about the best use of parliamentary time, will my right hon. Friend support all those in the House, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who wish to have an early debate on the Jopling report? The time has come to debate that vital issue.

Mr. Newton: That, too, is a request which I will bear in mind.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I refer to early-day motion 387.

[That this House is concerned that if the European Commission accept the standard Euro two pin plug as proposed by CENELEC as part of the European plug and socket harmonisation programme the result would be that of scrapping the safest domestic power system in Europe; notes that the cost of such a change is estimated at £20 billion or £1,000 per household and that United Kingdom manufacturers are faced with massive re-tooling and plant replacement costs compared with our competitors on the European mainland and a large proportion of 20,000 United Kingdom citizens would be put at risk; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to reject the proposals.]

Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the European Commission's attempt to impose on Britain a domestic plug, called the Europlug, for use in an electrical system that will cost about £20 billion in conversion costs? Its use will endanger practically all the 20,000 jobs in the related industries and will destroy what is fundamentally the best and most safe domestic electrical system of lighting in Europe. Does the Leader of the House agree that, time and again, whacky bureaucrats in Brussels attempt to impose totally unacceptable conditions which pose a great risk to jobs and safety?

Mr. Newton: There is no such standard at the moment, of course. If one were to emerge, we would have to decide whether to seek a derogation, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's points would be kept in mind.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend undertake that, on Friday next week, the Government will not block the Bank of England (Amendment) Bill? Does he agree that, if the Government did so, it would be widely resented in the House as an attempt to prevent a useful small measure that would give parliamentary accountability for monetary policy, and that it would be even more widely misunderstood by those who will be asked to lend the Government £1 billion every week?

Mr. Newton: I will draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip. Of course, it is the fate of the Government that they are often misunderstood.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House ask the President of the Board of Trade and the Attorney-General to make statements on the intriguing affair regarding Venables and his companies? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the Government will not ask the Serious Fraud Office to get rid of some of the charges that it is investigating and that the Department of Trade and Industry will not drop the serious charges against another Venables company, because Alan Sugar, the Tory business man, is trying to concoct a deal in which he backs Venables, provided that the dogs are called off in the inquiry into Tottenham? There has been a lot of sleaze in Britain of late, surely——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I could not possibly begin to comment on such a matter. In my view, that is not the way in which the hon. Gentleman should use the Chamber.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend say whether the amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will be debated on a free vote on the Floor of the House? If it is, may we also have a debate on a free vote, as I asked my right hon. Friend last week, on an amendment tabled by more than 30 colleagues on the subject of corporal punishment for young offenders as an alternative to imprisonment? I am sure that most of my right hon. Friend's constituents and my constituents would regard that amendment as being more in tune with "back to basics" than the previous amendment.

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I said to my hon. Friend last week.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware that the First Scottish Standing Committee will not meet next week because the Government are trying to gerrymander that Committee in the same way as they are gerrymandering local government in Scotland? Will he think again about that matter? The arithmetic favours the Opposition's case, which is supported by the Liberal Democrats. Such arrogance by the Government has caused the breakdown in the usual channels.

Mr. Newton: That is a matter for the Committee of Selection.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an urgent debate on proposed changes to the charging of fees in sheriff courts in

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

Scotland? Civil litigants will have to pay for judges' salaries and many people will be prevented from litigating their just rights.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a debate on that matter. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be present at Question Time on Wednesday.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House undertake to arrange a debate in Government time on a Government motion before Her Majesty's Government give formal or informal support to any withdrawal of United Nations forces, including British forces, from Bosnia?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that there will be further opportunities for debate on Bosnia, whatever the circumstances. I will bear the hon. Gentleman's point in mind.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the current public consultation process in regard to opencast mining and its effect on the environment, under the review of mineral planning guidance 3. That matter is particularly important with respect to the coal privatisation Bill. Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that there will be an opportunity to debate that subject, which is of great importance to many constituencies?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Coal Industry Bill is currently before the House, which will give many opportunities to raise such matters.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week on GATT? Is the Leader of the House aware that some leaders of the textile industry are saying in private that the Government negotiations have sold the industry down the river? I have 11,000 textile workers in my constituency in the city of Bradford. It is an important industry. Tariffs work very much against the industry. In India, for example, they are set at 100 per cent. and in Turkey at 21 per cent. We need clarification of the Government's negotiations.

Mr. Newton: The Government intend to present to the House a White Paper on the results of the GATT round later this year. That will be the appropriate time to consider the possibility of a debate.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): Will my right hon. Friend consider initiating an early debate on councillors' allowances? Is he aware that the former deputy leader of Derbyshire county council has been gaoled for defrauding the council on his expenses and is currently serving his sentence in prison, yet is still receiving his council allowances? Does not my right hon. Friend consider that to be a shocking state of affairs and that it should be prevented?

Mr. Newton: I have seen those reports. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has seen fit to coment on them or, indeed, whether the district auditor is involved. My hon. Friend may wish to consider that.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Will the Leader of the House make time available soon for a debate on extradition, bearing in mind that any citizen of this country can be sent to anywhere in the Community by a court without at any time having been questioned by the police?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that point to the attention of my right hon. Friends who have responsibility for such matters.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In the absence of a much-needed debate on foreign affairs, will my right hon. Friend ask our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the Government's attitude to the situation in the Balkans, and in Bosnia in particular, when he returns from Turkey and Bosnia next week?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend on his return. I note the introduction to my hon. Friend's question, but I point out to him that he will have the opportunity to speak in the debate on the Royal Air Force next week.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): Will the Leader of the House reconsider holding a debate on the Child Support Agency, which is causing tremendous difficulty, pain and hardship to many constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House? I urge him to allow a full discussion on the matter.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request, but I cannot add to what I said on the subject on a couple of earlier occasions.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): Will my right hon. Friend urgently consider having an early debate on Iraq and its leader, the dictator Saddam Hussein, so that public opinion can be satisfied that there is very little support for the scandalous views of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway)?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend perhaps understates his case. We do not need a debate to know that there is no support whatever for the sentiments that are said to have been expressed.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Has the Leader of the House had a chance to read early-day motion 389 on double summer time?

[That this House recognises the enormous advantages for all the people of this country in moving Britain's clocks forward by one hour throughout the year, thereby matching daylight and waking hours more effectively; notes that the move is supported by the Royal Society for the Prevention of accidents and the Police Federation because, according to Transport Research Laboratory calculations, the result of such a move would be 140 fewer fatalities and 520 fewer serious injuries on the roads every year, with the Scots benefiting proportionately more than others; further notes that an extra hour of evening daylight would benefit children, working women, and elderly people, who are disadvantaged and threatened by the early dusk and darkness, as well as cutting energy costs by £260 million per year; recognises the benefits that extra evening light would have on the health and life style of the British people, and the £1 billion increase in tourism revenues that the consequently longer holiday season would provide; similarly recognises the greater convenience to all business people

communicating with and travelling to and from Europe; welcomes the European Commission's review of summer time arrangements in the Community which has now resulted in the adoption of a Directive to ensure that all EU members end summer time along with Britain in October; and therefore calls on the Government to allow Parliament to decide on Britain's move to single/double summer time at the earliest opportunity.]

Does he accept that it is time that the House came to a view on that matter, that the issue has dragged on for long enough, that the motion has widespread support throughout the House and the country and that it is time for the Government to bring a little extra daylight into people's lives?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that, while there is support for the early-day motion, a number of people have expressed serious reservations about it. A balance has to be struck and the Government are considering that.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend kindly wrote to me and said that the order giving effect to a unitary authority on the Isle of Wight would be laid before the House. Will he reassure me and all other hon. Members that the delay that has occurred so far has not been occasioned by the Liberal Democrats' activists handbook, which is full of racist comments about minority dialects such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone), who has taken considerable offence? Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that the order will be laid before the House before long?

Mr. Newton: I can certainly assure my hon. Friend that there is no connection between the two points that he raised. I shall communicate with him further about the timing of the debate.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will have seen that the draft Ports (Northern Ireland) Order was laid yesterday. Will he consult the Secretary of State through the usual channels with the idea of having a grand Committee examine it, or possibly having a debate on the Floor of the House with extended time, bearing in mind the importance of the order to the whole Northern Ireland economy?

Mr. Newton: As to the usual channels, I am grateful for the indication that the hon. Gentleman is ready to talk to us about the handling of these matters. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will discuss the matter with him in the spirit in which he raised it.

I should make it clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) that, when I referred to a debate, I should have referred to the laying of the order.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on early-day motion 341?

[That this House calls upon the Right honourable Member for Yeovil to disassociate himself from the description by Tom Dommett, a Liberal Democrat County Councillor, of his constituents in Somerset, as 'Yids, Nig-nogs, Ities and Pakis . . . no better than New Age scum and vermin'; believes that the use of such grossly offensive language about people of other nationalities and races is wholly unacceptable in public life; notes that this is yet the latest example of blatant racism within the Liberal Democrat Party; and calls upon the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, the Right honourable Member for Yeovil, to expel Councillor Dommett from the party forthwith.]

It refers to the remark by a Liberal councillor in Somerset that his constituents were no better than "Yids, Nig-nogs, Ities and Pakis". Would not a debate give the leader of the Liberal party an opportunity to explain to the House how he can stomach having someone like that in his

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury) *rose*——

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is about to give us an explanation.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House once again to the deep anxieties about the engineering steel industry. May we have time in the House for the Government to make it clear and give an assurance that the British engineering steel industry will not be taken out by unfair competition from heavy subsidies paid in the EC?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is right to remind us that he has raised this issue before, but I cannot add to what I said on the previous occasion.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Given the much-vaunted European political organisation, especially the extradition agreement within Europe, may we have a debate on foreign affairs to discuss the recent appalling action of the French Prime Minister in refusing to extradite to Switzerland two Iranian nationals who are wanted there on murder charges? Could we explain to the French Prime Minister that a consistent application of extradition should depend on issues of justice and not merely on French commercial interests?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Is the Leader of the House aware that domestic violence accounts for 25 per cent. of all reported violent crime? I draw his attention to early-day motions 357 and 383.

[That this House congratulates the Association of London Authorities on its Zero Tolerance Campaign, London's first major crime prevention campaign on the issue of violence against women; notes that a local London survey found a third of women questioned had experienced domestic violence and nearly two-thirds of men said they would be violent towards their partner in certain circumstances; further notes that domestic violence accounts for a quarter of all reported violent crime; calls for active prevention of crimes of violence against women and children, adequate provision of support services for women and children and appropriate legal protection for women and children who are victims of violence; and calls on the Government to implement in full the recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee report on Domestic Violence.]

That this House congratulates Edinburgh District Council on the launch of the second phase of its Zero Tolerance Campaign, an initiative which is now being replicated throughout Britain; notes that Tayside and Strathclyde Regional Council, Aberdeen District Council and the Association of London Authorities have been at the forefront of supporting Edinburgh's initiative; and calls upon the Government to ensure a fair and reasonable amount of funding for women's aid and rape crisis groups.

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

They highlight the excellent work being carried out by the Association of London Authorities and Edinburgh city council in crime prevention. Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on domestic violence so that we can discuss the full implementation of the recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee?

Mr. Newton: The Government agree that it is important to raise public awareness of this problem, and are currently considering what more can be done in this respect.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate next week on the speed and flow of traffic in London—especially in west London and, within that area, in Northolt at the Target and White Hart roundabouts where phased traffic lights are urgently needed—so that the House can press Ealing council to introduce traffic lights which are urgently required?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is due here to answer questions next Monday. As I have done on one or two previous occasions, perhaps I shall give him advance warning of a point that might be raised.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I remind the Leader of the House that on 29 October 1993 the Government, by the back-door method of a written answer, announced the termination of the readaptation benefits scheme for the steel industry. Meanwhile, the industry is being plagued by subsidised foreign competition. When will we have a debate on this vital industry?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman understandably raises the same point that was raised two or three questions ago. I cannot add to what I said on that occasion.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on "BB""—not "back to basics", but the evil of badger baiting? Anyone who saw the television programme on the subject earlier this week will know how sickening that practice is, and will know that the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Mr. Newton: It is just possible that my hon. Friend will get an opportunity to raise that matter next week, when my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Focd will be answering quetions. In any event, I will bring my hon. Friend's remarks to her attention.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): In the light of the soaring crime rate in north Wales and the continued refusal of the Home Office to allow an addition to the complement figure of that area's police force, when may we reasonably expect a debate on that important subject so that the people of north Wales are given the services of an adequate police force? With the best will in the world, they cannot do the job without resources.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's point, but I cannot promise an early debate on that specific matter.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): May we have an early debate on investment in safety in the railway industry in the light of the announcement yesterday of nearly 200 redundancies in my constituency in the railway maintenance yards? Is my right hon. Friend aware that technology has been developed at Eastleigh for secondary door locks? Those locks could not only save the many lives which are lost through passengers falling out of moving trains, but could also secure many hundreds of jobs in the railway works at Eastleigh.

Mr. Newton: I will mention that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and my hon. Friend may care to do the same on Monday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Foreign Secretary make a statement about what representations, if any, have been made to the German authorities about the massacre of British troops who were taken prisoner at Dunkirk in 1940 and about the role of the notorious and fanantical Nazi, Mohnke? If we are concerned, as we should be, about present-day butchers such as the man who presently rules Iraq, should not we be equally concerned about the butchers responsible for the massacre of our troops? Should we forget about it just because it happened 54 years ago?

Mr. Newton: Certainly not the latter. The hon. Gentleman will know that the jurisdiction in that case lies with the German authorities and that the British authorities have given full and active co-operation to the German authorities in the investigation.

Points of Order

4.3 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On the Order Paper yesterday there was a question from myself to the Secretary of State for Employment. I asked a straight and factual question about whether a firm called Coltman Precast had notified his Department of impending redundancies, and what the date of that notification was. The answer I received from the Minister was that the information required under those provisions was given in confidence.

Is it in order for a Minister to refuse to answer a direct question from an hon. Member when the law says nothing about confidentiality? Is that an example of Ministers attempting to aid and abet employers who seek to evade their statutory responsibilities?

Madam Speaker: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order. I am sure that he appreciates that Ministers are solely responsible for their answers to parliamentary questions. It is entirely a matter for the Minister in question, and is not a matter for the Chair. However, I want to be helpful to the hon. Gentleman who might seek parliamentary opportunities to pursue the matter. Although I do not give guidance across the Floor of the House, he may like to come and see me. If he wishes to reflect on the matter, he may well know how to raise it in some other appropriate way.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that you cannot discuss security matters, but I seek guidance about whether it is in order for hon. Members, and in particular the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), to invite and bring in to this building members of Sinn Fein? Given that the Government are still awaiting the renunciation of violence from the IRA, surely people who will not renounce violence should not be invited into this building.

Madam Speaker: I am, of course, not prepared to discuss security matters, but what took place was perfectly in order providing that the room was booked in accordance with the relevant regulations, as I understand was the case in this instance. I dealt with the matter earlier this week. Had the meeting not been in order, I would of course not have allowed the use of the room.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTION FOR MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. John McAllion
Mr. Robert Ainsworth
Mr. David Alton

BILL PRESENTED

NORTHERN IRELAND TERMINATION OF JURISDICTION

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Bill Etherington, Ms Mildred Gordon, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. Dennis Skinner and Mr. Alan Simpson, presented a Bill to terminate British jurisdiction in Northern Ireland, and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 May and to be printed. [Bill 36.]

Opposition Day

[1st Allotted Day]

National Health Service

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. Because of hon. Members' great interest in the debate, I have had to limit speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm to 10 minutes. I make the strongest plea to those who speak outside those hours to limit their speeches voluntarily so that I may call as many hon. Members as possible.

4.5 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the lack of accountability, the growth in bureaucracy and waste of resources which have occurred at the expense of patient care arising from the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Before I begin my speech, may I appeal to the Secretary of State to make Government time available for an open and non-party debate in the House about infertility and embryology research. During the Christmas recess, great concern was expressed about that issue and the House should have the opportunity to debate it in Government time.

I mention Government time because it is two and a half years—it was 1991—since the Government last came to the House, voluntarily, to debate the national health service. It is exactly a year to the week since we had a debate on the NHS and, just like today, it was held in time allocated to the Labour party. That was not surprising, because the Government have a great deal to answer for.

The Government have created chaos in the greatest health service in the world; they have undermined the confidence of those who work in the service at every level; they have created a situation where instead of money being spent on patient care, it is spent towards servicing the system; they have created a situation in which 100,000 more people are on waiting lists than at the time of the general election. In the first half of this financial year, there was a jump of 25 per cent. in those waiting for more than a year. Last year, there was an increase of 37 per cent. in the number of complaints made.

The Government have deliberately created two-tier access to services with the creation and encouragement of general practitioner fundholding. Their record is a disgrace. In the past year, one in five accident and emergency units were closed. Since the Government came to office, one third of all beds have been lost and one quarter of all hospitals have been closed. That has happened without commensurate investment in care in the community and localised community care facilities. That is a sorry record, but the Government try to blame it on those who work in the health service.

The Secretary of State for Wales said that it was all the fault of the men in the grey suits. It is not their fault, but the fault of the Secretary of State for Health. She is responsible for what has happened to the health service and its work force. We are defending, promoting and encouraging the NHS as we know it—and we created it. We are fighting against corruption, commercialisation, privatisation, waste and the politicisation of the service at every level.

We must do that because the Government, during 15 years in office, have forgotten the definition of the proper conduct of public business. From Westminster and Wandsworth borough councils to the hon. Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) and for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), to quangos and trusts up and down the country, every inch of public life is being packed by the Conservative party supporters.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Does the hon. Gentleman include in the trusts that he accuses of being packed with Conservative party supporters the new chairman of the Priority Health Care Wearside trust, Mr. Joe Mills, former chairman of the regional Labour party in north-east England?

Mr. Blunkett: The exception proves the rule. A recent survey showed that 70 per cent. of those prepared to declare a political conviction were Conservatives. Figures placed in the Library by the Government on Tuesday reveal that 60 per cent. of all chairs of trusts in England have a business or financial background; 50 per cent. of non-executive members have a business or financial background; and only 4 and 6 per cent. respectively have any connection whatever with the national health service.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Does the hon. Gentleman also include Helene Hayman, chairman of the Whittington trust? Does he include his own spokesman in the House of Lords, Baroness Jay, who is a member of the health authority?

Mr. Blunkett: Yes, I include them in the 4 per cent. who have an interest in the health service.

I draw attention to the position in south Wales, Scarborough, Glasgow and Gravesham. Let us take a little look at Gravesham. The five non-executive members of the Dartford and Gravesham trust were announced just a few weeks ago: Professor Kelly is a neutral; Kenneth Shaw, a banker, is a Tory councillor; Malcolm Nothard, who is in insurance, is a Tory councillor; Eileen Tuff is a chair of the local Tory association; and Janet Dunn happens to be the wife of the local Tory MP.

May I mention the names of a few other spouses? Mr. T. Shephard of King's Lynn; Mrs. S. Taylor of Southend; Mrs. S. Biffen of Shropshire; and Mrs. Gardiner of Surrey ambulance service—who are they married to? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) shouted, "Sexist." [Hon. Members: "She is not here."] There is nothing sexist about mentioning both sexes.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: I shall give way in a moment.

What about ex-Members of the House, from before the last election? Mr. T. Flavell, Lord Jenkins, Lord Hayhoe and Sir Timothy Raison were all appointed to trusts. Trusts are a bit like Woody Allen films. We start out with husbands and wives and end up seeing crimes and misdemeanours.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): My hon. Friend neglected mentioning the former Member for my constituency, Mr. Ian Grist, who lost his seat at the last election. He is now chairman of the health authority in

South Glamorgan and today he announced the closure of the acute unit of the district hospital in my constituency —formerly his constituency. He should have been here to protect it and was then appointed chairman of the health authority to close it.

Mr. Blunkett: I am sorry that I must miss certain former Members, spouses or Tory party Members, because the service is riddled with them. Other hon. Members will no doubt make similar points.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I should be sorry if the hon. Gentleman omitted to mention my wife. His comments raise an interesting question in relation to Labour party policy. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that a woman who has worked for more than 20 years in the national health service and allied jobs, and who, long before she married a Member of Parliament, had built up a considerable reputation for expertise in the subject, should automatically be denied a presence on a trust simply because she is married to a Conservative Member of Parliament?

Mr. Blunkett: Certainly not. I make no such presumption. I merely know that the people who are declared as, or declare themselves as, Tory councillors or Tory Members, or who are married to, or have been married to, Tory Members, are committed to the Tory cause.

When, last week, the Secretary of State rushed out a response to the working party investigation on corporate governance, she expected us to take seriously the message that major changes would be made to bring about accountability in the service. She spoke of staggering changes, such as the fact that, for the first time, health authorities would have to publish annual reports and, for the first time, non-executive and executive members would have to declare any interests in relation to the health service and in relation to their own trusts.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough) *rose*——

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: I shall not give way, as I have given way sufficiently for the moment.

In the *Health Service Journal* last week, the Secretary of State said:

"Accountability is one of the key ideas and issues that will be concerning the health service in 1994".

It certainly will. We shall want to hold to account those who are making decisions and need to answer to the public about what they are doing. When we table questions in the House, we are met with the blocking response that the information is not collected centrally. We are referred to local trust chairmen and chief executives who are appointed by the Secretary of State, whose remit and survival depend on the Secretary of State and who have no direction to give us the answers.

The pay of those chief executives, chairmen and non-executive members will not be directed by the decision made by the Secretary of State last week on corporate governance, despite the fact that over Christmas the Secretary of State, in the numerous interviews that she gave to the press, gave the impression that it would.

There will be no change; there is no intention to open up the health service. The Secretary of State's proposals on regions make the opposite presumption—instead of regional board members there will be a "respected local figure". The respected local figures for the eight new zones will, even now, appear on the Conservative central office computer.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that we in Staffordshire face the prospect of losing our ambulance trust, directly as a result of the Secretary of State's failure to be accountable for what is going on? That is simply because there are so many players who are trying to get rid of a good public service and are concerned only about money. Where does accountability lie for the reduction in the rates of pay of my constituents, who are sitting in the Gallery, from £4·85 to £3·26 an hour?

Mr. Blunkett: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no accountability; there is a concentration not on improving the quality and standard of service, but on cost cutting and demoralisation.

Just before Christmas, I was sorry to hear that the Secretary of State had had her handbag stolen. It was stolen from the back of the official car at 11.30 pm, while it was waiting for her outside Annabel's night club after a Tory party Christmas bash. I mention that not merely to draw attention to the fact that the Conservatives have lost any understanding of the line to be drawn between what is right in terms of political responsibilities and what is expedient in terms of personal and political interests, but to show that the Secretary of State should set an example.

When expense on hospitality in the Department of Health goes up by 46 per cent., it is not surprising that people fail to take seriously calls to cut down on waste. The Secretary of State spent £45,000 on overseas visits—the most of any domestic Government Department, and nearly as much as the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and for Defence. She spent £1 million on the good news unit, using our money to promote her propaganda.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that all the Ministers in the Department of Health underspent their hospitality budget last year?

Mr. Blunkett: The estimates by the Department of Health equate entirely with the incompetence with which it runs the rest of its budget. If Ministers underspent and still had a 46 per cent. increase, Lord help us if they had really been trying.

At Quarry house in Leeds, home of the NHS Management Executive, the Department spent £55 million and provided hand-woven carpets. It cost £30,000 for just three people to travel between Leeds and London. The A to Z sent out from the health service cost £368,000 and contained a wonderful definition of a bed. People up and down the country know all too well that a bed is not a trolley.

Circulars have increased by 100 per cent. in one year and pamphlets cost £800,000 last year. The Secretary of State for Health has become the task force queen of the Government. A task force has been set up for every single month that the right hon. Lady has been Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): When the hon. Gentleman has finished his long list of personal attacks, smears and innuendo, perhaps he will take some time out to explain the Labour party policy on NHS trusts. He has made contradictory statements in the past and I hope that he will allow us to have a proper debate by clarifying where Labour stands on that matter.

Mr. Blunkett: I will clarify our policy in my own good time. However, our policies will have something to do with treating patients, quality of care and what goes on in the service. I raised issues relating to the Secretary of State because she is in charge and what she does and says matter. Her attitudes pervade the entire service.

It is worth drawing attention to a 19-year-old boy called Dominic who wrote to every member of the Cabinet just before Christmas asking for a donation towards a £1 million appeal to charity.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): That has nothing to do with the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Blunkett: It has absolutely everything to do with what we do and how much we care. The Chancellor of the Exchequer gave a tenner, the Chief Secretary gave a fiver. It is relevant, because the Secretary of State for Health sent him a photograph of herself. Sincerity ratings and opinion poll ratings reflect that.

Dame Jill Knight: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to make gross personal attacks, nothing whatsoever to do with the motion on the Order Paper?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): If there had been anything out of order the Chair would have ruled on it. It is a matter for the hon. Member, who is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Blunkett: I drew attention to what is said and done. We are talking about £1·2 billion being spent on introducing the new system; we are talking about waste and the use of the new market system to increase profits in the private sector by 19 per cent. in the past year; we are talking about he misuse of money merely to manipulate and service the system rather than to provide care.

We are also talking about the ridiculous position of London with the specialty reviews, the Tomlinson review and the Peckham reviews. University College hospital is not threatened by any of those reviews but by the market itself, and the Secretary of State has had to intervene to save that great hospital and its facilities from herself.

Those things matter greatly to every single person. They matter to those who have been waiting 14, 18, 19 or 22 hours on trolleys. They matter to those who have been waiting for operations that have been cancelled again and again. They matter to people who have been told that they could have their operation done if only their GP belonged to a fundholding practice. They matter to people who have seen waste in every area of the service. For example, salaries have risen for senior managers, people have undertaken trips abroad, conferences on waste have cost thousands of pounds.

Nadene Ghouri rightly said in the *Evening Standard* a day or so ago that one waits for hours and is then told that, if only one would pay, one could have a bed—which was already there and available—for £270 at King's, and that one could be taken off a trolley and given the care that one deserves if one were prepared to pay the money.

We know why people believe that the health service is not safe in the hands of the Secretary of State. We know why people are so angry and frustrated. We know why people wish us to raise the issue of waste at every opportunity. We know why people are asking us, day in and day out, to raise their concerns, which they express at every surgery: why waiting lists and waiting times have gone up; why there are hidden waiting lists; and why they must wait to see a consultant—the crucial time—so that it can be assessed whether there is an urgent case to be dealt with and urgent treatment to be undertaken.

Those things matter to everybody, but no statistics on those matters are kept nationally. They are not added to the waiting times. The Secretary of State will shortly give instructions for getting waiting lists down for those waiting more than a year. Nobody takes the statistics of those who have never been put on a waiting list, because they have been told that they cannot be given a time and therefore that there is a pending list on which they have to be kept. Nobody would forgive us if we did not raise again and again the need for every pound of our money not to be spent on peripheries, not to be wasted on incompetence, but to be spent on patient care.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Given that the hon. Gentleman wants to see more money spent on patient care, why did he oppose compulsory competitive tendering, which is producing some £130 million extra for patient care? That is what the debate is about.

Mr. Blunkett: I think that the term "brass neck" would be an understatement.

Mr. Brandreth: Answer the point.

Mr. Blunkett: I am interested not in cutting the wages of the lowest paid, but in improving the quality of care to the patient and getting people off trolleys and into beds. *Today*, in its campaign to improve our health service, has provided excellent information, as has the *Evening Standard* on what is happening in London, the *Manchester Evening News* in Manchester and the *Sheffield Star* in my area, and newspapers throughout the country, and the exposure of waste by the *Daily Mirror*.

All that information is available for people to see. What is more, people also know who benefits from spending and from the health service, not merely those who are placed in positions with which I have already dealt this afternoon. Of the top five beneficiaries who benefit from health service spending, two of them give money to the Tory party: A. A. H. Holdings plc and Glaxo. They will benefit from our money. The hon. Member for City of Chester should not start lecturing about where the money goes or who benefits from it, because some of us could give chapter and verse about how some people have been benefiting greatly from the thrust towards privatisation in the health service.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blunkett: I shall not give way.

We know what is happening. The Secretary of State for Wales revealed it all. There is jargon where previously there was common sense, and over-management where previously people committed themselves to service. Episodes of care have replaced counting patients. Activity levels are fiddled by counting those who come back from theatre not only to a different ward but to a different bed, and by double-counting people who have been discharged too quickly and are readmitted for the care that they should have had in the first place. Provider units have replaced hospitals and community services.

I was asked what we would do. We would repay the confidence of the British electorate by treating them with respect and dignity, to restore common sense to our health

service. We would not adopt the "Yes, Minister" approach in which the Secretary of State has been engaged, with private gain at public expense, which is what we have had during the past 15 years. Each year, £85 million goes in tax relief alone for those who are retired and cannot obtain services in the NHS. Insurers provide the facilities that the NHS should provide as a matter of right. That is the truth of the matter.

Again and again, we have raised the incompetence, corruption and nepotism in the Wessex and the West Midlands regional health authorities, or the sell-off of the estates facilities in the South West Thames regional health authority, which reaped one man alone a profit of £900,000. It is no wonder that the British people rally to our support in our fight to cut bureaucracy and to increase investment in the care of patients.

In the year ahead, the British people will see the Secretary of State's capital budget cut by £73 million and there has been a 4 per cent. reduction in the proportion of the health service budget spent on the mental health service, despite the declared commitment to that service, and they will hear the Secretary of State repeating platitudes. No wonder the word "ecology" springs to mind. Recycling the same statistics and verbiage is no substitute for a policy.

Our principles are clear. We want a comprehensive NHS, not a fragmented, destroyed and undermined service, and equal access for everyone at time of need, not GP fundholding undermining that key principle on which we stand. We want a health service that is publicly funded and publicly provided, not an easy killing for the private sector —what Aneurin Bevan described rather graphically as sucking at the teats of the state. We want public accountability where we currently have nepotism, and a free service at the time of need, not charges and private insurance.

That is why I was so interested in the interview——

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): For the purpose of clarification, has the hon. Gentleman just announced that the Labour party will abolish charges if it is ever re-elected to government?

Mr. Blunkett: I did not know that the Government were committed to charges for treatment at the time of need. Last year, the Secretary of State went out of her way to say that she was against charging people at the time of need. The Chief Secretary did not. He made it clear that he was in favour of extending all charges—charges for what he calls hotels in the hospital service; charges for meals; charges for what is now known as recuperation, for nursing when one comes out of theatre—which will soon be known as convalescence and charged for. The Secretary of State boldly stepped in to contradict her right hon. Friend, saying that, for the time being, there would be no charges for treatment. And Conservative Members have the cheek to ask me whether we would charge patients for treatment!

I can think of no better way in which to sum up the Secretary of State's dilemma than quoting from a recent interview that she gave *The Spectator.*

Mr. Garnier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blunkett: No, I will not. I have already given way a number of times, to the detriment of the flow of my attack on the incompetent handling of the health service.

In that interview, the Secretary of State said:

"We are like ducks going round in a fairground, and people shoot at you all the time as you go round. In the end, they get you, and the great thing is to know what you will be doing the next weekend."

I know where the Secretary of State will be going. I know where she will find herself when the people of Britain have the opportunity to make a judgment on the Government's stewardship of the NHS—on the way in which they have used resources, the way in which they have undermined the heritage that they received, the way in which they have increased the amount of waste and bureaucracy in the service and the way in which they have undermined accountability. That is why we have moved the motion, and why we have every confidence that people of good will, who are committed to the NHS, will reject the Government amendment.

4.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the improvement in the efficiency of the National Health Service which has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of patients treated, a reduction in long waiting times for hospital treatment and improvements in the quality of patient care; considers that these improvements show that the health reforms are working and that accountability has been strengthened by the clarification of responsibilities under those reforms; and looks forward to further benefits for patients resulting from proposals announced by the Secretary of State for Health to minimise the costs of administration through the proposed abolition of regional health authorities and streamlining of management.'.

We have just heard a catalogue of vituperation, personal abuse, innuendo and unsubstantiated smears. Once again, the one thing that we have not heard is a policy: this is a policy-free zone, as it has been before.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I listened carefully to what was said by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). I fear that I must disagree with my right hon. Friend: according to her, the hon. Gentleman said nothing about policy, but I picked up two ideas—albeit meagre—from what he said. The first is that, if Labour ran the health service, there would be centralised control of information; the second is that there would be public accountability. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that public accountability would lead to a trebling of a number of committees in the health service? That is what happened in Sheffield when the hon. Gentleman led the council.

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend is entirely right.

As I was saying, we have again been confronted with a policy-free zone, empty of substance. As always, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) condemned and talked down the national health service, rather than pay tribute to the dedicated staff who work in it, providing ever higher quality care.

Ministers give an account of their stewardship of the health service every month at Question Time, and in Adjournment debates and statements. Even when they give their account of developments to the press, the hon. Member for Brightside complains that there are too many press interviews and press notices—simply because, yet again, they highlight the bankruptcy of his own position. He asks a good many questions. During a recent period,

[Mrs. Bottomley]

Opposition spokesmen asked 1,400 questions, at a cost of £144,000: they cost £97 a go. However, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not rather inadvisable of this young woman—she supposedly is a Minister—to question the right of hon. Members to table questions, regardless of cost, when she is the most incompetent Minister in an incompetent Government?

Mrs. Bottomley: I was going to suggest to the hon. Member for Brightside that requests for me to list NHS expenditure, in the latest year for which figures are available, on surgical dressings and bandages, broken down into the country of manufacture, were not particularly necessary to the careful stewardship of the national health service, bearing in mind the fact that each question happens to cost £97.

A year ago, we charged the hon. Member for Brightside to explain his policies but we are still waiting. Would he abolish NHS trusts? We heard an interesting intervention from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) who seemed particularly distressed at the prospect of her trust being dismantled. Would the Labour party dismantle the health reforms or does it accept that they are here to stay? We have waited a year but printing machines have failed to roll. The questions are still unanswered; the policy zone is still deserted.

The answer to the question, "What is Labour's health policy?" is that Labour's health policy is due out next month. As far as I can tell, that has been the position since the general election and it was certainly the position when last month the hon. Member for Brightside gave a short interview about his policies. However, next month has arrived and the hon. Gentleman is still silent. He is the mañana man, always putting off until tomorrow what he should be doing today.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): On the subject of NHS trusts, does the Secretary of State understand that the split between purchaser and provider is widening and that patients are falling into the gap that is being created? For example, a 90-year-old constituent of mine, who was taken to a trust hospital for a head injury, complained of rib pains, was sent home without an examination and was later found to have broken ribs. That occurred because the hospital needed more beds. Is that the sort of policy that the right hon. Lady promotes? Is that the sort of service that people deserve?

Mrs. Bottomley: There are few thinkers who do not believe that the distinction between the task of assessing health need and purchasing health care and the task of providing for patients is better separated. They are different jobs and separation provides the opportunity to develop a strategic framework to improve the health of the nation. The health reforms, which will ensure that money is not used merely to prop up institutions but has a strategic purpose, are of profound importance.

It is a source of great regret that the Opposition are not interested in debating or willing to debate in detail the complexities of making the system even better. Had they been interested, I should have referred the hon. Gentleman to, for example, the speech by Sir Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the NHS, in which he talks about the importance of purchasers and providers working together and to repeated statements by Ministers to the effect that it is important that there is a spirit of trust and co-operation between the districts and the general practitioners and between the hospitals and the clinicians who work in them. Out of that new system comes an opportunity to develop a health service that meets the health care needs of his and all of our constituents much more effectively.

The sadness of the Opposition, who are dominated by the trade union movement, is that they talk constantly of the reactionary, the fossilised and vested interest but they have no interest in patients or in progress.

Mr. Rowe: Is not it true that in the mañana republic that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) wishes to establish we would return to a provider-driven service? Is it not perfectly clear that one of the enormous advantages of the purchaser-provider split is that it has rendered the accounting transparent? That, in turn, has made it much harder for people to get away with a range of little abuses that have crept in, such as the use of NHS equipment in private practice. Is not that a clear example of value for money?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are supposed to be short but the two that we have just heard have been rather lengthy. If that continues, the many hon. Members who want to catch my eye will be disappointed.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall try to resist inteventions for a while but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will appreciate that I have a great commitment to the changes that we are setting in hand and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) raised precisely the sort of point which proves that we are becoming ever more effective in improving the quality and quantity of care that we are able to deliver.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I hope that the hon. Gentlemen will bear with me. It is my way to give way but I fear——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is fairly obvious that the Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mrs. Bottomley: Of course there are times when things do not go as they are intended. There are times when patients are treated unacceptably but, of the 8 million in-patients treated, the vast majority express great satisfaction with the care that they receive. When things do go wrong, it is right for us to take action.

One such example is the case of the lady mentioned by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) who had to wait an unacceptable length of time on a trolley in an accident and emergency department where an £8 million investment programme is under way to extend it. It was, nevertheless, an unacceptable state of affairs which is why I have today written to health authorities to ensure that they have the proper A and E arrangements in place, that they have provision for a service that is subject to unpredictability, that they have the spare capacity and that patients are always treated with dignity and courtesy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I cannot give way as I need to make further progress.

The hon. Member for Brightside refers with scorn and abuse to all those who spend their time working in the health service. He speaks vindictively of those he describes as

"non-caring, non-patient—orientated"—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 400.]

meaning the white collar workers in the NHS. It is not good enough for him then to say that he has in his sights only the senior executives or some group that he associates with the reforms. It is important to make it clear that general and senior managers account for only 3 per cent. of the NHS wage bill and 2 per cent. of the work force. They are tiny figures.

The figures that the hon. Member for Brightside frequently quotes as a damning indictment of NHS bureaucracy include, for example, the medical secretaries who provide the invaluable back-up to doctors, freeing them to spend more time with patients. Is the hon. Gentleman, in his abuse of managers in the service, saying that medical records should not be filed or patients' notes typed? Is he saying that such people are "non-caring, non-patient orientated?" He should apologise for his remarks which belittle and insult the hard-working members of the NHS. As ever, his comments show the bankruptcy of his arguments.

Mr. Blunkett: Statistics provided by the right hon. Lady's Department show that senior management costs have risen from £25 million to £494 million and that last year trusts spent £24 million on cars compared with £5 million the year before. Where do medical secretaries feature in those statistics?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is adding apples and pears; he is not comparing like with like. There has been an increase in the number of managers, in large measure because of the reclassification of a great number of senior nurses. The fact remains that whereas, 10 years ago, 60 per cent. of our staff were involved in direct patient care, the figure has increased to 65 per cent.

Our record is commended around the world. We concentrate on meeting patients' needs and we do so effectively. The question that the hon. Gentleman should ask is, what is the added value from the management input in the health service? The answer is the delivery of extra patient care, falling waiting times and improved quality, which is so important.

Mr. Graham: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall give way for the last time and then I must make headway.

Mr. Graham: I am delighted that the Minister has agreed to give way.

The citizens charter, which promised our constituents that they would be treated or get an appointment in a certain period, is absolutely horrifically not working in my constituency. One of my constituents has been waiting five months for an appointment with a urologist. I have been told by a local doctor that it will be more than 19 weeks before they can get an appointment to meet a urology consultant. Is that the type of health service that we are running for our constituents?

Mrs. Bottomley: The House must be aware that before the health reforms more than 200,000 people were waiting for more than a year and many people were waiting for more than two years. We have seen a plummeting in the long waiters and a substantial reduction, in the year, of more than one year waiters. There has been progress in the health service and transparency for patients because the patients charter explains to patients precisely to what they are entitled. That is because of the greater transparency, the better organisation and the commitment by the Government to the NHS.

My hon. Friends on the Conservative Benches will remember the Cook test, named after the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who radically challenged us to measure the success of trusts by the simple test of whether they do more or less work for patients. Now that those trusts are indisputably doing more work for patients, the hon. Member for Livingston conveniently finds himself with new duties, but the hon. Member for Brightside is left to wriggle and squirm his way out of that hole. That is why he will count the number of beds, bandages or of press notices—anything but patients. The hon. Member will not recognise that it is the patients who count.

The hon. Member for Brightside forgot to mention in his speech that the NHS hospitals are on course to treat 8 million patients this year. That is 1 million more than in the year before the reforms, but it is 3 million more than it was when the Labour party was in power. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has made it very clear that she will not give way.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman forgot to mention that trusts have increased their patient activity even faster than other hospitals. He forgot to mention that for every 100 patients treated in hospital before the reforms 116 are treated today, and next year it will be 120. He forgot to mention the rapid increase in day surgery and childhood immunisation and in the quality of care.

The hon. Member for Brightside spoke about waiting lists. He forgot to mention the 51,000 patients who, before the reforms, were waiting more than two years; there are none today. He never gives credit. He certainly did not mention that before the reforms the average wait was nine months; that has now decreased to five months. Ten years ago, only one in eight patients were able to have a hospital operation and go home the same day. That is now one in four.

That is what our policies are achieving. The Labour party cannot bear to hear the accurate statistics of the achievements of the national health service because the figures highlight even more clearly its abject failure to come up with a policy. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is fairly obvious that the Secretary of State is not giving way at this stage.

Mr. Graham: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that debates were an opportunity to give Back Benchers a chance to question the Minister. It is difficult for us to do a good job if we cannot get a chance to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State is responsible for her own speech and whether she gives way.

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that I have given way as much as, or probably more than, the hon. Member for Brightside. Opposition Members do not wish to have an informed

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debate. They seem to wish to make a great noise because they want to obscure the achievements of the national health service.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. She is making a robust defence of the strategic changes in the health service and I commend her fully for that. May I say, however, that there is concern among many general practitioners in my part of the country about the quantity of statistics—which she recently mentioned—which they have to provide. At this stage they do not receive enough information about the usefulness of those figures. I hope that she will regard that as a constructive contribution to the debate, in contrast to the attacks that she has received from Opposition Members.

Mrs. Bottomley: That is an extremely constructive contribution because it highlights one of the dilemmas or complexities that confront us. We have to be accountable for the work that is undertaken by general practitioners; we have to ensure that there is a comprehensive health service; we have to have control, not only of the financial aspects, but of the quality of clinical care. Every time that a form is filled in, however, there is a distraction. That is time that general practitioners would rather spend with their patients. I hope that we shall find more simplified ways of satisfying the proper interests of general practitioners as well as, rightly and properly, the need for accountability and the stewardship of the national health service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I think it would be fair to say that I have given way to Labour Members twice as many times as I have to Conservative Members. I do not wish to fall out with my hon. Friends and, therefore, for fear of getting into difficulty with them, I must demonstrate some sense of balance and order in the number of occasions on which I give way. When I have given way to an equal number of Conservative Members I will try to give way to Opposition Members once again.

You will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the substantial advances that I have identified, that the Labour party——

Mr. Home Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you start a waiting list for Members who want to intervene in the debate?

Mrs. Bottomley: I suggest that Labour Members put their name down on the waiting list for a Labour party policy on health because if ever there was a case of, "If in doubt, shout", it is the Labour party. It has no policy. The nerve of asking for a debate which simply gives my hon. Friends the opportunity to expose the Labour party's policy-free zone defies all description. We had thought last week that the antics of Labour Members were a result of their deciding at the last possible moment that they could not brave a debate, and were a way for them to pull the plug on it. Be that as it may, all day today the hon. Gentleman will have to put up with my hon. Friends asking time and again, "Where is the policy?" That will not deflect me from continuing to give an account and an explanation of those important changes.

We take the view that the way in which resources are managed is of crucial importance to delivering quality and cost-effective patient care, but we also accept that the resources are important. That is why, this year, we have more than met our manifesto commitment. NHS spending is already at record levels and it will increase next year by a further £1·6 billion—equivalent to an extra £83 for every household.

I notice that last week in the *British Medical Journal* the hon. Member for Brightside said that he hoped that the Labour party would make a specific commitment on NHS funding. I hope so too, after the consultation. We are sick and tired of being told that the health service is underfunded, by a party which refuses time and again to say by how much health spending should increase.

Last month, however—Labour Members may wish to listen to this—the hon. Gentleman said that a Labour Government would aim to take Britain into something called "the 7 per cent. club", by which he meant the group of nations who spend at least 7 per cent. of gross domestic product on health services. Is he aware that the policy would cost the British taxpayer an extra £6 billion? Will he confirm whether that is now Labour's firm commitment? Will he confirm whether he has the express permission of the shadow Chancellor to make that commitment?

While the hon. Member for Dumfermline, East (Mr. Brown) is telling the British taxpayers, "Honest, guv, we've gone straight," the hon. Member for Brightside wants to pick £6 billion out of their pockets. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman wishes to confirm the status of his commitment to spending an extra £6 billion on health. Would he like to intervene?

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: It seems that the hon. Member for Brightside does not wish to substantiate the claim that he made last month. No doubt my hon. Friends, and their constituents, will be extremely worried about that aspect of Labour party policy.

The truth is that in government Labour cuts spending and in opposition it cuts commitments. The Government have done neither. We have cut out waste and improved efficiency. Since we came into office the number of patients treated in hospitals has increased nearly three times as fast as spending, even when that is adjusted for inflation. In the 1980s the number of patients treated in hospital grew on average by 2·5 per cent. a year.

Mr. Graham: The health of the nation is deteriorating.

Mrs. Bottomley: I must respond to that off-side intervention. The hon. Gentleman says that the health of the nation is deteriorating, but he may like to know that over the past 10 years the number of people who die below the age of 65 has fallen by one fifth, the number of babies who die in their first year has fallen by two fifths, and average life expectancy has increased by two years. I regard that as a substantial improvement in the health of the nation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I am seeking——

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is fairly obvious that the Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mrs. Bottomley: Labour Members may wish even less to hear what I have to say next. In the 1980s the number of patients treated in hospitals grew on average by 2·5 per cent. a year; in the 1990s, since the reforms, that number has been growing by 5 per cent. a year, and even faster in the trusts. Under the Labour Government activity grew by little more than 1 per cent. a year. The improvements are essential if the health service is to keep pace with the demands on it. That is why, as well as maintaining our spending commitments, we shall continue to demand tough efficiency improvements from the health service.

Mr. Hughes (Doncaster, North) *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: It is not how much one spends, but what one does with it.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Secretary of State give way, on spending commitments?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have no need to give way on spending commitments. A Government who have given an extra £1·6 billion this year do not need to give further explanations of spending commitments.

For the coming year we have set a target of 2·25 per cent. for efficiency gains, which will release an extra £450 million to spend on patient care. It is no coincidence that those dramatic improvements in the number of patients treated have taken place as the Government deliberately strengthened NHS managers. Leaders of the profession agree.

Christine Hancock, for example, recognises that that process was needed, and indeed overdue. Sir Roy Griffiths, whose management reports in the mid-1980s were so important, said that if Florence Nightingale were carrying her lamp through the corridors of the NHS then, she would almost certainly be searching for the people in charge. In the unmanaged shambles that we inherited from the Labour party it was impossible to reduce costs because nobody knew what costs were. Better management has meant that we have been able to cut waste by improving services and service delivery.

Take, for example, the supplies authority——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Give way, give way.

Mrs. Bottomley: Last year and this year the NHS supplies authority has saved £84 million. In addition it has just negotiated a deal with British Telecom to save several million pounds through its contracts. Better management has cut energy consumption. The hon. Member for Brightside pours scorn on the "A to Z of Quality", but the idea has brought forward practical initiatives throughout the health service, and people are taking those achievements forward. The hon. Gentleman is pouring scorn on the efforts of nearly 3,000 NHS staff who have submitted their ideas for individual cases to be selected.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: In just one example, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchcliffe), energy management——

Mr. Sedgemore: Give way, give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a matter for the Secretary of State whether she gives way or not.

Mr. Sedgemore: Why does she not give way? There is something wrong with her.

Mrs. Bottomley: One of the examples—*[Interruption.]* Once again, Labour Members do not want to hear the facts of the situation. One of the examples in the "A to Z of Quality" concerns the constituency of the hon. Member for Wakefield, where the energy management project is saving £370,000 a year. That more than covers the costs of the "A to Z of Quality", and the money is all being spent on patient care.

We have cut waste by contracting out services. Competitive tendering across an ever widening range of services has led to savings of at least £130 million a year. The Labour party fought those changes and it fights them still. That says more about its real commitment to rooting out waste in the health service than all the spurious facts and figures cited by the hon. Member for Brightside.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has ground me down, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Contrary to what the right hon. Lady has been saying, some Labour Members are very happy with the treatment that we have had in the national health service, and we are prepared to say so publicly.

Mr. Sedgemore: Where was the treatment? St. Bartholomew's.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: However——

Mr. Sedgemore: The Secretary of State is closing down the hospital that saved my hon. Friend's life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) must control himself.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When one is in hospital one hears when things go wrong. I can tell the Secretary of State about an incident one evening in Bart's when the accident and emergency department was 33 beds short. The chap responsible for running the whole hospital decided that the staff had to put beds on the floor——

Mr. Sedgemore: Mattresses.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry, it was mattresses. They had to put mattresses on the floor to take in the extra patients in accident and emergency. Someone then telephoned throughout London to find out whether there were additional beds available in any other accident and emergency department, or in any other ward in any other hospital. Bart's telephoned 17 hospitals, and could not find a bed. So we cannot understand why, at the same time——

Mr. Sedgemore: She is shutting the A and E unit.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We cannot understand why the right hon. Lady is deciding to shut the accident and emergency unit in the hospital where I was. Where is the sanity in that policy?

Mrs. Bottomley: Again, I ask Labour members to read the informed and sensible debate on change in London that was led by their spokesman in the House of Lords. She said, as the hon. Gentleman must also say in his more

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rational moments, that no change is no option in London. Of course having first-rate A and E services is essential for the change. That is why we are putting nearly £15 million more into the London ambulance service.

Meanwhile, there is a major development programme at the Homerton, increases at the Royal London, improvements in the A and E at St. Thomas's and £8 million being spent at King's. Those who take a more serious interest in the health service will know that one of the dilemmas in London is caused by the fact that people frequently use A and E services where elsewhere they would use primary care. If the hon. Gentleman cared to consult Professor Lesley Southgate, professor of general practice at St. Bartholomew's hospital, he could have an informed discussion about the importance of change in London and of developing primary care, and about the phenomenal unprecedented investment that is under way, taking forward 100 primary care schemes across London this year. That is a necessary programme of change.

I understand the concerns of those most directly involved. I also know that it would be unforgivable, in the light of all the changes, and all the medical advances, to fail to grasp the nettle. I admire Labour Members who constructively and responsibly seek the right outcome rather than simply holding on to the latest fashion and resisting change. It is that approach which makes them unfit ever for government and ever again for stewardship of the national health service.

This debate is of great importance and there are further matters which I wish to raise. We have announced recently that we wish to streamline the management of the NHS. Every change requires review and further development. We have had a successful drive towards decentralisation. We want patients closely involved and we want decisions to be made as close to patients as possible. Now is the time to sweep away a layer of administration. That is why I have announced proposals to abolish the 14 regional health authorities, to reduce further the number of health authorities by allowing district and family health service authority mergers and by streamlining the management executive. Those proposals received a broad welcome, both inside and outside the health service.

Of course, as ever, the hon. Member for Brightside could not bring himself to share that welcome. Once again, he talked about cutting out waste and when we take action to do so, he is lost for words. The proposals will mean that the management of a decentralised health service is even more effective and they will save money on administration to be spent on patients. That process is already well under way. Take, for example, the Northern regional health authority.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you agree that it is a disgrace that there is no Minister from the Scottish Office present so that we have some idea of whether the Secretary of State's proposals will also apply to Scotland?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair and the hon. Lady knows it.

Mrs. Bottomley: I was referring to the Northern regional health authority, which plans to save more than £3 million on administration over the next two years to be spent on patients—including reducing waiting times. East Anglia health authority expects to save £1·6 million and to use that extra money to deliver 4,000 patients treatment.

The hon. Member for Brightside referred to accountability, which is an enormously important subject in a service as sensitive and as complex as the NHS. We will uphold and strengthen the accountability of the NHS to Ministers and to Parliament. The public must continue to have confidence in the stewardship of the taxpayers' money spent by the health service. Citizens and taxpayers have a right to expect those who use their money to provide services to carry out their jobs with responsibility, with honesty and to the highest possible standards. No one can give a guarantee that nothing will ever go wrong, however the health service is managed. What matters is to throw the spotlight on such matters and to take the necessary action.

I remind hon. Members that it was this Government who opened the doors of the health service to the independent external scrutiny through the Audit Commission. The Labour party was quite content with the cosy, secret world of closed books behind closed doors. We are determined that there should be a rigorous system of accountability with external audit and that lessons should be learned when things go wrong. The vast majority of NHS work is characterised by dedication, responsibility and honesty. This year, the Audit Commission reported that the overall financial management of all NHS activities has shown a significant and welcome improvement. It is disgraceful that the Labour party should use isolated examples to cast a slur on the integrity of the majority of men and women who work in the health service.

It is right that in the light of the important Cadbury report on corporate governance, and in the light of recent, justified criticism from the Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Select Committee, we have been working to look again to develop codes of conduct and accountability in the NHS. Once again, the hon. Gentleman poured scorn on the use of task forces in the NHS. In a service as complex as ours, the involvement of people working, rather than the loudmouths of the Opposition, is a better way in which to deliver policies which will work in practice. I pay tribute to all those who have helped the task forces on corporate governance, on accountability and on the code of conduct.

Those codes will play a key role in strengthening accountability, probity and financial control. They re-affirm long-standing good practice in the NHS and state unambiguously that NHS boards are responsible for ensuring effective financial stewardship through value for money, financial control and financial planning strategy. The codes include new measures which will require the directors of boards to declare private interests, require boards to establish audit and remuneration and terms of service committees, to keep proper control over the pay of chief and senior executives, and will require pay and remuneration packages of both executive and non-executive board members to be published in annual reports.

The information revolution is already under way. In the past, no one knew who was in charge of a hospital. The establishment of trusts, the requirement to produce annual reports, to produce accounts, to have a public meeting of the trusts, apart from the work of the health authority means that the amount of information that is now available is unprecedented. I look to chairmen personally, with the

full support of non-executive members and chief executives, to take a lead in implementing those codes. They must lead by example.

Labour Members delivered their usual catalogue of abuse against those who serve as non-executives on the NHS trusts and authorities. I find that unbelievable because I believe that there is a tradition in this country of public service and service for the NHS which transcends political parties. I remember Lady Callaghan only too well when she was chairman of Great Ormond Street hospital. I remember any number of spouses of Labour Members taking a key and influential role and that there are any number of individuals throughout the service of all political parties who are serving the NHS trusts.

I am pleased, from what I gather, that the Opposition are no longer actively discouraging their members to serve on trusts and authorities. Too often in the past, it was reported that there was pressure put on members of the Labour party not to serve on trusts and authorities.

The way in which chairmen of health authorities have been appointed has varied little over the years since 1948. I suggest that the Labour party puts forward its own good names and support people who are doing an extremely good job and recognise the great quality of the contribution of the non-executive members. For example, Dame Margaret Turner-Warwick, the previous president of the Royal College of Physicians, is now the chairman of the Exeter NHS trust. There are any number of examples of people from all ranges of activities who are contributing to the national health service.

The hon. Member for Brightside knows that whatever accusations he has made against the health reforms, they have been widely accepted in and beyond the NHS. His dilemma, and it is a real dilemma as my hon. Friends will know, was summed up by the founder of the Socialist Philosophy group, Professor Julian Le Grand, when he said of the Labour party in an article in the *New Statesman:*

"If they refuse to believe that there are positive features of the reforms, they can call for their complete withdrawal. But then they have to offer something else that would do better. It is far from clear what that would be. Certainly few who work in the NHS would want to go back to the old pre-reform system. And even fewer would relish the prospect of yet another dramatic upheaval regardless of what form it took."

Elsewhere in the article, the professor states wisely:

"central planning was not a conspicuous success in the old health service"

and he describes GP fundholding, which is always denigrated by the Labour party, as "perhaps the biggest success story" of the NHS reforms. If that is what constitutes socialist philosophy in revisionist times, I have a great deal more time for it than the half-baked denigrating variety served up by the hon. Member for Brightside.

The hon. Member for Brightside has no answer to the increasing success of the health reforms, he has no answer to the improved efficiency of the health service, he has no answer to the extra spending, and he has no answer to the millions more patients who are treated. The hon. Gentleman has no answer to the dramatic falls in long waiting times, and no answer to the improvements in patient care which are taking place in every hospital, every clinic and every GP's surgery. His sole response is to spread scares, smears and innuendos against people in the NHS. His mean-spirited attacks lack recognition of all that the staff have achieved in the past three years. They have taken change on board and they have made it work for the benefit of patients.

We have begun a great journey with our health reforms, and that journey must and will go on. We will make the health service even more responsive to the ever-changing needs of the population and the ever-widening capabilities of science. The hon. Gentleman, in one of the rare sane moments in his speech, referred to the important but deeply concerning matter of human fertilisation and embryology. I will certainly talk with others about a possible debate on it. This country was indeed ahead of others in setting in place legislation to control those new techniques. That was a forward-thinking and enlightened piece of legislation, and so also are the health reforms a forward-thinking, enlightened piece of legislation, which will encourage diversity of care, not just in hospital but across the range of settings.

We will harness the health service single-mindedly to the goal of improving the nation's health. We will keep the health service at the leading edge of modern medicine. In practice, it must always be informed by the best and the latest medical knowledge. It must be clinically effective as well as cost-effective. Above all, we shall ensure that patients are treated with the courtesy and dignity that they deserve. Their needs, their choices and their well-being come before all else. Our health reforms are the means to those ends. They will uphold and strengthen the integrity and dynamism and the value of our NHS now and into the next century.

5.21 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I shall be brief. The Secretary of State and her mouthpiece, the right hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), should be congratulated on their skilful misuse of NHS statistics and accounts which could lead one to believe that they were the grandchildren of Goebbels, for they regularly use his propaganda skills. Two and a half decades ago, when he was a Health Minister, Enoch Powell referred to NHS statistics as a pack of lies. He would not be so complimentary now.

The Secretary of State continually claims that never before has the NHS been so well run. NHS trust chairmen and chief executives tell her that, but that is no surprise. She says that never before has so much been spent and so many patients treated. Those comments are the deliberate, cynical misuse and falsification of facts and statistics. The Secretary of State should know that the form of NHS accounts and statistics was so substantially changed on 1 April 1990 that comparisons before and after that date are virtually impossible. I am aware of an in-patient case which involved at least four consultants by the time surgery took place.

In recent days, the Secretary of State has thrust herself forward as an exponent and promoter of "back to basics". Although that was clearly designed to camouflage Government incompetence, she should at least present facts to the public without criminal distortion. Let us hear of a few basics which the Secretary of State has not seen fit to publicise.

First, no chairman or non-executive director of an NHS health authority or trust is democratically elected, yet we hear much criticism from Conservative Members about trade unions. Conservative NHS appointments are more akin to the Nazi gauleiter system. Secondly, in 1993-94, NHS chairmen and non-executive directors will receive about £50 million in salaries and expenses. That sum

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would pay for 40,000 in-patient cases. Some non-executive directors have received more than £500 per meeting attended.

Thirdly, since 1990, chief executives and immediate managers have doubled or trebled their pay. During the same period, caring staff received little more than a 10 per cent. increase. Fourthly, extravagance is rife. It is only in the past few years that a manager would have had the affront to travel by Concorde at public expense, without a word of criticism by the Secretary of State.

Fifthly, vastly increased expenditure on managers' cars has been incurred, despite their having little need for them. However, district nurses need cars. Sixthly, over the past three years, the cost of managers and management has increased by about 1,500 per cent.

Seventhly, contractual mismanagement on a scale unheard of in the public service has occurred in two regions, costing tens of millions of pounds and, sadly, depriving tens of thousands of patients of treatment. What has been the Secretary of State's reaction? She rewarded the chairman of one regional health authority with the chairmanship of the national supply committee, and, on his resignation, she made Sir James Ackers the unique gift of £10,000 from public funds, thereby happily compounding the regional health authority's action in making illegal payments to senior officers rather than dismissing them. The Secretary of State would learn something if she listened rather than rabbited.

Eighthly, nurses who were still waiting for grading settlements five years after their 1988 grading restructuring were refused interest on moneys outstanding. That is the meanness of the Secretary of State. Ninthly, in-patient waiting lists remain immense, despite dodges such as putting patients on 12-month out-patient review or delaying out-patient appointments falsely to understate the waiting list.

Tenthly, there has been the highest ever reduction in the number of posts for caring staff, to fund the highest ever costs and staffing levels of administration and management. Eleventhly, the sum of nearly £1 billion, which was spent on computers, management and accounting systems to support the market style of management, would have paid for the treatment of the greater part of the in-patient waiting list, as declared by the Secretary of State.

Twelfthly, the Secretary of State has consistently refused to order public inquiries into the deaths or permanent damage of children in hospital—no doubt, to suppress the truth—and, at the same time, delayed the payment of damages which could have improved the life styles of some unfortunate children. The Secretary of State should be ashamed of herself.

Last week, *Public Finance and Accountancy* quoted the Secretary of State as saying:

"Review bodies must look at pay in the context of what is affordable."

I have yet to hear her say that regional health authority corruption and incompetence are unaffordable. As stated earlier, they are well rewarded in the West Midlands regional health authority. It has also been feared that the 1,500 per cent. increase in managers' pay is not affordable. The statement of the junior Minister—

"we make no apology for the small real increase in senior managers—

is pathetic and shows not only the Government's ignorance but their indifference to the sick. I call on that Government to order a 10 per cent. per annum reduction in the number of all health authority and trust managers and their pay over each of the next five years as a start to restoring the balance between those who care and those who live on their backs.

"Back to basics" in the health service creates unemployment among nurses and the lowest possible pay, with the exception of top management who are rewarded with massive pay and rewards for mindless loyalty. Back to basics—so much for sound economic management. Anything is affordable to avoid publicity. Back to basics—justice and fairness are not applicable to nurses, only to those who promote Tory policies. Back to basics—never let the public know the truth.

I could go on, but time is limited. In the past five years, we have seen a massive growth in corruption and gross management incompetence throughout the national health service at the same time as the last elements of accountability of chairmen and directors have been removed. The Secretary of State can take notice of whichever of the Prime Minister's back to basic principles she chooses. But she and her team should resign and let us get back to running the national health service.

5.31 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak in the debate. Unlike Labour Members, I see the latest management changes introduced by the Secretary of State as another constructive step towards the Government's goal of achieving an appropriate and accountable management structure in the national health service.

I remember that, not long ago, the national health service had no management structure of which to speak. Those were the days when no one could provide even the most basic information such as the number of doctors employed in the NHS, the bed occupancy rate or even treatment costs. As Sir Roy Griffiths said in 1984, there was no one "in charge" and no one could be held to account for the billions of pounds of public money that were being poured into the service. What was needed was nothing less than a management revolution to give the health services the sort of management that was capable of handling its huge resources.

I am proud that the Conservative Government grasped the nettle in the early 1980s and have continued to pursue their aim of improving management performance. I remain convinced that only through good management can the health service continue to deliver the range and high standard of services that are demanded by rising public expectations and increasing medical capability.

Anyone who is acquainted with the reforms introduced in the past 15 years will understand that changes on the scale that have been achieved could not be introduced overnight. There had to be a clear strategy with every stage building on the previous one. The introduction of general management and the various management initiatives of the 1980s strengthened and increased the role of management.

The breadth of the reforms introduced by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 added new dimensions and new responsibilities as the internal market developed. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate

the scores of managers who have worked stoically to improve services for patients as well as implement the many changes that are expected of them.

One year ago, the Select Committee of Health, which I am privileged to chair, published its interim report on the NHS trusts. The Committee recognised the long-term contribution that trusts are making, and will increasingly make, to the health service. However, we expressed the view that the rapid expansion of trusts was in danger of causing a potential loss of strategic planning, especially at the regional level. We asked that consideration be given to the way in which the roles of the regions and the NHS management executive outposts could be accommodated with the freedom of the trusts. It seemed to us that there was a proliferation of management as a result of the new system growing up alongside the old, largely centralised management structure.

I am satisfied that the Secretary of State has responded to that concern. Her latest announcement on the structure of NHS management will ensure that the best parts of the old system are fully integrated with the new. The reduction in number and slimming down of regions, the merger of the outposts with regions, the review of staffing in purchasing authorities and the merger of districts will all contribute to slimlining the management structure. In addition to that top-down rationalisation, as the structure settles down and individual managers gain confidence, they are achieving their own improvements.

In my constituency, the East Hertfordshire NHS trust, which covers patients living in my constituency, has reduced the number of its full-time managers by nearly one third, from 50 to 35, since trust status was achieved. Management costs are also down to less than 2 per cent. of the total budget. Yet all contracts in 1992-93 were delivered within budget, and it is expected that they will be again in 1993-94.

In any large organisation, integrity is an absolute prerequisite, especially when large public funds are at stake. I welcome the positive steps taken by the Secretary of State to strengthen accountability, probity and financial control in the NHS. The codes of conduct and accountability that she proposes to introduce will reaffirm the long-standing good practice in the NHS and set out clearly the corporate standards that people can expect from the NHS boards.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Roe: I will not give way at the moment. Mr. Deputy Speaker has already said that many hon. Members wish to speak. I know that my hon. Friend will be speaking later, and he can make his points then.

With an organisation as vast as the NHS, good management is essential for higher productivity and better efficiency. Good management pays, as the performance of my local NHS trust has shown. I am proud to be able to tell the House that, without any subsidy, the trust complied with its financial duties in the first year and broke even. This year, it is on target to achieve a similar result.

All that was achieved while there was an overall increase of 4 to 5 per cent. in patient care. Improvements in waiting times have been made—over 85 per cent. of patients are seen by a consultant within 30 minutes of the time of the original appointment; improvements in support services have been made—for example,. 95 per cent. of patients attending the East Hertfordshire trust accident and emergency department are seen immediately by a senior triage nurse; the trust has efficiently managed a 10 per cent. increase in attendees in the accident and emergency department in 1993-1994; and day surgery output increased by more than 20 per cent. in 1993. Those are facts. East Hertfordshire trust has been reported as the top provider in the North West Thames region on the patients charter monitoring. None of that suggests to me that this is a service in decline—far from it.

5.40 pm

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I welcome the opportunity afforded by the debate to discuss the national health service. I know from my postbag that the state of the NHS continues to be one of the key issues for the public. People have written to me from all parts of the country—no doubt they have done to other hon. and right hon. Members—expressing their concern at the closure of beds, wards and hospitals.

One of the reasons for that state of affairs is surely the NHS's increasing bureaucracy and the seemingly endless stories of waste. I do not say that that is the only cause, but it is one. The Government claim to be opposed to a vast and bloated bureaucracy, but the whole nature of the changes that the Government have introduced meant that an increase in bureaucrats and managers was inevitable.

If one separates purchaser and provider functions, each with their own management structures, one inevitably creates more management posts. If one establishes a contractual relationship between purchasers and providers, one inevitably creates a new layer of bureaucrats dealing with negotiations and contracts.

The Government make great claims for their reforms, trumpeting the fact that many more patients are now being treated. However, there is considerable doubt about how meaningful those figures are. The figures that the Government provide are for "finished consultant episodes", but it has been shown that the treatment of an individual patient for a single illness can lead to several "finished consultant episodes".

A leading health economist, Professor Alan Maynard, stated in a recent article in the *Health Service Journal:*

"effects of the reforms are unknown due to the Government's decision not to evaluate them."

That is presumably on the ground that the Government cannot possibly be wrong. There are, however, numerous examples showing that they do appear to be wrong when it comes to running the NHS. Millions of pounds have been spent by health authorities in hiring head-hunting firms for senior managers—£10 million was wasted on business consultants by the West Midlands regional health authority, as has been mentioned in the debate; £40 million was spent by the Department in setting up the NHS trusts, with no independent means of checking where the money has gone.

We have all heard of the loss of up to £63 million by Wessex regional health authority in its mismanaged computer scheme. Another example is the £100 million wasted by the NHS Supplies Authority through inefficient management techniques and muddled contracts. The catalogue goes on and on and on. It is no wonder that a "good news unit" has been set up by the NHS Management Executive in Leeds—it is more correctly titled the corporate affairs intelligence unit. Surely that is another example of waste and pointless bureaucracy.

[Ms Liz Lynne]

It would be wrong to say that the Government have not responded in a more concrete way to the reports of waste and failure in the NHS. Following the Public Accounts Committee report on West Midlands health authority, the Minister made it clear that Sir Duncan Nichol was developing guidance addressing the need

"to reinforce core public service values in the NHS."

That is quite laudable, one might think, but why does a task force have to be set up to reinforce public service values in what is supposed to be our greatest public service? My party would put the concept of public service at the heart of the NHS.

Our local hospitals should be accountable to the local people whom they are supposed to serve. The Government claim that they want to encourage the involvement of local people in decisions about health care provision for their area, but surely the creation of trust hospitals in their present form makes that more difficult. There is no effective local representation, with no real local accountability. Mind you, district health authorities are not really accountable, either. We need direct elections; only then will we get proper accountability.

At the regional tier, while no one wants to see a bloated bureaucracy, an open form of regional planning and supervision would be far preferable to the closed and secretive system that the Government propose.

In the long term, we should also like to see merged district health authorities and social services departments, to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, to ensure a seamless provision of care and to reinforce local accountability. The Government have failed to set up ways of evaluating the effectiveness of their changes and thereby establish mechanisms to put a check on wasteful expenditure and growing bureaucracy. However, others have been doing it for them.

A recent key report from the British Medical Association underlined the fact that one of the damaging effects of the Government's changes has been to create a two-tier NHS. As a result of the so-called fast tracking procedure, patients of GP fundholders are receiving treatment ahead of patients whose services are purchased by the district health authority.

Such queue-jumping is happening even when district health authority contracts have not been fulfilled. That process is clearly undermining one of the fundamental principles of the NHS—that patients should be treated on the basis of need. Just because they happen to be patients of a particular doctor, people who are less seriously ill should not be able to jump ahead of people who are in greater need of treatment.

Much has been made recently of the increase in NHS bureaucracy, and the ever-increasing burden that pay and perks are loading on NHS finances. While nurses have to stick to 1·5 per cent. on average, trust chief executives are getting huge increases of 9 per cent. That is hardly fair.

What, therefore, is the future for the key workers in the NHS—the doctors and nurses who provide the care, and the many support workers? The Government have come out in favour of the Calman report on specialist medical training, and I am pleased about that. Where, however, are the resources to enable an increase to be made in the number of consultants? I shall be grateful if the Minister will answer when he replies.

The Government are committed to action to reduce junior doctors' hours, which is another thing for which I am grateful, but another report from the BMA recently pointed out that that is being patchily implemented.

The position of nursing in the NHS looks even worse. The number to be trained will fall by 16 per cent. in England between 1993-94 and 1994-95. That is despite research by the NHS management executive that shows that better qualified and trained nurses are more cost-effective and provide higher quality care. Clearly, the decline in the number of trainee nurses will have a dramatic impact on the future quality of patient care.

Surely the purpose of the Government's changes, although I do not know what was in their minds, was to try to use the money in the NHS as effectively as possible, but the reverse seems to be the case. Or is it that, by some unfortunate chance, the changes have highlighted the one problem that the Government have tried to mask—underfunding?

Of course, the Minister will try to blind us with statistics, and it is difficult to believe that over £20 billion is not enough. I agree with that, but we should remember that we spend less money on our health care as a percentage of GDP than almost every other major western country. In the light of that statistic, it is amazing that the NHS is as good as it is. For that, we must thank the dedicated people who staff the NHS at every level.

Mr. Day: The hon. Lady mentioned the total amount spent in this country. Is she aware that, in terms of public expenditure, this country leads Europe? In the rest of Europe, the figures for total spending as a percentage of GDP are different, because there is more personal input on health in other countries. That is not an argument for or against private health, but the hon. Lady must recognise that fact.

Ms Lynne: I recognise that more money has been spent on the health service, but it needs even more. Inflation in the health service is running at 3·9 per cent., so the money currently invested in it is not enough. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that I am just about to discuss funding possibilities.

The Government should give careful consideration to the possible advantages to be gained from hypothecated taxation. It is often said that the British public want better public services, but are not prepared to pay for them. Perhaps that is because they do not trust us, the politicians, enough to handle their money. The catalogue of waste outlined today certainly gives them good cause to believe that.

We want a health service that is not plagued by ever-lengthening waiting lists. It is possible to manage other European health services to avoid such delays, so why not here? Perhaps if we politicians gave a commitment to spend resources and source revenue on specific health services, we might be able to convince the British people that we are committed to improving the services that they cherish. They might then believe that we can be trusted not to waste their money elsewhere.

Dr. Mawhinney: I want to be quite sure about what the hon. Lady is telling the House, because hypothecation would not, of itself, offer more money to the health service. Is she suggesting that the Liberal Democrats want to take more public expenditure from some other programme—and if so, which one—to give to health? Or is she

announcing to the House and the country that after the Liberal Democrats have increased taxation to fund education, they will increase taxation even further to pay for greater spending on the health service?

Ms Lynne: I am glad to answer that question.

The Liberal Democrats have begun to study hypothecation in detail and I sincerely hope that the Government will do the same. We could explicitly earmark the money raised from tobacco and alcohol exise duties for spending on the health service. We could raise considerable amounts through those duties from hon. Members alone.

It is not for politicians alone to decide on the appropriate way forward. We must open up the debate on how to fund our health services.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way once again, because I am genuinely trying to understand what it is she has suggested. She answered my question by telling us a little bit about hypothecation. That was fascinating, but it did not answer my question.

Is the hon. Lady suggesting that money should be taken from other spending programmes to pay for the health service? The money raised through taxation on alcohol and tobacco is already spent. She cannot spend it twice. Is she announcing to the country that after increasing tax to fund education, she would increase it still further to fund the health service?

Ms Lynne: I am grateful for that further intervention. My party is looking at hypothecation. I am not making a commitment that the Liberal Democrats would raise taxes after the next general election. I want the merits of hypothecation of taxes to be subject to public consultation. I want to go out and talk to the public about whether that is the best way forward. Our policy is markedly different from that of the Government, who brought in their reforms without consulting enough. Hypothecation could be the way forward and it is up to the Minister to examine all its implications carefully instead of trying to make a party political issue.

The British public must be given the opportunity to participate in the key decisions about the future, as well as being given the chance to hold to account those who made mistakes in the past.

I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement to consider having a debate in the House, for which I asked, on the new and possible treatment and use of eggs from dead foetuses for in vitro fertilisation. I am grateful to the right hon. Lady and I hope that she will honour that commitment.

5.53 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am afraid that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) followed Opposition Members, as the Liberals usually do, by offering the usual carping, negative criticism of the health service. I congratulate her, however, because, in clear distinction from the Labour party, she at least provided one or two elements of possible Liberal Democratic policy. I do not believe that they bear too much scrutiny. The hon. Lady said, "We are looking at hypothecation," which is a pretty good example of how the Liberals approach policy making. I wish that she had offered a more concrete definition of her party's policy.

Everyone should join Conservative Members in applauding the idea that decisions on health should be taken locally. That was the thrust of the health reforms and it is one reason why they are working so well. The Liberal Democrats' proposition that such decisions should be made on the basis of elected local agencies, which would, however, be funded centrally, fills me with the deepest misgiving.

The problems faced by all central Governments over the funding of local authorities would be a picnic compared with the battles and feuding that would arise over health authorities being elected locally but funded centrally, whether that funding was derived from hypothecated additional taxation or additional income tax.

I hope that the Liberal Democrats will continue to explore such ideas, but will offer the nation a more informed analysis of their potential, because I genuinely believe that it is right that such ideas should be considered. That is why it was so sad to witness the performance of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and that of other Opposition Members, because, as usual, they offered no positive thinking on policy.

One of the great tragedies of the Opposition is that they fail to understand that the provision of truly adequate health services for the 1990s is an international challenge facing all modern societies. These days, the aspirations of people, the challenges and costs of modern developments in medicine require the solution of terrifically difficult problems. Germany, France, the United States and other countries face that difficulty and they have all produced different solutions.

I believe that the British solution, as it is developing, is one of which we should be proud. Our solution is not perfect, but we will make no progress as a nation if the continued examination of this crucial subject is bedevilled by the mean-minded, ill-informed, pettifogging attitude adopted by the Labour party.

When the hon. Member for Brightside, the Labour party spokesman on health, can offer as the subject of his major speech nothing but a reference to the restaurant at which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health dines, it is a pure and appalling reflection on the paucity and poverty of what passes for thinking on the Opposition Benches. Such behaviour by the Labour party is traditional and it makes me somewhat hot under the collar.

The hon. Member for Brightside talked about the NHS and said, "We created it." Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that "we", the Labour party, created the NHS? Does he know nothing about history? Has he any idea of the thought and work undertaken by others towards the creation of the NHS during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s? He is totally ignorant. He obviously has no idea of the efforts made by all parties towards its creation. It started with the Liberal party and Lloyd George, and the idea was carried forward by Neville Chamberlain. The White Paper that provided the fundamental basis for the NHS was introduced by Henry Willink, the Conservative Minister for health in the wartime coalition Government. The irony is that the only significant change made by Mr. Aneurin Bevan was to go against the declared policy of the Labour party for locally based and controlled health units and opt for a nationalised hospital service. It is the nationalised hospital service which has caused so many problems over the 40 years. *[Laughter]*

What is the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) laughing about? Does she think that there were

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

no problems when Baroness Castle was Secretary of State and Lord Owen was Minister responsible for Health? There were huge problems, which is why we have had to find a way forward and why the health service reforms are providing an excellent solution to that challenge.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Lady shakes her head. She probably was not born at the time, but Herbert Morrison pointed that out to Aneurin Bevan, who won the argument in Cabinet but lost it in the succeeding 40 years.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Although that is interesting and I am grateful for the history lesson, I am not sure whether I accept the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the historic events that led to the creation of the national health service.

We are all concerned about the national health service and should be thankful for every person who is treated in our hospitals. Last week, the Wolverhampton *Express and Star* announced:

"Hospital Waiting Lists Are Soaring".

It said that 1,800 extra people were on the waiting list and that more than 6,000 were waiting. In the west midlands, more than 100,000 people were waiting for treatment. Is that success in the health service?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was a very lengthy intervention.

Mr. Whitney: I clearly made a mistake. I could give the hon. Gentleman several answers, but shall give him a brief one. Since 1988, the average waiting time for treatment has fallen from nine to five months. I invite the hon. Gentleman to write to me and tell me what waiting times were in Wolverhampton in 1977 or 1978 during the last Labour Government, when the national health service was plagued by strikes.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman accepts the history lecture and I hope that he passes it on to his colleagues in the Labour party. I hope that next time they have a debate on the national health service, they will not just say, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside said, "We shall clarify our own policies in our own good time." That good time is up. The nation demands to know what the Labour party has to offer.

The Conservative party knows that it has to offer the huge improvements which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has outlined. The nation knows that we are now treating a million more patients than last year, and 3 million more than when we came into office. The nation knows that waiting times are reduced, there are tens of thousands more nurses and thousands more doctors, and their pay has risen by some 40 per cent. in real terms. We are proud of that record. The nation cannot be proud of a political party that claims, on bogus grounds, that it is its health service, but has no contribution to make to its continued development.

6.3 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) tried to suggest that the Labour party had claimed that there were no problems before the Conservative Government were elected. That is nonsense.

Mr. Whitney: I said nothing of the sort.

Mr. Davis: Oh yes, he did. Of course, there were problems before the Conservative Government were elected and problems still exist in the national health service. The charge against this Government is that they have made the problems worse.

That charge is contained in the motion. I was interested to note that, in his peroration, the hon. Member for Wycombe never referred to the motion. I shall debate the motion before the House. As I was coming to the House today I wondered how the Secretary of State for Health could oppose a motion that deplores the lack of accountability, growth in bureaucracy, and waste of resources in the national health service, all at the expense of patient care. After all, in the past year the Public Accounts Committee has produced two major reports on how resources have been wasted in the national health service. Both reports drew attention to the lack of accountability in the health service and pointed out that bureaucracy in the health service has failed the people of this country.The Committee says that all that has been done at the expense of patient care.

The West Midlands regional health authority has wasted millions of pounds. The regional health authority admits that it wasted at least £10 million. We have had a report on the Wessex regional health authority, which wasted tens of millions of pounds. The regional health authority and national health service management executive admit that it wasted at least £20 million. Today, the Secretary of State for Health said that the books were no longer closed and no longer examined behind closed doors. That is simply untrue. The books are examined behind closed doors by the district audit service, whose reports are kept secret.

If someone writes to the district auditor and asks about the reports, he or she is referred to the regional health authority. If one then asks, "But how can I ask the regional health authority for the report if I do not know what was reported on?", he simply says that that is a good question. One cannot ask for a report unless one knows that it exists. If one knows that it exists and asks the regional health authority about it, one is most unlikely to get a copy of it because the books are examined behind closed doors and kept secret.

The internal report on the West Midlands regional health authority, known as the Carver report, explained how procedures had been flouted and regulations ignored and how people had wasted money. It was kept secret until someone in the regional health authority leaked it to a journalist on the Wolverhampton *Express and Star.* Only once it had been leaked and had come into the possession of hon. Members and referred to the Comptroller and Auditor General could the National Audit Office mount an investigation.

We should not depend on leaks. Reports should be put before us so that we can make up our minds on the basis of facts. I am not surprised that the Secretary of State has left the Chamber, having refused to allow me to intervene in her speech. She knows that what she said was totally misleading—I choose my words carefully to stay in order.

The West Midlands regional health authority was described by the chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive as "a shambles". That is

the truth about the national health service 15 years after the Government were first elected. The Public Accounts Committee said that officers' behaviour

"fell well short of the standards of conduct expected from public officials".

It said that not only were there

"serious failings at all levels of management"

in the West Midlands regional health authority, but a

"serious failure by Members of the regional health authority and in particular the chairman, in their duty to ensure the accountability of regional management".

The report on Wessex said, most revealingly, that the auditors had sent their reports to the national health service management executive before the issue ever came to the Public Accounts Committee and before the National Audit Office was put on to it by people like my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham). The auditors did not stop there, but sent the reports to the Secretary of State—not once but over several years. And nothing happened. That is where we come to the whole point of accountability.

When Sir Duncan Nichol, chief executive of the national health service management executive, came before the Public Accounts Committee, he had to say that he had no authority. I am not sure what he was the executive of, but he was called the chief executive and he had to say that he had no authority—it was a matter for the Secretary of State.

We are entitled to ask what the Secretary of State did. The answer can be given in one word—nothing. She did nothing about the fact that those appointed, particularly the chairman of the Wessex regional health authority, Sir Robin Buchanan, were personally responsible for that region's failures. Tens of millions of pounds were wasted at the expense of the care of those living in the region.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: As the hon. Gentleman will know, I have taken a great interest in the health service over many years. Did the hon. Gentleman tell the House the truth when he said that Sir Duncan Nichol said that he had no authority over that matter? My understanding of the National Health Service Management Executive was that it administered the service on behalf of the Department of Health. If Sir Duncan Nichol has no authority, what is the point of the executive?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman might well ask. I can assure him that I have given an accurate summary of the statements of Sir Duncan and his predecessor. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to come with me after the debate, we can sit in the Library together and go through, not one or two, but several sittings of the Public Accounts Committee. He will then see that such statements were made, not only by one but by a succession of accounting officers from the health service management executive.

When the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority eventually resigned, he received a letter of praise from the Secretary of State for Health and a golden handshake worth several thousands of pounds. I suppose that we should consider ourselves lucky because the chairman of Wessex regional health authority was promoted. If someone wastes more—tens of millions of pounds—he is promoted to a better job. That is the truth about accountability and the lack of accountability in the health service under this Government.

All this waste is at the expense of patient care. I shall give an example from the west midlands. A hospital in Birmingham that serves my constituency used to be called the East Birmingham hospital. When it opted out and became a trust it changed its name to Birmingham Heartlands hospital—it is known locally by my constituents as the "Heartless" hospital. In October there was a series of newspaper reports about people attending the accident and emergency unit and having to lie on trolleys all night. Another group of people had to wait on trolleys the following night, and the same thing happened the night after that. Patients had to be resuscitated in corridors because there were trolleys in the resuscitation room. Patients had to urinate into bottles in front of other people in corridors.

Staff were almost driven to breakdowns in the accident and emergency unit because there were not enough beds for patients to be admitted. Those who could not be admitted were not attending the unit unnecessarily. They had been taken there by ambulance and examined by doctors who had decided that they should be admitted. But there were not enough beds.

My hon. Friends and I went to see the chairman of the district health authority to discover what he was doing as a purchaser. I did not agree with the Government's changes and voted against them, but the system was implemented. When we met the so-called purchaser to discover what he was doing to purchase an adequate accident and emergency service on our behalf, he told us that he could not obtain answers to his questions.

The chairman said that inherent in the Government's organisation was an adversarial—his word—relationship between his health authority and the trust hospital. That was said by a man appointed chairman of a district health authority by the Government. He has since been appointed as a chairman of a trust elsewhere. He also said that the position was aggravated by personality, but I do not want to become involved in personalities in the House. The adversarial relationship between hospitals and health authorities lies at the root of the problem.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Does not my hon. Friend's illustration reveal the heart of the problem—that nobody is responsible for anything any more? We write to purchasers, providers and Ministers, but they all say, "It's not us, guv, it's somebody else." I have a letter from a Minister to back up my hon. Friend's argument. Mid-Staffordshire health authority lost £3 million in the market system last year. I asked the Minister to assure me that there would be no impact on patient care. I received a letter from him assuring me that patient care would not be affected, but this week the authority has closed four wards. It seems that nobody is responsible for that.

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right: nobody accepts responsibility—it is always the fault of someone else in the national health service, particularly those who sit on the boards of health authorities.

One would have expected something to have been done about the lack of beds in Heartlands hospital last October. In the intervening three months there have been several circulars, meetings and discussions with Ministers, and the Secretary of State for Health has popped in and out of Birmingham. However, after she had made her visit, the problem recurred.

[Mr. Davis]

A fortnight ago the *Birmingham Evening Mail* featured a patient who had lain on a trolley for 21 hours. He was admitted at 5 o'clock and was not found a bed until 2 pm the next day.

My hon. Friends and I had a meeting with a junior Minister in the Department of Health. He seemed to know all about it and to be well briefed until we asked how many people had suffered the same experience and whether it was a lone incident. We asked whether that man was the only victim of what the Minister described as a sudden surge in emergency admissions. The Minister said no. He said that the man was one of 22 patients who had spent all night on trolleys at the same hospital where, three months earlier, patients had had to suffer the same experience for three nights in succession.

Let us examine the figures of the so-called sudden surge. We were unable to obtain good figures. The junior Minister gave one set of figures and the chairman of the hospital trust gave a different one—the two sets could not be reconciled. The junior Minister said that he would reconcile the figures, but we are still waiting for clarification. After we had talked to doctors, it was clear to us that there has been a steady upward trend in emergency admissions, not merely for one year on year, but year after year. That was true, not only in east Birmingham, but throughout Birmingham.

Those running the health service failed to predict what was an obvious trend. They actually thought that there might be fewer admissions this year than last. They had no explanation for reaching that bizarre conclusion, impossible hypothesis and incredible assumption—they failed and simply did not provide enough beds. That lack of beds existed even without the closure of the Birmingham General hospital, which has led to many more patients being admitted to the Heartlands hospital. Those running the health service did not even take that fact properly into account.

The problem does not stop with patients lying on trolleys instead of beds. Patients are taken out of bed and sent to other hospitals. They are discharged too early. Doctors making their rounds during the night may have to decide that, even though the consultant responsible for the patient stated that he was not ready to be discharged, the patient must be discharged because a patient who is in a worse condition is lying on a trolley.

Other patients do not receive operations as a result of the Secretary of State's gimmicks and gestures. Every hon. Member could recite from letters, cite examples and talk about families at their advice bureaux who have been unable to get the operations that they need. For me, the problem was crystallised in a letter written by a consultant at the Heartlands hospital in reply to a protest about the delay in an operation. The consultant wrote back stating:

"There is no doubt in my mind that he requires the operation to correct his nose . . . Unfortunately I am only too well aware of the non-medical urgent priorities of many of our cases on our far too long waiting list. Nevertheless at this time the major incentive for surgery appears to be a management decision"—

not a medical decision, appraisal or assessment—

"to remove all those who have been waiting more than one year for their operation regardless of priority and this has upset our general ability to bring forward cases".

That policy is being implemented in hospitals in order to achieve the Secretary of State's target whereby nobody has to wait for more than a year. It means that people who need urgent operations are not having them. It is a scandal that people who should have operations—people whose noses bleed every night—cannot get an operation. The priority is decided by management, so that even those who are not so seriously ill will not have to wait for more than 12 months. Of course, we do not want people to wait for more than 12 months, which is a scandalously long time, but the waiting time should be reduced for everyone, not at the expense of the most urgent cases.

One might think that after what I have described—my hon. Friends from Birmingham could give similar accounts—everybody would realise that the fact that there are not enough beds lies at the root of the problem. It is not the staff or the doctors; it is the beds that people who should go into hospital, or must stay in hospital, cannot have because so many beds and wards have been closed.

We are told that things take less time now and that people do not spend so long in hospital. So putting to one side the mistakes that have occurred in the past 15 years, against the background of a crisis, what does the West Midlands regional health authority want to do in Birmingham? It wants to reduce the number of beds not by 10, 20 or 100, but by 1,500. It proposes 300 fewer beds in the very hospital where people have been left on trolleys all night. The fact is that the regional health authority does not know how many beds are needed.

Today I have managed to get hold of another report by the district audit service. Perhaps my hon. Friends have not yet seen it. The district auditor wrote:

"hospital management in the west midlands have not determined the numbers of acute medical beds required for their contractual work load".

So much for all that business about purchasers and providers. The purchasers place contracts, but the providers do not work out how many beds they need, so people are lying on trolleys.

The Secretary of State praised the efforts of the staff in the national health service. At least we can agree on that, but the staff working in the national health service deserve our credit and our sympathy as they combat and struggle with the consequences of Government policies and the incompetence and waste of resources by Government appointees. It is not surprising that almost every day staff from local hospitals phone my local office to tell us what is happening there. They will not come forward; they are frightened because they know what will happen—they will lose their jobs; and, as 15 to 18 per cent. of the local people are already unemployed, they cannot stand up for themselves and we have to explain it for them.

The Secretary of State ignored the terms of the motion because she ignores the facts and does not live in the real world. She has lost the respect of the staff in the national health service and the confidence of all the patients.

6.21 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): That was good knockabout stuff, but now we come to some facts instead of flying off on extraordinary tacks. Listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davies), one would think that nobody was ever treated in the health service or went on anything else but trolleys and never went into beds.

Whether the hon. Gentleman likes it nor not, and I suspect he does not, there has never been so much careful treatment of sick people in the west midlands and the rest of the country as there is today. People are being operated

on with infinitely more complicated techniques and treated with very much newer and cleverer treatments than ever before. They are being treated with drugs which were invented only a few years ago.

The hon. Gentleman and the Opposition should recognise that there is a great deal for which to be thankful in the way in which our health service is treating and curing people who, only a few years ago, would have died.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it absolutely clear that she deplored people lying on trolleys and was anxious to deal with the shortages as soon as she possibly could.

Never before has so much money been spent on the health service—more than £100 million a day. It is interesting that while Opposition Members are happy to object, to fulminate and frighten people into fits, they will never say how much more money they want spent on the health service, nor where they would get it.

No one has done more to tackle waste in the health service than my right hon. Friend and one of her predecessors, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Previously, money was shovelled in increasing amounts into the ever-open maw of the NHS. No one knew how much was wasted because no one knew what anything cost. No one was ever able to assess one hospital's running costs against another's, or one doctor's practice against the one up the road to see if one was managed more sensibly and cutting out waste rather better than the other. No one ever questioned whether any drug costing less might be just as effective as one costing more, or whether wards, operating theatres or kitchens could be run better.

Mainly because it is essential that all the billions of pounds of taxpayers' money spent on the health service should go to patient care and not be wasted, the Government set about changing all that. However, the Opposition fought us long and hard on every single reform that we tried to make to ensure that waste was stopped. That is why they have a brass neck, a bare-faced cheek and a confounded nerve to table the motion on the Order Paper today. A great deal has been done which Labour would never have had the guts to do.

My right hon. Friend would probably be the first to agree that there is still some way to go. In fairness, eliminating all the faults in the biggest business in Europe takes a bit of doing.

May I suggest to my right hon. Friend that the first essential is accurate information. On that narrow point, I agree with the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. The proposed closure of the Royal Orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham, known locally as the Woodlands, is a case in point. I and others were given wrong and misleading information to support the closure decision. We were told that the hospital was losing £250,000 a year. Now there has been a Peat Marwick report. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who said that he could never get any official reports from the auditors, had not heard of it.

Mr. Terry Davis: I made it very clear, as the hon. lady will see when she reads my speech in *Hansard* tomorrow, that I was referring to the district auditor's report. Peat Marwick is not the district auditor.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman, in dealing with audits and costs, never mentioned the most important audit report that Peat Marwick produced as a respected and independent auditor.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman must make his own speech. I am trying to be quick for the sake of other hon. Members.

I am anxious to inform the House and to say in front of my right hon. Friend that it was a very great shock to some of us that the information that we were given about the amount of money that the hospital was losing was not correct. Far from losing £250,000 pounds per annum, Peat Marwick says that it is making a profit of £680,000 per annum.

We were told that the supply of patients was drying up. Now we learn that there are waiting lists for that hospital. We were told that the layout of the Woodlands was too old fashioned and difficult to run. If that is so, why are so many doctors and surgeons virtually unanimous that the Woodlands should stay open and are campaigning hard to that end? We were told that the doctors and consultants did not object to a move. They most certainly did.

It is crucial that the information on which we make our decisions should be accurate and right; if it is not, we shall not reach the right decision.

I believe that the hospital should stay open and that is certainly the overwhelming view of the people of Birmingham right across the political spectrum. There is unanimous agreement in the council.

We now have a reprieve while the matter is considered again. I shall make two points to my right hon. Friend on it. First, please give us accurate and unbiased information. If there is a cost in the continuation of that hospital—it has been suggested that there is—please tell us what it is and what the option is. We can then decide whether we should pay that cost, whether it be with greater waiting lists elsewhere or with pure money.

Secondly, please can we reach a decision quickly? The Woodlands is peopled with highly expert staff. It has an international reputation. It is not surprising that all those people are under strong pressure to go elsewhere. They are saying to themselves, "Well, if the hospital is not going to be there, perhaps I should accept the request to go elsewhere." It is important not only that a right decision is made but that it is made soon, because we are losing staff through uncertainty.

The motion mentions bureaucracy. I know how open my right hon. Friend is to argument and persuasion, but there is some truth in the fact that bureaucracy exists. Some of it could be struck off. A doctor constituent of mine wrote to complain about a communication from the family health services authority. He says:

> "We have just received the enclosed communication from the Birmingham FHSA. The amount of work it will entail for our staff if one follows it to its logical conclusion which includes half-day absences for courses etc. is really quite pathetic and I wonder whether there is anything you can do to try and help us reduce this flood of bureaucratic waste".

I have the form here and it is indeed complicated. It would undoubtedly take a busy doctor a long time to fill it out. I gather from my constituent that it is new. Will my right hon. Friend be kind enough to investigate the complaint, because doctors do not have time to fill out forms that are not necessary?

[Dame Jill Knight]

I shall now deal with a concern that Birmingham FHSA has with the medical practices committee, which controls the distribution of general practitioners. The FHSAs are responsible for the smooth running of GP services in their area. The MPC is supposed to take the advice of the FHSAs, but it does not. I tell my right hon. Friend, with no pleasure, that there are too many running battles going on between the FHSAs and MPCs. Those battles waste time, impair efficiency and affect patient care.

Last summer, a GP in Birmingham, after two years of consistent inefficiencies, was disallowed from practising. That followed his suspension by the General Medical Council. On four occasions over two years, his conduct was officially deplored. On one occasion he was warned; on two others, £500 was withheld from his pay and he was suspended. On the last occasion, he was fined £1,000 and suspended again.

The FHSA wanted the GP out. Who can be surprised at that? It explained its need and responsibility to get proper care for the patients on its list. But the MPC did not agree. Oh dear me, no. It said that there would be eight months' suspension and told him that he would automatically be returned to the medical list after suspension, although the FHSA gave strong and unequivocal advice that the doctor could not or would not provide proper patient care and that it could not carry out its duty to give patients that proper care with that doctor still in place. For eight long months, there were no proper services, except temporary, for all the patients on his list. That matter is now resolved, but I have details of no fewer than five other cases where the advice of the FHSA has been ignored and overridden by the MPC. Will my right hon. Friend kindly look at that, because it needs to be checked?

Finally, I wish to voice my concern yet again about a system that keeps a consultant or hospital doctor in suspended animation for months, or even years, on full pay if he is under accusation of improper or negligent conduct. I would like to know what has been done to speed up the business of resolving that matter. I know of one case where a consultant was sent home. He did nothing for two and a half years, but was paid his full salary throughout that time. At the end he was found to be innocent, but it was a great waste of money. Of course I am not saying that he should be cut off from all his money when the case is not proven, but we need to speed up the arrangements formally made because it is a great cost to the country and a great strain on the doctor concerned.

My right hon. Friend has done much to improve the health service. She has fought successfully to get record sums from the Treasury. Even now, we hear that more will be allocated. She has tackled waste and inefficiency. She has stood up with courage and grace to the despicable attacks made by the Opposition and she has never shirked awkward decisions. How the Opposition would love to have a Virginia Bottomley on their side. It is not because she has done little, but that she has done so much and proved time and again that she is dedicated to constant improvement of the health services that I draw those matters to her attention and ask her to bring her considerable talents to bear on solving those problems.

6.36 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I welcome the debate on accountability, because somebody should certainly be held accountable for what is happening to the national health service. In spite of some of the rhetoric from the Government Benches, every day, in every part of the country, there is an acute bed crisis. Every day, people in pain, anxious, worried and afraid telephone some hospital early in the morning to find out whether there is a bed available. Increasingly, there is not, because one in three beds has been lost since 1979. Every day we read of sick people spending hours on hospital trolleys and mattresses, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) outlined earlier this week. We heard also from my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who has experience as a patient at Bart's hospital.

The Secretary of State says that she deplores the situation and wants to do something about it. She should be thoroughly ashamed of herself, because her so-called reforms have helped to bring it about. Every day we are bombarded with slick propaganda from the Department of health and the Government telling us that closing wards and hospitals will make the NHS deliver a better service. Fewer beds, but more patients treated, they claim.

A closer inspection suggests that the apparent increase in the treatment of patients has far more to do with the introduction of the internal market and the increasing numbers of managers and administrators, who have the duty and the time to fiddle the figures and ensure that the statistics match what the Government want them to match. Before the internal market, putting a price on everybody's head was not a priority; treating the patients was.

We should keep saying again and again and outlining one or two of the tricks that the Government get up to, because finished consultant episodes mean that the same people can be counted if they change consultants two or three times. It is only one person, but he or she has been counted three times. The revolving door policy introduced in the 1980s, whereby elderly patients enter hospital for a fortnight and go out for a fortnight, means that the same people are counted over and over again on admission. I do not argue for elderly people to be kept in hospital any longer than is necessary.

The position regarding Government-appointed heads of trusts becomes worse the more that we read. A recent survey conducted by Incomes Data Services, a respectable industrial research body, said that the pay of trust chief executives had escalated sharply. It also found that, in stark contrast to the openness of the trusts, information on that was limited in detail and difficult to acquire. If such people are still working for the NHS, why cannot we be told what they are paying themselves? IDS concludes that public sector accountability appears to be diminishing. That is an understatement.

The Government refuse to keep statistics on the number of nurses and health workers who are disappearing as the army of administrators grows.

Mr. Garnier: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: No, I will not. I am aware that many hon. Members want to speak, so I shall try to be brief.

Matters get worse. This morning, the Select Committee on Health, in its examination of the drugs budget, heard from witnesses, not for the first time, about the advisory

committee on national health service drugs—yet another Government quango. That particular quango is overseeing and advising on the limited list. We do not know its terms of reference; nor, it seems, does anyone else. Witnesses tell us that its terms of reference have changed from a scientific to a cost basis.

It was put to us that the committee is high-handed and secretive. It is obviously not transparent. We do not know whether the committee holds a statutory position, nor from where its advice comes or to whom it is accountable. The limited list system and the committee are so unaccountable that no one on the Select Committee or giving evidence to it knows how it works. This morning, a representative of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts claimed complete ignorance, so we are entitled to ask a question or two about that.

Our national health service, based upon equity and being free at the point of use, is disintegrating before our eyes.

Mr. Garnier: Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

Mrs. Mahon: I am sorry, no. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

According to a survey by the BMA, 42 per cent. of acute units in England give priority to the GP fundholding practices. Hospital waiting lists stand at over 1 million. We daily read of cuts, closures, queue jumping and sometimes, tragically, avoidable deaths. All the time, the huge unaccountable monster of a market-led NHS gobbles up precious resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) gave an excellent exposé of what has been happening in the West Midlands and Wessex health authorities and the Government-appointed business men who have made such a mess and wasted so much money. The sleaze encouraged and permitted by the Government is a disgrace.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) referred to the increase in administrative costs. I wish that the Secretary of State had attempted to reply to some of the serious points that he made. When so much money is going on administration and being taken away from nurses, most people would accept that it is the patients, nurses and health workers who lose. In this brave new world of markets and managers, nursing and midwifery staff have decreased by 5·4 per cent.

Our ambulance service, once the pride and envy of the world, has also suffered. Since 1987, there has been a massive cut in staffing levels and the funding of the service has fallen by 10 per cent. in real terms. The Minister likes to talk in real terms. In 1992-93, 30 per cent. of England's ambulance services failed to meet minimum response times. In west Yorkshire, only 55 per cent. of responses were within eight minutes. In Halifax recently a young man tragically died. Because of cuts in the number of crews, a crew from another town had to come and the time that that took was unacceptable.

The new NHS executive management headquarters in Leeds cost £55 million, about the same amount that it would have cost to build the new hospital for which Halifax has been waiting since 1978. Last year, our trust submitted a plan for a new hospital at a cost of £50 million which was turned down by the Government. After meeting in secret, it has now submitted another plan costing £35 million, thus hoping to save the Government £15 million in capital expenditure. That will mean the closure of two hospitals—the Royal Halifax infirmary and the Northowram hospital which caters for elderly and mentally ill patients. If that plan is accepted, the service to my constituents will be drastically reduced.

Calderdale has already seen its service much reduced. Due to overspending, infertility and cosmetic surgery are to be curtailed. Mixed wards have been introduced. I receive many letters of complaint about that, mainly from women who do not want to be on a mixed ward. Mixed wards have been introduced simply because managements have closed other wards. Women tell me that they feel at their lowest in hospital and are embarrassed to be on a mixed ward. They do not want them. But all the Government-appointed trust management says is that no one complains to it. They certainly complain to me and I would not want it.

The referral of non-GP fundholding patients from outside hospitals in Calderdale has been stopped and there has been an increasing use of short-term contracts. Staff have experienced insecurity, some of them working in casualty on short-term contracts. How does that relate to a Government who profess to care for nurses? In addition, we have seen the closure of one of our intensive care beds because of a £55,000 overspend. If the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) would donate just one quarter of the public money that he has had, we could reopen that bed and perhaps save someone's life.

The management of the trust is Government appointed and it is difficult to obtain any real information from it. The chief executive of the Calderdale health care trust wrote to me on 3 December in reply to a letter from me about the closure of the Arthur and Ada children's ward saying that the trust had no plans to close it. Such a statement was a disgrace from a public figure because a few weeks later she announced the closure of the whole hospital, not just the children's ward.

The new development plan for Calderdale is shortly to be put out for so-called consultation. The last consultations concerned whether we wanted trust status and just about everybody in the town said no. But a handful of people, appointed by the Government, decided to go ahead. Therefore, consultations in Calderdale and, I think, everywhere else, should be taken with a pinch of salt.

This week I received a letter from Calderdale and Kirklees local dental committee showing the cuts and how the figures are fiddled. Cuts in services are going on apace. The letter complains that the new purchasing authority, the West Yorkshire health authority, proposes to treat only the most severe orthodontic cases in hospital and to send the rest back to general practitioners. The health authority exists to provide services to my constituents, but in this case it is clear that it is under pressure from the NHS Management Executive to cut waiting lists. It accepts that it is under that pressure.

There is a shortage of orthodontists: the Select Committee was recently told in a report on dental services that the service in the United Kingdom was inadequate. That need will not go away. A group of patients in Calderdale are to be disfranchised just so that waiting lists can be shortened. Sadly, most of the patients involved will be children.

The letter states:

"As in any medical or dental treatment, the most severe cases are the rarest and those children that fall into Grade 3 (moderate)

[Mrs. Mahon]

will be that group most referred for consultant treatment. The majority of these patients are children and it is probably that the treatment of these children is beyond the skill of most dentists."

The children concerned will disappear from the waiting list; they will go into the black hole into which the Government pour any statistics that cause them difficulty. Another service will be lost—but the waiting list will be shortened. It is all done by fiddling the figures.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) threw out the taunt that we wanted a Virginia Bottomley in our party. That is the last thing that we want—and, moreover, the last thing that the country wants is another Virginia Bottomley, or any more of the current one. I say that in the name of patients who, tomorrow morning, will be telephoning to ask for beds that are not there, or on a waiting list that is there.

6.51 pm

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): Although I agree with nothing else that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said in her speech, I join her in welcoming the debate. I believe that the issue of how to obtain the best possible management in the national health service is very important, and I am glad that the Opposition have given us the chance to discuss it. I regret, however, that Opposition Members who have spoken so far have chosen not to focus on that issue, or to set out any alternative policies.

Instead, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) treated us to a tirade of personal abuse, smear and innuendo, directed at those who work in the management of the health service and, in particular, at my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Although I have not been in the House for very long, I suspect that I shall have to wait some time before I hear such an outrageous speech again.

In contrast, I want to concentrate on the issue of NHS management. The NHS is one of the biggest employers in the world. About 800,000 people work for it—more than the total number working in the armed services, the police, the Post Office and British Telecom combined. This year, the NHS will spend £37 billion of taxpayers' money. Let me put that into proportion: the NHS budget is larger than the gross domestic product of New Zealand, Ireland, Egypt or Portugal. If we are to obtain the maximum value from that enormous sum, an organisation of such size, complexity and scope must clearly have good management.

The Opposition have given the impression today that NHS managers are simply unnecessary bureaucrats—that anyone who is not a doctor, a nurse or an ancillary is a worthless drain on resources. They seem to think that the sole concern of NHS managers is to obtain new offices and limousines: throughout the debate, they have delighted in denigrating the efforts of administrators.

It must be said that the Opposition are not alone in that regard. Every Saturday evening, those who watch "Casualty"—I do, regularly; it is my wife's favourite programme—will note that the villain is the hospital manager. In every episode, he tells the medical team that they cannot afford to employ any more nurses, that they must close a few more beds or that they must lose a couple more wards. The latest development is that the manager is to leave the hospital to work for the ultimate horror, a tobacco company.

Mr. Garnier: May I bring my hon. Friend back to the realms of real life, rather than the fiction presented by television? If he visits Leicestershire, he will see NHS trusts working side by side with non-trust systems. The three major acute NHS trust hospitals in Leicester are the Glenfield, the Leiester Royal infirmary and the Leicester general hospital. In those hospitals, and in the Fosse trust, my hon. Friend will see more patients being treated, shorter waiting lists, more medical staff doing more medical work, greater efficiency and better use of public money to provide the best possible service for NHS patients. Notwithstanding the picture painted by Opposition Members, the Leicestershire system deserves much praise.

Mr. Whittingdale: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend: the reality is very different. The position that he has described is duplicated throughout the country.

The truth is that NHS managers are as essential to the provision of health care as consultant surgeons. The introduction of proper management has not wasted money; it has saved money. According to one estimate, about £1·5 billion has been secured in efficiency savings since the reforms have installed proper management.

The Government's record in providing more resources for the NHS is second to none. Every year the increase in expenditure on the service has risen by more than that in almost every other area of Government spending. That record has allowed us to treat more patients each year, and to ensure that our standard of health care is among the best in the world.

However, it is no good simply increasing the budget every year if the way in which the money is spent is not properly controlled. The search for greater efficiency and value for money is also essential if we are to obtain the maximum amount of patient care. That requires first-class, experienced managers—and securing them means paying the proper rate for the job.

It also requires a clear, streamlined management structure. The original structure of the NHS was a recipe for chaos. Area health authorities, regional health authorities and health districts all competed with each other; the result was confusion, bureaucracy and a lack of accountability. In 1980, area health authorities were abolished, which removed one unnecessary tier of bureaucracy. The abolition of regional health authorities will remove another: it will give more power to the districts, which are closer to the people whom they serve, and it should also result in savings in administrative costs which can be ploughed back into patient care.

I hope that that will also mean that NHS resources can in future be distributed on a fairer and more equitable basis. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is familiar with Essex Members' complaints about the way in which we have been penalised, year after year, by the weighted capitation formula used by North East Thames regional health authority. Indeed, we have suffered a double penalty.

The formula for allocating resources between regions works on the basis of capitation weighted on the basis of age and relative mortality; it does not take account of socio-economic factors such as housing conditions. The formula used within the North East Thames region to

distribute resources between districts has an additional weighting to benefit poorer areas. As a result, the region receives no more money because it covers some of the poorest London boroughs; but districts outside London lose as the regional distribution is skewed away from them.

North Essex—which covers my constituency—consistently receives less than its fair share. In 1991-92, for instance, revenue expenditure per head in North East Essex and Mid Essex was £317, compared with £345 in East Suffolk, a district which is identical to North Essex in almost every respect but which has the good fortune to fall within the East Anglia region. In view of the abolition of the regional health authorities, perhaps my right hon. Friend could introduce a single national formula for the allocation of resources to remove the unfairness.

When the regional health authorities are abolished, power and responsibility will rest with the districts. My constituency was previously covered by two district health authorities—the North-East Essex and the Mid-Essex health authorities. They have recently merged with a third authority to form a new single authority—the North Essex district authority. It has a budget of £277 million of which management costs are £3·4 million, or only 1·2 per cent. That is an extremely good record and one which compares well with private sector organisations.

The merger of the three authorities has not only strengthened the district's ability to obtain value for money in its purchasing but has produced a recurrent saving of £100,000. As a result of my right hon. Friend's recent announcement, it will have a further opportunity to merge with the family health service authority. It must make sense to have a single body locally which is responsible for the provision of every element of patient care. I welcome the discussions now taking place between the district health authority and the FHSA on the establishment of a single authority.

Strong and clear management is needed not only at district level and in the purchasing of health care; it is equally important in provision in hospitals. One of the great benefits of the NHS reforms has been that they have revealed the degree of inefficiency and waste which was endemic throughout the NHS. Prior to the reforms, it was often considered wrong even to think about the cost of treatments or, indeed, the cost of any element of the NHS. As a result, no effort was made to identify possible savings. Staff who faced the choice of using different procedures usually had no idea which might be the more expensive and which might be cheaper but just as effective. That has changed since the reforms.

Cost awareness is now widespread and practitioners have the information that allows them to take account of cost, not as the determing factor in deciding on a treatment but as a relevant consideration. At the same time, the requirement to assign costs to different procedures in different hospitals has shown enormous differentials in costs and, as a result, purchasers are now able to shop around and managers can compare costs and identify best practice. They are now able to obtain more value for money, which means that more resources are releaased and returned to patient care.

Strong management will keep down costs and ensure that more resources are devoted to patient care, but strong management is not enough to maximise efficiency. If anything has been proven in the past 14 years, it is that the greatest spur to efficiency is competition. Compulsory competitive tendering has already led to enormous savings in the delivery of health care. Competitive tendering of laundry and portering services has already resulted in an estimated saving of £136 million. Other non-core activities could also benefit from private sector disciplines or CCT.

I cite just one example. Since the NHS Supplies Authority was established in 1991, it has brought together more than 70 separate local supply organisations. As a result, more than £60 million in purchasing costs has already been saved, but the scope for larger savings is considerable.

If the authority were able to take advantage of information technology, it could service every hospital in the country from a single warehouse connected to the hospitals by electronic data interchange. Companies such as Sainsbury, Unipart and National Freight operate complex delivery systems every day. The transfer of the Supplies Authority to the private sector would allow it access to necessary investment capital that it needs to set up such a system and the savings would allow more money to be put back into patient care.

It is not only in non-health activities that competition is providing greater efficiency and value for money. The NHS reforms have created an internal market that allows health purchasers a proper choice for the first time. General practitioners and district health authorities——

Mr. Turner: The hon. Gentleman believes that the health service reforms are wonderful, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), who is sitting below the Gangway, has informed me that in Wolverhampton tonight dead people are lying in hospital beds because of the disappearance of the night portering service. Is that the image of the national health service in Britain in 1994? Dead people are not being taken from their beds until the following morning because of the failure to provide a portering service.

Mr. Whittingdale: I cannot answer for the service in Wolverhampton, but I accept that the NHS is not perfect and that we still need to make improvements. The Opposition, however, will not accept that more patients are being treated every year and that things are getting better. If the Opposition would recognise that, we might have a more constructive debate.

As I was saying, general practitioners and district health authorities are now able to seek competition between providers and are therefore able to obtain faster and cheaper treatment for their patients. The line between public and private care is now being blurred and NHS trust hospitals are trying to attract extra resources by providing private treatment. Purchasers are turning to private hospitals as well as to NHS hospitals.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Wonderful.

Mr. Whittingdale: It is wonderful, and I shall explain why. GP fundholders have been quick to take advantage of the freedom that they have as budget holders. One GP fundholder in my constituency has contracted with the local private hospital rather than the NHS trust hospital, with the result that 90 per cent. of his surgical referrals are carried out by the private sector. In so doing, he has largely eliminated waiting lists, his patients are now treated in single rooms in comfortable surroundings and the cost to his budget and, therefore, to the NHS is less than if he had contracted with the local trust hospital.

The NHS reforms have not——

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, North): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Will he give me a little advice on how to reply to a constituent who wrote to me yesterday? An elderly lady who is going progressively blind because of cataracts has been told that she will have to wait 62 weeks for an appointment for the consultant even to examine her. Will the hon. Gentleman tell me how I might best advise my constituent?

Mr. Whittingdale: I would advise the right hon. Gentleman to tell his constituent that waiting lists are declining and that the number of cataract operations being performed is increasing.

Mr. Hayes: Perhaps I might suggest that the constituent of the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) uses the national health service hotline, which is a very effective means of dealing with the problem.

Mr. Whittingdale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will pass on that advice to his constituent.

The NHS reforms have not led to increased bureaucracy and waste as the Opposition motion claims. They have, in fact, done precisely the reverse. They have improved efficiency and they are enabling more patients to be treated. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will build on the reforms by encouraging more competition in the provision of health care and thus allow us to treat even more patients in future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Madam Speaker has stated that between 7 pm and 9 pm speeches shall be restricted to 10 minutes.

7.9 pm

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): There are two views of the condition of the national health service—the Secretary of State's and everyone else's. The Secretary of State seeks to assure us that all is well and, indeed, improving. Another reality is played out day and night in the casualty units of London's hospitals. Since before Christmas, I have made regular evening visits to a number of casualty departments in London to see at first hand the impact of bed closures and the internal market on Londoners' health service.

I shall at this point make a special mention of King's, which is the hospital that achieved notoriety this week and on a number of previous occasions because of the long waits on trolleys that patients have to endure before being admitted to the hospital. It is not unusual, but it is probably worse at King's than anywhere else in London. The reasons are obvious.

King's has closed 120 beds in the past two years. Is it, therefore, surprising that the hospital finds itself, night after night, without beds to which to admit sick patients? The only alternative is to leave them lined up on trolleys that touch one another, in the casualty department.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I hope that my hon. Friend will mention the Higgins inquiry report, which the Secretary of State promised to implement in full as a matter of urgency, into the accident and emergency service at King's, where people were lying for up to 24 hours and some people died before treatment was given to them. If the Higgins inquiry report was to be implemented it meant that an absolute commitment, and a fast track commitment, had been made to providing new resources. Is my hon. Friend saying that that promise is not being kept?

Ms Jowell: As the Secretary of State said earlier, building work is under way for a new accident and emergency department. Indeed, late last night I saw the new X-ray facilities at the hospital. However, it is pointless to tell sick people tonight that in two years' time there will be an accident and emergency department, which will mean that they do not have to wait on trolleys. The Conservative party patently refuses to understand that sense of desperate urgency.

The crisis in our hospitals in London has been brought about by two factors. The first factor is the steady closure of beds during the past five years—inner London has lost about 14,000 beds—and the second is the impact of the internal market. The market now means that hospitals have to live by the rules of competition. "Contractual viability", in new NHS-speak, means 100 per cent. bed occupancy. Anything less will put prices up and therefore threaten the market competitiveness of the hospital.

That also means that there is no slack to deal with the inevitable peaks and troughs in demand that are part of being a national health service hospital. While hospitals may be operating at the limits of the capacity that the contracts that their purchasers have paid for, they are all operating with closed beds, so they are in fact operating at below real capacity and only at the capacity which is specified by the market, not by the needs of patients on the waiting lists.

It is interesting to note the way in which the private sector, which the Government constantly hold up as a desirable role model for our national health service, has such a remarkable and unfair advantage over the national health service. There are important differences.

First, the private sector does not have to deal with emergencies, so all admissions are planned admissions. In contrast, almost every national health service hospital in London admits about 60 per cent. of patients through the accident and emergency department. They are unplanned, unpredictable, unquantifiable admissions—quite unlike the situation in the private sector.

The second difference between the national health service and the private sector is that the private sector responds only to demand. Therefore, if patient demand requires that operating theatres be fully used and consultants kept fully occupied operating, that is what they do. They are not bound by the absurdities of the internal market, which mean that a national health service which is desperately needed to operate at full capacity is prevented from doing so by Government edict through the internal market.

As one health manager said to me recently, it is now "dog eat dog in the national health service". Consultants admit their elective patients needlessly early, simply to stop anyone else getting into the bed. As a result, patients who need to be admitted through the casualty department have to wait on trolleys because there are no beds available for them.

Some hospitals manage somehow. They put up camp beds. When a bed becomes free during the night it is only because another patient has died. The staff then work to "get the bed cold" in order to take a trolley patient up from the casualty department. However, the patient who is being admitted has to be admitted to the ward wherever the vacancy is. That is why elderly men are admitted to gynae wards and women with gynae complaints are admitted to wards where all the other patients are elderly men. As one

member of staff said to me, when one has to operate under that type of pressure the quality of care goes out of the window.

Let us dwell for a moment on the fact that the patients charter says that only after someone's operation has been cancelled twice is guaranteed admission within a month. The mayhem that the market has created in our hospitals means that that is regarded now as an acceptable standard.

We heard a lot from the Secretary of State about the way in which waiting times have decreased. What has happened, however, is that people are now treated on the basis of the length of time that they have been on the waiting list only, not on the basis of clinical need.

As a doctor told me a couple of days ago, if someone with an ingrowing toenail has been on the waiting list for 18 months, he will be taken into hospital because the patients charter requires it. However, a woman who needs a hysterectomy, who has been bleeding and in discomfort for many months, and has been on the waiting list for five months, is likely to have to wait 18 months before she is admitted. That type of perversity, that absurdity, is played out day by day in our national health service hospitals.

Is the Minister aware of the Norton scale? If he is not aware of the Norton scale, which was posted up in an accident and emergency department that I visited last night, let me tell him the way in which the administration of that new nursing protocol is described:

"Due to increased waiting times in accident and emergency, it is essential that we assess our patients' risks of developing pressure sores."

That is a nursing protocol to ensure that people—often elderly people—who wait for hours on trolleys are monitored, because of the likelihood of their developing pressure sores and dehydration. It is now a fact of life that elderly people who are kept waiting in casualty departments arrive on the wards, when they are eventually admitted, in a worse state than when they arrived at the hospital.

There has also been a sharp increase in the numbers of people attending accident and emergency departments and, more disturbingly, in the numbers of people who are not registered with a general practitioner.

7.19 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): It will be 50 years ago next month that a Conservative Minister in the wartime coalition published the first Bill promoting the national health service. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) rightly gave credit to Liberals such as Lloyd George and Beveridge, and to the Labour party for actually enacting the legislation, but every party in the House can take credit for the basis of the NHS.

Having listened to some of the Opposition's arguments tonight, I feel that they still fit the descriptions such as "the halt, the sick and the maimed" that we find in the Third Reading debate on the Act that established the national health service. I sometimes wonder whether the Opposition parties can really cope with the advances of the past 50 years.

The strength of the national health service has been much trumpeted over the years, but, not surprisingly, the weaknesses became ever more obvious. By the early 1980s, it was obvious to everybody that its management was inadequate. The Griffiths report began to tackle those problems. However, it was not until the Government under Lady Thatcher published the White Paper, "Working for Patients", that the most radical changes were proposed. What a culture shock they were, and what emotions they aroused.

According to the Labour party, hospitals would opt out of the national health service, general practitioners would collapse under the administrative burdens of running their practices, and patients would suffer further as the whole system ground to a halt. Now, three years on, we can see the great success story of those Conservative reforms. The internal market works, based on the logical concept of separating health needs from the delivery of health care. Nobody pretends that there were no teething problems—you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are in an especially good position to judge that. We all remember the irate meetings and the clamour riding on the back of the threat of change.

Having been trained in the national health service and having worked in it for much of my life, I have some insight into the fears. How were doctors expected to manage budgets when they had spent their entire professional lives ordering investigations and prescribing drugs with no knowledge of the costs involved, let alone any concept of accountability? Yet, surprisingly quickly, the first tentative steps towards fundholding became a rush. Now about 25 per cent. of the population are covered by fundholding GPs.

The story of national health service trusts is similar. The various waves almost had to be held back, as hospitals —their number is now almost 400—clamoured to regain some of the independence that they had lost over the years when they were kept down by arrogant and stifling bureaucracies. Doctors, nurses, ancillary staff and administrators have risen to the challenge. Suddenly, the national health service was competing with the independent hospital sector for contracts.

I declare an interest as a director of two private health care companies operating in this country, one British and one German. They cannot relish the process of NHS reform, but they now have an added stimulus to give choice and value for money.

I welcome the competition. The private sector will survive only if it offers a better service than the reinvigorated national health service. That is what Conservative competition is all about. I can live with that. It gives better treatment for patients, and that is the most satisfactory outcome of all. It so happens that neither I nor my family have private health insurance. We have all been in-patients in the NHS over the past few years and we all have a vested interest in it—and we have all had the most excellent treatment.

We see a great success story, but all we hear from the Opposition parties is negative vilification, with no acknowledgement of the progress that the Government have made. Even if the Labour party does not recognise the achievements of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, perhaps Labour Members should listen to Professor Le Grand of the Socialist Philosophy Group, who said that fundholding was

"perhaps the biggest success story".

As my right hon. Friend told the House earlier, Professor Le Grand emphasised that

"few who work in the NHS would want to go back to the old pre-reform system."

The Labour party sees efficiency as some sort of inhumane capitalist mechanism rather than as a means to deliver the best possible resources for the care of the only person who matters in the exercise, the patient.

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

I am ashamed to say that only two weeks ago my own trade union, the British Medical Association, published pleas for pilot projects. We have heard that expression before. "Pilot projects" were among the concepts advanced by the Labour party at the general election, and it said that the election would be the test of health care delivery in this country. We know the result of that election, and we know that pilot schemes have been translated into the real thing over the past three years, and that patients have benefited thereby.

In anticipation of today's debate, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) announced that 10,000 beds had been lost in one year. That statement is an index of the hon. Gentleman's crass ignorance as a health spokesman. Has he never heard of day surgery? Does he not realise that day surgery does not require beds, and that stays in national health service beds are getting shorter and shorter? Does he not realise that more and more patients are being treated in out-patient departments, and that fundholders now treat more patients in their own surgeries, so we need fewer beds?

The Opposition keep pushing the argument about people being left in corridors, and so on. That is not a medical problem; it is a management problem. We accept it as such and it will be sorted out as such.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: No, I regret that my speech is time-limited.

Let me educate the Labour party. In 1991-92, 36 per cent. of elective surgery was done on a day basis. That percentage has now risen to 45 per cent., and the Royal College of Surgeons has a target of 50 per cent. for the near future. Sadly, the hon. Member for Brightside seems to have no idea of the effects of community care on the need for beds.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I cannot, I fear.

Community care has introduced a whole new and humane system that gives the lie to the accusation that the Government are centralist. It has produced the most major change in influence from central to local government, and the greatest increase in local responsiveness that we have seen for many years. That is another reason why fewer beds are needed in our hospitals.

My constituency is served by three excellent national health service trust hospitals, and I have reports from regular visits there. One of them, St. George's Healthcare, has reduced its running costs by almost £10 million, through a combination of removing overheads including direct management costs, improving clinical efficiency and income generation. There has been a vigorous competitive tendering programme, and the trust even generates its own electricity—I welcome that. At night, it sells electricity to the London electricity board, thus generating savings of about £900,000 per year. Who would have thought that that would be an outcome of Conservative policies? And how agreeable it is.

The St. Helier national health service trust has treated more patients every year within the patients charter guidelines, within its financial budget and within the Department of Health programme for total quality management. The Kingston NHS trust has reduced its staff by 7 per cent. while productivity has increased by 23 per cent. There is multi-skilling of staff, and clinical staff are now released from administrative duties to do the job for which they were trained.

In summary, there is solid evidence that Conservative policies work. In 1948, Nye Bevan said:

"The House of Commons only produces Bills, but it is the men and women outside who can make the living realities."

How ashamed he would have been if he had heard the Labour speeches today. They contain no policies whatever. I have the greatest confidence in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and she is running the largest organisation in Europe—for the benefit of patients.

7.29 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): On 8 January last year, Sir James Ackers resigned as chair of the West Midlands regional health authority. His resignation was greeted by a letter from the Secretary of State, who said today that, occasionally, things go wrong in the national health service. The letter she wrote to Sir James Ackers included the words:

"You have strongly supported the reforms of the NHS and have overseen their successful implementation in the region. In addition you recently initiated some important improvements in the managerial structure of the region. Underpinning all this has been your personal commitment to the health service and its patients."

Clearly, the Secretary of State thought that he had done a rather good job. One or two people disagree with her on that. The Public Accounts Select Committee disagrees with her, because its report into goings on inside the West Midlands regional health authority during Sir James's stewardship began with the following words:

"The use of National Health Service funds by the West Midlands Regional Health Authority has been characterised by serious shortcomings in the management, control and accountability of the Authority's Regionally Managed Services Organisation. These shortcomings have led to the waste of at least £10 million."

The Committee looked at the engagement of a consultancy firm to consider the supplies organisation, which promised to save £50 million. It ended up costing the West Midlands regional health authority, and ultimately the patients in the west midlands, between £2·5 million and £4 million. There were no terms of reference or financial conditions in the arrangements established and the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General noted that the consultants' expenses amounted over one year to some £350,000, and included such items as leased houses, aircraft hire and lavish entertainment. Clearly, that was the kind of good job being done at the time.

Of course, many such projects were the brainchild of the former director of the regionally managed services department—a man who had a penchant for privatisation. Privatisation has been something of a theme of West Midlands regional health authority. One instance was the privatisation of the management services division, which was turned into a company called Qa Business Services, for £750,000. It went bust in 18 months and the consequences have so far cost the West Midlands regional health service £928,000.

The staff did not do too well from that privatisation. I find it interesting that Conservative Members have said that Opposition Members do not care about white-collar staff. I would like to know what they would say to former

employees of Qa Business Services, who lost their jobs. Many did not get redundancy payments and some lost up to two thirds of their pension entitlement because the pension fund that was set up could not cover its liabilities.

When I and other hon. Members have tried to raise the issue of the pensioners of Qa Business Services, we have been fobbed off time and again and after all the reports, the answer given was that the national health service had

"no moral or legal responsibility"

to those people. What a travesty and an insult. Even after that, Conservative Members have the gall to say that we do not care about white collar staff in the national health service.

Of course, others did rather better. Sir James Ackers, the man who was praised in the letter from the Secretary of State, received a pay-off of £10,000. That pay-off was not in his contract, but was a discretionary payment. The man who oversaw the consultancy to which I referred received a pay-off in excess of £80,000. There is a small problem with that, because it was subsequently discovered that he was overpaid by about £41,000. Attempts to recover that money are still going on.

The gentleman who authorised that overpayment was Mr. Mel Nock, who was in charge of the personnel function and has since left the regional authority. He has recently been appointed as the consultant to advise on personnel matters for the new North Birmingham health consortium by Malcolm Skilliorn, a colleague from the regional health authority and other places before.

That is the reality of the serial sleaze of the national health service today and the Secretary of State has the gall to say that things go wrong from time to time. Such things are endemic in the mentality that the Government have introduced into the NHS; a mentality of bureaucracy and unaccountability and an obsession with the market.

In my own district, South Birmingham, we have experienced the operation of that market. We were told that, under the market, money would follow the patients. I can tell the Minister that we have plenty of patients in South Birmingham, but we have a little difficulty getting hold of the money to treat them. The Royal Orthopaedic hospital, adjacent to my constituency of Northfield and internationally renowned for orthopaedic services, is currently under threat of closure because of the way in which the market is operating. The hospital runs at a surplus, yet it is still under threat of closure. It has been reprieved for a short time for consultation.

That is not all that is happening. One thousand five hundred acute hospital beds in Birmingham are under threat. Birmingham also has examples of patients waiting for up to 22 hours on trolleys. Elective work has virtually dried up in many hospitals because emergency patients are taking all the beds. The future of Selly Oak district general hospital is also under threat.

Perhaps Ministers will have an answer for that great beds crisis. They may suggest sharing beds. That always saves a little money. However, that is not much of an answer to patients in the south of Birmingham. That area is short of between £12 million and £16 million every year.

The massive organisational changes that have been brought about by the Government and the effects of their reforms were blamed in a report as contributory factors to a well publicised case over the summer of maldiagnosis of bone tumours, which meant that large numbers of patients may have been wrongly diagnosed.

One of the most insidious effects of the market is the way in which it sets hospital against hospital; purchaser against so-called provider. For instance, the Royal Orthopaedic hospital, to which I referred earlier, is in surplus but under threat of closure. Let us imagine that the health authority sees sense and reprieves that hospital, not in the short term, but in the longer term. The health authority would still be short of money. It would still have to close something, so it would perhaps consider the number of beds and would take some beds from Selly Oak district general hospital.

The health authority could decide that it should not cut beds, because the emergency beds were already overflowing. What could it do as a result? It would have to cut what is called its purchasing allocation and cut the services that could be provided by the very hospital that it had decided to keep open.

What would happen then? Local people would not be able to receive treatment at their local hospital, because the local health authority would not have the money to purchase the service. The hospital would have to raise income to pay for that service. How? An interesting scheme in Birmingham Heartlands hospital in east Birmingham over the summer determined that a sophisticated scanner, intended to treat patients, was used to treat pigs and sheep. It was hired to the Meat and Livestock Commission because it was described by the West Midlands regional health authority as a "form of income generation". That was one rather interesting scam.

A more likely outcome is that the hospital under threat would end up only treating patients from doctors who are GP fundholders or those who were able to pay for themselves through the private sector. It is a ridiculous merry-go-round on which a hospital is reprieved, but the health authority cannot buy services from that very hospital. That is the real effect of the market. That is what is happening in Birmingham and in other parts of the country.

In June, during health questions, I raised an incident in my constituency with the Secretary of State, which applied to that same orthopaedic hospital. A patient was told that he would have to wait six months for a knee operation, but that it would be only six weeks if he came from a GP fundholder. That is a distortion of the principles on which the national health service was founded. The sooner we get rid of the market mechanism, the better.

7.39 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I declare an interest. I advise the Western Provident Association, which, as most people know, is involved in health and is non-profit making.

This has been a particularly depressing debate. We heard from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) one of the most disgraceful speeches that I have ever heard from an Opposition spokesman in my 10 years in the House of Commons.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman always says that.

Mr. Hayes: I say that only when the hon. Member for Brightside speaks. He accused the Government of sleaze, yet he had the nerve to attack the Conservative Members' wives who served on health authorities. He criticised the number of appointments of Conservatives. He should mug

[Mr. Hayes]

up on his history of the health service. There are slightly more Conservatives on health authorities because the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), forbade members of the Labour party to take such appointments. The hon. Member for Brightside cannot have it both ways. If air miles were given for sleaze, the hon. Member for Brightside would be the first man on Mars.

Talking of interplanetary activities, it is remarkable that no Opposition Member has had the grace to mention that far more people than ever before are being treated every year—more than 1 million people since the health service reforms came into operation.

Ms Jowell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: We are constrained by time. I would be delighted to give way to the hon. Lady, but I am unable to do so.

We are now spending more than ever before—£100 million a day. Efficiency savings are being made. We are talking about 2 per cent. this year and, perhaps, 2·5 per cent. next year. An extra £450 million will be spent directly on patients. It will not go to the Treasury.

The other amazing thing that I could not believe was that the hon. Member for Brightside could not tell us what his policy is. That is one matter on which I profoundly disagree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. She called the hon. Gentleman the mañana man because he was so slow. The word "mañana" in connection with the hon. Gentleman implies far too much urgency. However, he gave us a little clue. He said, "I will tell the House what the policy will be about. It has something to do with treating patients." Wow! I can imagine the great slogan when that policy document is produced in perhaps two or three years, after the next general election—"Something to do with treating patients."

The one thing that the hon. Gentleman did right was to introduce the debate on wasting resources and on bureaucracy. If anyone knows all about wasting resources and all about bureacuracy, it is the hon. Gentleman. Just a little clue about what would happen if he became Secretary of State for Health is what happened when he was the leader of Sheffield council. Under his leadership, the number of committees increased from 97 to 247. No Opposition Member had the grace to tell the House that, for every 100 patients treated before the reforms, there are 116 now.

Ms Primarolo: They are patient episodes.

Mr. Hayes: They are not patient episodes. With the greatest respect, the hon. Lady does not know what she is talking about. We are talking about the number of people being treated, and that is just in the short period since the reforms. Opposition Members should be proud of that. Anyone who works for the health service would feel nothing but despondency and misery at the dangerous nonsense that comes from the Labour party.

By April, national health service trusts will provide 90 per cent. of health and community care. Have they been a disaster? Opposition Members will say, "Of course they have." They have not, because trust activity has grown by 5·3 per cent. compared with an average of 4·3 per cent. in the other sector, and that growth is continuing.

When we have the great policy document from Opposition Members, what will they do? Will they abolish trusts, as they promised to do? The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo), who will delight us with a speech a little later, is nodding her head. I can only assume that we now have a policy.

Let us have a few more. What about GP fundholding? Six thousand GPs have become fundholders. One in four of the population are covered by them and by April it will be one in three. What will the Labour party do about fundholders? They have been a manifest success. The British Medical Association is in favour of them, GPs are in favour of them and, clearly, patients are in favour of them. I am looking for an inclination of the hon. Lady's head—just a little clue, perhaps.

Ms Primarolo *rose*——

Mr. Hayes: I will happily give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms Primarolo: The hon. Gentleman knows that the BMA has denounced the Government's two-tier health system, which was created by fundholders who allow patients to jump the queue, ahead of other people in greater need. The hon. Gentleman also knows—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked me a question: shall I sit down, or would he like me to answer it? He asked whether we are in favour of a two-tier system and GP fundholders. We have said before that we do not support GP fundholders. We believe that they are wrecking the national health service, as the Government intend, and they will not exist in this form.

Mr. Hayes: "In this form"—if ever there was the small print, that was it. Why does the hon. Lady not tell the House that, for every manager—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady is having a fascinating conversation with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), but perhaps she would like to listen to me, because she will hear even more exciting information.

For every manager in the national health service there are 26 doctors and nurses. Why do Opposition Members not say that? National health service managers in the over-bloated service that we are told about account for 2 per cent. of the national health service work force and 3 per cent. of the wages bill, and administrative and clerical managers account for 11 per cent. of the wages bill. The hon. Lady should be telling the country about those facts and figures. The proportion of national health service staff who provide care directly to patients increased from 60 per cent. in 1981 to 65 per cent. now. That trend will continue.

I will tell the House what the Government are doing about waste. There is bound to be waste in an organisation the size of the national health service. What are we doing to cut bureaucracy? We are allowing health authorities to merge—a perfectly sensible reform.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Labour proposed it.

Mr. Hayes The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) says that Labour proposed it. He should welcome what we are doing rather than attack the Government.

Some years ago we abolished area health authorities, and now, thank heaven, we are abolishing regional health authorities. Why do Opposition Members not give us some good news? There is a lot of good news? Opposition Front-Bench Members should read the King's Fund

Institute report, and they should read about health care in London. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) in particular should listen to what is happening in London.

Ms Jowell: I know what is happening in London.

Mr. Hayes She says that she knows, but if the hon. Lady reads the latest issue of "London Monitor" she will see that it states:

"For the first time in history, primary care will be tailored to meet the needs of all London's population, regardless of age,. gender, socio-economic status and community origin."

That is good news. Opposition Members should read the views of Rosalind Wilkinson and Hilary Scott, who said that the City and East London family community health service organisation will be discussing exciting new developments in the provision of health services in the east end of London.

There is a lot of good news on the health service, and Conservative Members are sick to death of it being ignored.

7.49 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me.

I have listened carefully to the debate and to the speech of the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes). I have been involved in primary health care for 30 years in west Belfast, but I must be living in a different world from the hon. Member. The fact that most of the population in my constituency are from social class groups 4 and 5 may have something to do with it.

I find the attitude of Conservative Members incomprehensible. This is the 20th century and we are about to move into the 21st. We should expect health services to improve: they are improving in every western European country. Why have Conservative Members been crowing? One after another has shouted about all the fantastic things that are happening. Of course, improvements have been made. Perinatal mortality rates, which were higher in Northern Ireland than elsewhere, have come down. We expect better maternity and geriatric services and better care for handicapped children.

Why cannot Conservative Members accept objective criticism from the Opposition? Why is a debate like a boy scout game, with hon. Members trying to catch each other out on point after point? Genuine criticism has been made but does not seem to have been accepted. If Conservative Members were to point out that they had achieved A, B, C and D but were having problems in other sectors, they might have some credibility.

My experience of these matters has been in Northern Ireland and I make no apology for referring to it. I pay tribute to the outstanding hospital staff of Northern Ireland, especially those in Belfast, where there is the violence factor, which I need not touch on now. Staff at the Royal group of hospitals—not just doctors and nurses but right across the board—deserve our appreciation. I should especially like to mention ambulance drivers. Throughout the trouble, I have never known one to refuse or to object to going into any situation, despite there being destruction all around them.

There have been achievements in cardiac surgery. The number of cardiac units at the Royal Victoria hospital has increased from three to five. Belfast and, I think, Glasgow have the highest incidence of coronary-artery disease in the world. I do not have the figures to hand, but I know that they are very high.

I accept that improvements have been made in Belfast, which serves the whole of the north of Ireland, yet patients are still being transferred to London and elsewhere for cardiac surgery. More people in their late twenties and thirties are suffering from ischaemic heart disease. They are mostly in social class groups 4 and 5—unemployed people, who cannot afford to look after their health by eating nutritional food. I pay tribute to the health promotion unit of the Eastern health and social services board, which has done a good job in trying to convey that message to people.

I should like to give an outstanding example of the deficiency of hospital trusts. The Royal group of hospitals was the first such group to have trust status in Northern Ireland. That caused great celebration among those who had sought it. Despite the objections of Belfast city council, trade unions, medical and nursing staff and local people, the group gained trust status. Once that had happened, I said that they should accept it.

Within months of the trust being set up, the Eastern health board offered Royal Victoria hospital a contract for 3,000 general surgical and ear nose and throat operations, which was less than it had had in the previous year. If that contract had gone through, it would have been the beginning of the end of the Royal Victoria as a general hospital. It would have continued as a regional hospital.

How was that contract stopped? It was done by a massive campaign in which, thankfully, Catholic nationalists from the Falls road and Unionists and Protestants from the Shankhill road came together to join trade unions in opposing the contract. An Adjournment debate was held on the matter. We spoke to the Secretary of State about it. The result was that Lord Arran, the former health spokesman, would not allow the contract to proceed.

That happened only a short while ago. The next proposal is for the Royal group of hospitals trust to merge with the City hospital, which was made a trust. Where will it all end? The Eastern health board, which offered the contract in the first place, did not even keep to the criteria that were laid down by the management executive of the Department of Health and Social Security in Northern Ireland. I read the criteria carefully, and I assure hon. Members that the contract did not keep to them. If I had more than 10 minutes, I would go into that matter.

Obstetric services are being closed. Lagan Valley, Mater, and Down hospitals are under threat. We are told that, for a service to be viable, 2,000 deliveries are needed. At the same time, a maternity committee has been set up to consider midwifery-led and GP-led childbirth, which I support. How can a committee consider such a proposal when a major maternity hospital is being closed and three others are under threat? It does not make sense.

Fundholding seems to work on Humberside, but I do not see it working in Belfast. It is early days, however, and there are few fundholders at present. I understand that if a fundholder can save money and use it to care for patients, his allocation for the following year is reduced.

Musgrave Park hospital is the main orthopaedic centre for Northern Ireland. It is a fantastic hospital. If any hon. Members need a new hip, I recommend that hospital, which will measure them up as if they were being fitted with a suit. Threats hang over that hospital as well.

[Dr. Joe Hendron]

Belvoir Park hospital, the main unit for oncology and cancer services, is also under threat. It is located in beautiful green territory and the proposal is to move services to one of the main Belfast hospitals, which would be a disaster. Orthopaedic waiting lists are massive. People on the cardiac waiting list die as they wait for surgery.

There are no problems with acute services and admissions, but people who may have cancer have to wait for proper investigations to be conducted. If the cancer is at an advanced stage, they may be treated too late.

The idea of community care and of elderly and handicapped people being kept in the community, which all hon. Members would support, is not new. Assessment of such people is important. Everybody wants to keep their grandmother or friend with a failing mind in the community for as long as possible, but somewhere along the line, if it is unavoidable, those elderly people have to go into an institution. Elderly people's homes are being closed, so something is wrong with social policy.

The issue of accountability appears in Labour's motion. Where is the accountability? I have not heard Conservative Members talking about accountability. They do not accept that the health service has any faults, yet there is no accountability.

Legislation on child care in Northern Ireland, where it is a major problem, has to be considered.

The Huston report, which deals with Northern Ireland, will come out either tonight or tomorrow morning. It investigated major cases of sexual abuse in Belfast. It contains 52 recommendations and is about the breakdown of information between statutory and voluntary bodies and it should be sent to every hon. Member.

7.59 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): My immediate remarks are directed at the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). I do not wish to question his knowledge of community care in that area, but Tory Members have not been crowing. Nor do we wear rose-tinted spectacles. We are rightly proud of the changes in health care in this country recently. That must be set alongside the system that was changed.

It must be remembered that, for every pound that was designated for patient care before the reforms, significantly more was being spent on a system that was simply waiting for reform to happen. Money was spent on funding a creaking management structure which was allowing it to happen. By most assessments, the organisation lacked sense, magnitude and direction. That was rationale enough for our recent reforms. The concern of Tory Members for a considered evolution to an institution that has at its core a focus for the needs of patients and its users is laudable and undiminished.

There was no overt conspiracy in the past to subvert the national health service from considerations of good management, effective resource allocation and monitoring. It did not happen because no culture or environment expected it, or even demanded it. It was a culture where costs were never properly assessed, altered demographics were not taken into consideration and advances in technology were discounted. Such advances have provided a raft of new techniques and disciplines which were the stuff of fertile imaginations and daydreams only a few years ago. Of course, they are now the everyday reality for many people, freeing them from pain and discomfort, and badly curtailed life styles.

One of the inevitable results is that people live longer. The Secretary of State was right to point out that, in living longer, people may also need more expensive and technical treatment. All of that adds up to the overall resource implications and cost of patient care which should lie at the heart of this debate. It goes without saying—and here lies some criticism—that those who conceived the idea of a national health service did not anticipate the rapidly rising costs with which it was presented almost from the word go.

Confronting the issue of resources and their effective allocation is one that Opposition parties have simply failed to confront in any systematic way—certainly, so far in this debate. But that is hardly surprising. To imply that the path to salvation lies only in a greater level of funding is certainly not surprising. But to pass off that rhetoric as a coherent strategy—even if they believe it—poses the greatest threat to the national health service and patient care in this country.

Equal in that danger is the elevation of the national health service to the point at which it remains untouched by the realities of greater demand and the ever-increasing public expectation of improved conditions, care and service. It sets deliberately false trails. It is misleading and makes no serious contribution whatever to the debate about how the national health service should be judged.

There can be only two indices of assessment. Efficiency and effectiveness can be measured only by the quality and quantity of patient care that it delivers. On both counts, the reforms have produced quantitative improvement. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) was right to mention that, and I am not ashamed to repeat it. More patients are being treated than ever before. The length of time that patients wait for treatment has fallen sharply.

There have been increases in spending each and every year. The proportion of our national income which is devoted to the national health service will rise this year to an estimated 6 per cent.—1·5 percentage points higher than when the Government came to power. Those realities are neither the politics nor the statistics of neglect. To suggest otherwise is disingenuous. In fact, it is downright dishonest.

The national health service is the largest employer in Europe. One could be forgiven for thinking that for some, that is the only indicator which will be considered. The proper use of the public purse, the efficient use of scarce resources and the better care of patients are not a happy accident. This is not the managerial version of "It'll be all right on the night". It comes about by one thing, and one thing alone—good, effective and sensitive management, and committed medical professionals.

To push through operational changes without necessary management changes would be ridiculous. That is why, since the mid-1980s, the Government have progressively —strengthened national health service management. The populist view that an under-managed service and weak management—and worse, under-valued management—are compatible with the pursuit of an ever-improved service is a dangerous myth.

It is interesting that most debates in the House dealing with the provision of public services are spiced with spurious Opposition claims of rock-bottom staff morale, whether they be teachers, local authority workers or the police. Yet I have heard only the most demotivating

barrage of abuse about dedicated professionals. I am sure that Unison was listening with great interest to the support from its comrades in arms and the comments about many of its members. Does the morale of management not count when it comes to fraternal concern? Apparently not.

Managing the new NHS cannot be done on the cheap. It certainly will not be done by abusing managers and staff. Of course, we must be alert to the need at all times to keep management cost effective and streamlined, and keep waste to a minimum. It was right that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) put this into perspective. General and senior managers in the national health service still account for little over 2 per cent. of the NHS work force and about 3 per cent. of the annual wage bill. I should, add that, in any management model, those are not unacceptable statistics. Administrative and clerical staff, many of whom directly support nurses and doctors, account for 11 per cent. of the wage bill. The overwhelming draw on the budget remains those staff who provide care to patients directly; they account for some 65 per cent. of the wage bill.

The reforms of the late 1980s paved the way for the recent changes in management structure which were aimed at reducing bureaucracy, minimising administrative costs and aligning the structure of the NHS more closely with the purpose of the reforms. The merger of district health authorities with family health service authorities will simplify and clarify managerial roles and responsibilities. Regional health authorities were part of that outdated culture. Their abolition was rightly welcomed by health professionals across the board. The streamlining of NHS management executive supports those changes taking place lower down the management dynamic.

Taken as a group of measures, there is much to be welcomed in the Government's plans. As with previous reforms, their success will depend on the careful monitoring and constant control of management costs—both set against explicit targets. But we must never forget that these controls should not become so restrictive that they prevent managers from carrying out their duties effectively. The national health service must be run by managers on the ground with doctors and nurses contributing to the decision-making process in the wards and in surgery. The most fundamental aim must be to improve health care.

The majority of people who use the national health service are satisfied users. Poll after poll has identifield that. People are not scared of the changes. Improved management touches large parts of their lives, whether in the public sector or in the private sector. They are right to demand it—they want to embrace it.

8.8 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Earlier, a Tory Member put up what is a fairly usual smokescreen for the Tories by saying that they have a right to claim that all the parties in the House can take credit for the national health service. It is certainly true that all the parties would like to take credit for the NHS. However, the Tories have the greatest difficultly because, of course, about 40 years ago they voted against the establishment of the national health service. That has proved a great difficulty for them ever since. It is the one issue which cuts most directly against the free-booting rhetoric of the market that is so beloved by the simple-minded ideologues who seem to have taken the Conservative party hostage for the moment.

They have the greatest difficulty with the NHS—it is the rock upon which they founder—because the NHS accords with the highest ideals and the fundamental needs of the British people. The Government's approach to the NHS must be set against that. The NHS will not stand the full frontal assault which they have exhorted in other areas, so their approach needs to be far more subtle.

The motion tonight relates to waste and bureaucracy in the NHS. I want to go back over a few Tory reforms, not just the most recent reforms but those which immediately preceded them. Every Conservative Government have seen it as their role to reconcile their initial, fundamental and innate hostility to the principles of the NHS with the fact that they have to run it.

In 1974, for example, there was a reorganisation under Sir Keith Joseph, as he then was, which established the area health authorities. I was appointed to the area health authority, then called Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, that was formed as a result of the reorganisation in 1974. In 1984, we had the district health authorities. I went on to serve on Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority, which principally embraced Guy's hospital, Lewisham and a few others.

There was then the cash crisis of the winter of 1987-88, when the previous Prime Minister was forced on one of the few occasions during her premiership to back down in the face of public pressure. Rather paralleling her similar experience in 1981 with the miners, she did not take the matter lying down and set in train a series of events which was designed to reorganise the NHS and, more particularly, to wreak her revenge upon it. The consequence of that came to fruition in 1990, when we got the regime under which the NHS currently operates, with the emergence of self-governing trusts.

What are those trusts? They are collections of self-appointed individuals, who asked nobody whether they wanted them to take over the health service. They have consulted no one who would be a beneficiary of those services. They just selected themselves and decided that they would provide the health services in an area because they knew best. We have particular experience of that in Lewisham and North Southwark, because we had the flagship trust of Guy's and Lewisham launched upon us.

Those of us at the Lewisham end of that were particularly concerned. We were told that Lewisham hospital, as a relatively insignificant district general hospital in the shadow of a major international institution like Guy's, had no conceivable future away from Guy's hospital. We were told that there was an umbilical and incontrovertible link between Lewisham and Guy's. To coin a phrase, what was needed to improve the health services in our part of south-east London was an ever-growing union.

Then came the Tomlinson report. More than anything, that report was a substitute for the fact that there is no single regional health authority in London. Many of the problems in London's health services will not be solved until such a time as there is a region-wide London health authority. The other reason for the emergence of Tomlinson was the immense distortion which the internal market was creating, not just across the country, but in London in particular.

[Mr. Jim Dowd]

The Tomlinson report has brought in its train serious threats to some of the finest centres of medical excellence in the world. People from overseas look aghast that we should even be considering closing centres like Bart's or University College hospital or Guy's or St. Thomas's. They think that we must be several light years out of our skulls, or at least that the Government are.

What else were we told by Tomlinson? We were told that the link between Guy's and Lewisham was now no longer necessary, because Guy's would be linked with St. Thomas's. We were assured by the self-same people who, a couple of years ago, told us that Lewisham had no future other than being linked with Guy's that Lewisham could stand happily on its own and would, in fact, benefit from being a separate trust. I can only suggest that there were either lies three years ago or there are lies now, because both cannot be true.

More embarrassing for those who are currently running the trusts is that the same people were telling us that those two conflicting stories were both true. So now we have a trust in Lewisham and a separate trust at Guy's and St. Thomas's. What Tomlinson came up with for Guy's and St. Thomas's was a merger on a single site. Anybody with any intelligence could see what that means. Either Guy's or St. Thomas's will close, and either over the river or further down at London bridge there will be a single sign saying "Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital". The entire nation is to be asked to believe that that is the continuation of Guy's and St. Thomas's, but it is a mask for closure.

The health authority has been through a metamorphosis. While the trusts were being set up, there was an imbalance —particularly as the flagship was moored so close by. Incidentally, it is now obvious that the flagship trust was sailing under a flag of convenience, which was that of expediency. The authority had to look at another way of matching the producer-provider split. That idea has not just dropped from the heavens. It is not a revolutionary idea —the producer-provider split in the public services is as old as public service itself.

We are arguing about the way in which it operates and the system under which it operates. The district health authority at Lewisham and North Southwark got together with what was then the authority for Camberwell and West Lambeth and created what was informally known as the south-east London commissioning authority. After due consultation, they decided to formalise a split with the commissioning authority, and we had something called the South East London health authority. That was formed, amazingly, out of the London boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. Those hon. Members who are still awake will recall that I mentioned the area health authority which was formed in 1978 out of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark.

I was just getting used to the South East London health authority, when I got a letter at the end of 1993 from an organisation called the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham health commission. This has all happened within a space of a few months. The only people who have benefited from the upheaval in south-east London are public relations consultants who have designed logos and printers who have designed letter headings.

The Lewisham trust, meanwhile, has announced for the fifth time to my certain knowledge phase 2 of the development of Lewisham general hospital. This is the fifth time since 1984 that that major step forward has been announced. On the other four occasions, it came to nothing. Let us hope that it is more successful on this occasion.

The chairman of the Lewisham trust resigned after I placed questions on the Order Paper asking what the hell he was doing launching a £100 million carpet company at the same time as he was supposed to be running a hospital. I accept immediately that carpets are important in hospitals, but I would much rather have somebody in charge who knows about health rather than about carpets. I asked questions about what he was doing and he resigned a few months later, I am pleased to say. However, we are left with his legacy.

It is clear that the NHS is not safe in the hands of the Government, and not safe in the hands of the Conservative party. The British people know to their cost that it is not the protection of the Tories that the NHS needs, but protection from them.

8.18 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) on his rational speech. He showed that he has a refreshing knowledge of the health service in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman is now accompanied by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), whom I know well. He has served on the Health Committee and its predecessor Committee for many years, and there is no doubt that Northern Ireland is well represented in the debate.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Belfast, West on what I consider to be a sensible remark. He said that the Government have done a lot of good for the health service and indeed they have. Some of the reforms have been beneficial and should be carried forward. The hon. Gentleman added that the Government are not prepared to listen to criticism. They are not prepared to listen to people who have a point to make. He said that the Government appear to think that any criticism comes from people who do not want to know anything about the reforms that the Government have introduced. He believes that the Government consider that those people are foolish, that they believe in a different philosophy and that therefore they need not be listened to. I think that people should be listened to.

Although I warmly welcome a number of the reforms that the Government have introduced, certain problems have arisen. Unlike the Opposition, I would not abolish fundholding practices, but I would ensure that every practice was a fundholder. That would put all practices on the same footing.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) will respond for the Opposition and I say to her, as a Conservative and a member of the Government, that I accept that there is a two-tier system. I have had many instances in my own constituency of such a system operating. Patients in a fundholding practice are offered immediate treatment, whereas those in a non-fundholding one are made to wait because the district health authority or the regional health authority has run out of money. The hon. Lady and every other hon. Member could cite similar examples. It is interesting that fundholding practices do not

appear to run out of money, just district health authorities. I do not have time, unfortunately, to talk about the allocation of resources.

I respect my right hon. Friend the Minister immensely, despite our many differences since his appointment to the Department of Health. Many of the Government reforms are good and should be supported, but my right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues, particularly the Secretary of State, should listen to constructive criticism, because everything in the health service is not rosy.

I accept that there is a lack of morale and a sense of uncertainty within the NHS. I say that as a Conservative, so my comments will not be welcome, bearing in mind the theatrical performance from my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). People wonder whether the Government are committed to the health service, as we know it and as I believe it should be. People are concerned about whether functions are being gradually weaned away to the private, independent sector or charitable sector of the hospital service.

That process has already affected community care and the care of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and those who are suffering from aging illnesses. They are no longer looked after in the NHS, but in private nursing homes, private residential homes or charitable, non-profit-making institutions. That is dangerous, because the health service is now dominated by its concern for treatment. It is gradually squeezing out care, but to my mind the provision of such care is a vital part of our NHS. People who work within the service, especially nurses, express that concern to me over and over again.

Macclesfield has a superb district general hospital. I congratulate the regional health authority chairman, Sir Donald Wilson, on the resources that he has allocated to that hospital and the extensions that have been made to it. I also congratulate him on the additional facilities that we have bought, because, I am glad to say, a private hospital went into liquidation. It had been built on health authority property next to the district general hospital and, as a result of its failure, we now have a superb orthopaedic department, at a third of the cost of providing one from scratch.

Nurses are overworked and are under immense pressure. They tell me that they were taught to care, but that they do not have time to care, even for people who are dying. My right hon. Friend has an immense experience of the medical profession and surely he would agree that a person should die with dignity and be offered care, compassion and love. The people who can give them that do not have the time to do so.

The debate is about bureaucracy and administration. Whatever my hon. Friends may say, there is no doubt that the system has created a huge bureaucracy and a huge additional administration. Senior management have increased from 1,000 to 10,000. It is not as though those people are still paid between £35,000 and £40,000 per annum. They now earn between £80,000 and £100,000 and receive big bonuses, cars, perks and various other benefits. They are extremely costly to the health service. Administrative and management personnel have increased from 10,000 to 35,000. My right hon. Friend may justify expenditure on those functions and claim that it is worth while, but a lot of that money should be going to patient care.

It is difficult to cost care. It is quite easy to cost treatment, but my right hon. Friend does not know how much care a particular patient will need. If commercialisation is to dominate our hospital service, one of the most valuable assets of our service, the care that is offered to sick people will disappear. That would be extremely sad.

I recently wrote to Sir Donald Wilson, because, although I pay tribute to him for reducing waiting lists and, perhaps, for running the most efficient region in the country—as he, or should I say his public relations department, is wont to say—I can only say that Macclesfield looks rather like a war memorial. Although I have a first-class trust chairman in Mr. Peter Hayes, a first-class board, both non-executive and executive, and first-class staff at the district hospital, what has happened to health facilities in Macclesfield?

The Mary Dendy hospital and the Alderley Edge community cottage hospital have been closed. The Soss Moss hospital is to close. Parkside hospital, one of the finest mental health hospitals in the country, is to close, despite my opposition, which I have voiced throughout the time, nearly 23 years, in which I have represented Macclesfield.

The young persons unit, which treats young people with behavioural problems, has the most outstanding reputation of any such unit. It, too, will be closed because it has a low profile in terms of the service that it provides and therefore it is a low priority on any purchaser's list. At the same time, the district hospital will provide an after-school sex clinic. The authority has got its priorities slightly wrong, because to abolish a unit that is a success story and to duplicate existing facilities in my community is a mistake.

The health authority has also decided to close the Priory unit, which treats those who suffer from alcohol dependence. The carers, the staff and those who use that unit want it to survive, but, oh no, the health authority wants it to close. The authority has informed my trust that it will not purchase any places at the unit and that its patients should be treated in the community.

I have received pleading letters from my constituents whose lives have been saved by the unit, but where is the consultation about which we hear so much? My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), who now chairs the Select Committee on Health, talked about accountability, but where is it? There may be accountability to Ministers and Sir Duncan Nichol, but there is none to the local community which is served by the health service.

The decisions in my area are not even made by the chairman of the district health authority, County Councillor Simon Cussons, but by Sir Donald Wilson, and I give him full credit for his experience. That health authority was merged against the wishes of my local authority, my wishes and those of the community health council. Now, it is not even located in the area that it serves, so how can it offer an acceptable level of accountability?

I urge my right hon. Friend to use the good reforms that we have introduced, but we should implement them in a way that is acceptable to the people of this country, the people who serve in the NHS, and particularly the patient.

8.28 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I am glad to follow my parliamentary friend and erstwhile colleague on the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), because of his concern in health.

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) gently chided the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) for overdrawing the picture. Unless my knowledge of quotations is completely wrong, he was quoting the director of Booz Allen and Hamilton, speaking in December, when he compared spending £1 directly on patient care and £4 on aspects of indirect care. I had the impression that that had been changing as a result of the Government's reforms, whereas the director was implying that that was still going on. He said:

"For every pound spent directly on caring for the patient, £3-£4 is spent on writing things down, scheduling work, and waiting for work to be required."

We must face some of the issues that remain with us. I pay tribute without reserve to the work that has been done over the years through the national health service. I have campaigned for it, but I do not believe that it has been perfect. Indeed, I do not believe that anything that a human puts his hand to is necessarily perfect. We should therefore always strive to improve.

In that context, I pay tribute to the recent honour that the Minister for Health has received. When I raised a question during the paediatric statement, he missed the point that I was making and said that he would refer the matter to the Earl of Arran. I received an acknowledgement that he had done so and, amazingly, I am still waiting for a definitive reply.

Paediatric orthopaedics is an example of the weakness in the national health service. It has a tremendous need to deal with youngsters, and one of the finest provisions in the United Kingdom is provided by Musgrave Park hospital. I knew that the Minister had personal experience of it. I acknowledge that the North British Tours organisation has given another generous donation from private enterprise to fund the work carried out at the hospital's Gait unit. I was amused to receive an oblique reply referring to the orthopaedic surgeon handling the work at the children's hospital.

I cannot understand why the Department continues to write to Members who raise issues detailing facts that the Members already know rather than dealing with the problems that they raise. He told me that Kerr Graham was the surgeon, but he had already written to me to thank me for the interest that I had shown.

I am not knocking at the health service but pleading for continued improvement in it. I understand the views of the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne on care because, on Tuesday this week, I was travelling from Belfast with one of Northern Ireland's finest comedians, Frank Carson, who paid tribute to the hon. Gentleman's concern for social care.

The earlier part of this debate seemed, with sound and fury, to signify nothing. We must get beyond a partisan approach so that we can come together to help and improve. Some people constantly seek to defend their own patch. It is interesting to discover that the pharmaceutical industry is adamant that we should not curb drug production because only 10 per cent. of the national health budget is spent on drugs. Yet there is 10 per cent. wastage in the health service, so why take it out on drug manufacturers when what they supply equals the waste? Nobody will suggest that the waste occurs only in the drugs budget.

Hon. Members complain that we knock the managers. As I said in Committee earlier today, I put on a blue suit because I was not knocking the men in grey suits. None the less, we need to examine the growth of the managerial approach. Figures that were given to another hon. Member suggest that 36,000 more managers and 27,000 fewer nurses are employed than before the reforms. I appreciate that statistics can be confusing, because those figures refer to the whole United Kingdom from 1989-90 onwards and include nursing auxiliaries and pre-Project 2000 nursing students, whereas the Department of Health figures in the statistical bulletin exclude Northern Ireland and apply only to qualified nurses.

It is, therefore, difficult for hon. Members asking questions in this place if they do not get clear answers. Perhaps some of us are still living in our school days, when we gave a vague answer to try to gain something from the examiner because we did not have the full answer. I suspect that there are still more nurses in patient care, because one must add to the number of nurses involved in the health service those now involved in private residential and nursing home provision.

The fashion of provision on acute sites is one of the issues raised in the London review. It is argued that we should not have specialised, free-standing units, but that they should be on acute hospital sites. I share the concern of the hon. Member for Belfast, West about the suggestion that one of the finest cancer units in the United Kingdom, at Belvoir park on the outskirts of Belfast, serving the whole region, should be on an acute site, whether the City or Royal site. The Minister will agree that the City or Royal sites could not even cope with the parking facilities now available at Belvoir Park. To destroy that wonderful provision because a fad in medicine says that it must be on an acute site would be lunacy.

We must challenge some of the thinking in the medical profession for which politicians get the blame when, in fact, the changes have been driven on by advances in medical care and technology. The poor politician must then provide the money and carry the can for those decisions. The public must realise that medical folk have their own agenda.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield referred to community care and the move to private provision. The tragedy is that now, with the new programme—in time, the Government want to try to extend community trusts to the rest of Britain—we are discovering that private residential facilities in Northern Ireland are closing. People are afraid that there will be no provision for the elderly, the mentally infirm and others. We are decanting them and relying on their families, without proper respite provision or back-up in community care.

We must constantly keep alert to those issues, so that we maintain the best health service that the world knows.

8.38 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): First, I declare an interest. I am the parliamentary consultant to the National and Local Government Officers' Association section of Unison, and I am proud so to be. Some of the comments in the debate may be construed by members of that union to be an attack on them. That is unfortunate, because many members of Unison work in the NHS and many members of NALGO work in the administration of that great service.

It has been said today that, as a Government and as a party, the Conservatives should listen to criticism about the present workings of the national health service. That is right, and that is what the Government do. Only recently, the Secretary of State responded by announcing an initiative issuing new NHS codes for accountability, probity and financial control, for which I applaud her.

The NHS is a vast service, which employs many people, and it would be surprising if there were no instances of genuine distress involving individual patients at specific hospitals. When such stories are related by Opposition Members, they are valid and particularly pertinent to the patients who suffer. But such tales do not tell the other side of the story—the vast number of patients who are treated by the NHS and are well satisfied. I am constantly amazed by the number of people who come to me, either in my surgeries or as I am wandering around the constituency, and say that they have received wonderful service from the NHS. They are often elderly people.

Opposition Members often cite examples of patients who have been kept waiting for what everyone agrees are unacceptably long periods. It is fine if Opposition Members do so to try to improve the service, but they do not. They do so in an attempt to attack the integrity of the Government and the NHS by continually alleging that that is the true picture.

That is why I had some sympathy with the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) when he said that in order to deal with the problems we need a consensus. That is necessary if we are genuinely interested in saving the NHS for the future—the task before us. All hon. Members know the pressures on the service. They are shown not just by the individual difficult circumstances already mentioned, but by the massive number of patients successfully treated by the NHS. Success identifies the problems faced by the service, but that aspect has hardly been mentioned in today's debate.

The idea that a service designed to meet the needs of the 1950s could be retained in a fossilised form without change is bizarre. The NHS could not possibly have met the needs of the 1990s in its original form. Even now, the NHS is not perfect. Given the pressures that it is under, I suspect that it never will be. Nobody in the House can deny that the NHS has never been perfect. The problem of patients having to wait too long did not suddenly occur when the reforms were introduced. Indeed, the reforms were an attempt to deal with that problem.

Nobody can promise to eliminate that difficulty, but it does not serve the interests of the House or the subject when hon. Members constantly and only relate the downside of the equation. Even with the shortest of waiting lists, someone will always have to be last on the list. Hon. Members who are constantly on the attack by reminding us of the person who comes last are not helpful. According to them, the NHS cannot win, but it is not good enough merely to say that.

The NHS is a great institution. I am proud to say that I rely totally on the NHS for my health provision. I thank God that I have been lucky enough not to have use the services of the NHS except for specific injuries. The NHS has been successful, and more people are living to a greater age. We all welcome that and hope to be part of the problem. In the light of the temperature in here sometimes, I am not sure whether it is the best place to be to become part of that problem for the NHS, but I shall try.

Parliament and politicians must recognise that to provide for people in old age requires changes. We must constantly fine-tune the system and the changes. If the Opposition criticisms are designed to help that fine tuning, they are valid, but I do not recognise such criticisms in what they have to say.

I cannot remember who it was but, during the debate, an hon. Member related the problems that one of his constituents faced waiting for a cataract operation, and his story proves my point. The number of people waiting for cataract operations originally began to grow—despite the Government's partial success in that sphere—because the NHS was so successful that more people began to live to an age when they suffered cataracts. We must recognise that problem if we want to save the NHS. As someone who uses the NHS, I have faith that the reforms are not a threat to the principles of the NHS, but its salvation.

8.45 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): I pay tribute to the brave and forthright speech of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). He highlighted what happens when a Government become so obsessed with ideological ends that they put their obsession ahead of a commitment to the most popular of all public services in this country, the national health service. The Government have taken no account of the costs of their policies.

We have heard today that the NHS is in a state of perpetual crisis in all parts of this country. I do not need to repeat the litany of problems already mentioned by my hon. Friends—suffice it to say that the NHS cannot cope with demand because it is so short of supplies. I should have thought that a Government so committed to the ethics of the marketplace would have understood that—the first principles of economics. For any enterprise to succeed, it must be able to meet demand with adequate supply. If one closes one fifth of one's capital assets—hospitals and acute wards—and fails to protect investment—the NHS budget—from the ravages of inflationary costs, one's enterprise will inevitably fail to keep pace with demand. Is that not the homily that we have heard from successive Chancellors of the Exchequer, Prime Ministers and Health Ministers?

Such a scenario is bad enough when it afflicts an individual firm, but when it comes to pass in an institution as vital to the health of our nation as the NHS, the country's alarm bells should start to ring. What is at stake is the health and future of our nation. The NHS is in danger of imploding as a consequence of the combination of underfunding, rock-bottom staff morale, public disquiet and the Conservatives' market changes. The straw that may finally break the camel's back is the boom in bureaucracy of recent years.

We all know that times are hard, that precious resources have to be husbanded and that we cannot do everything that we would wish to do immediately. If we ask members of the public where they want their hard-earned tax revenues to be spent in the NHS, they say that they want more doctors, nurses and midwives and more expenditure on medical equipment. I bet that no one would say that they want more bureaucrats or managers, but that is precisely what we have. In the midst of famine, there is a feast of bureaucracy.

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

There is the starkest contrast between the problems that my constituents face as health care providers and people requiring health care and the boom in bureaucracy over recent years.

The NHS is becoming more secretive, centralised and top heavy. It is in danger of becoming a service where the daily growth in the number of chiefs is matched only by a fall in the number of indians.

The position is now sufficiently clear. The Department of Health's own figures paint the starkest picture. There were 14,000 more managers, 22,000 more administrators and 27,000 fewer nurses in the United Kingdom's national health service between 1989 and 1992. The introduction of the Conservatives' market changes saw a 236 per cent. increase in managers and a 5 per cent reduction in nurses.

Ministers have formed an army of bureaucrats which is strangling the NHS with more and more red tape. The internal market is sapping the health of the nation with a booming bureaucratic burden in contrast to Ministers' promises. We were promised a leaner and a fitter national health service where resources would be freed for better patient care. It is not leaner or fitter; it is fatter with bureaucracy.

Ministers say they are determined to hold down administrative costs. The Secretary of State claimed in her statement to the House last October that the abolition of the regional health authorities

"will slim down NHS management".—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 400.]

She repeated that claim earlier today, but, as the right hon. Lady must know, axing the regional health authorities will do no such thing. They have been sacrificed, not in an effort to cut down bureaucracy, but to stamp out the last vestiges of proper planning in the NHS.

If the proposals go ahead, the distinctive health needs of my region, the north, will be swamped in a larger, less accountable organisation run from the centre by the hand-picked appointees of the Secretary of State for Health.

As for the claim that it will mean fewer managers, who on earth do Ministers think they are kidding? In 1992, out of a total of 710 managerial staff in the national health service of the north, just 88 were directly employed by the regional health authority. The Secretary of State quite simply has the wrong target in her sights if she is serious about reducing NHS bureaucracy. Its growth owes nothing to the planning work of regional health authorities and even less to the redesignation of nurses as managers; it owes everything to the introduction of a new contract culture at hospital level.

That culture has brought with it the paraphernalia and institutional bureaucracy of the marketplace. We have more financial directors, more pieces of paper, more trading in health care, and more PR specialists and management consultants, and they are all looking to make a killing in the new environment. If the Government really want to cut down on bureaucracy, stamp out waste and end the growth in grey suits, they have to end the market experiment in the national health service.

The responsibility for waste and unnecessary red tape lies with Ministers. They have abused public spending. The annual pay bill for managerial staff in the United Kingdom has trebled—an increase of more than £350 million. In the past year in England alone it has risen by £110 million—an increase of 29 per cent.—while the overall nurses' salary bill has increased by just 5 per cent.

Ministers say that it takes a special person to be a hospital manager and that therefore hospital managers deserve a special reward, but it also takes a special person to be a nurse, a doctor, a porter or somebody working in NHS labs saving lives in our hospitals and communities every day. But what is their reward? A pay squeeze, which damages morale further. It is an insult to NHS staff at the sharp end of health care and it is precisely the double standards we have come to expect from the Government.

That is just the beginning of the story. My hon. Friends have alluded to the growth in corruption within the national health service. I never thought that we would see the day when corruption would become synonymous with the NHS.

In my region we have the Northumbria ambulance service, the jewel in the crown of the NHS trust success story run by a man who happens to be the president of the Tynemouth Conservative association and, I understand, of the Tynemouth boy scouts as well. Mr. Stewart and his friend Mr. Caple have very good track records. There are personalised number plates for NHS ambulances. They pop over to America and buy a new fleet of ambulances——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Porter): Order.

8.56 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The motion alleges lack of accountability within the health service, and I would dispute that. Health authorities and trusts are answerable to local people, including local Members of Parliament. They are answerable to the NHS executive and to Ministers who, in turn, are answerable to us in the House by way of letters, parliamentary questions and debates such as we are having today.

I do not consider the first leg of the motion to be particularly strong. When Opposition Members talk about accountability, what they mean is that they would like to see health authorities elected and turned into party political bodies, to which my response is, God forbid.

The second leg of the motion alleges a growth in bureaucracy. In the sense that there are now people with management responsibilities that did not exist before, that is correct. It is exactly what was needed in the health service—a clear line in management responsibility.

The third leg alleges waste of resources. That is certainly true. There is some waste of resources, but, thanks to the reforms in the health service, we can now identify and deal with them. At least there is now a mechanism in place whereby they can be handled, which was not the case in the past.

I am not going to quote an over-quoted slogan, so I think that we should go back to why and how the structure of the NHS was changed. The House will recall that, in the early 1980s, we were faced with ever-increasing expenditure in the health service without apparent corresponding improvements in the service, and with lengthening waiting lists. As a result, the then prime Minister set up her inquiry and Sir Roy Griffiths was asked to initiate an inquiry into the management of the health service which he concluded was poor.

There was waste then, but it could not be identified, because we did not know how much things cost. In those

days, if one asked at the local hospital or health authority what was the average cost of a gall-bladder operation or a hysterectomy, they literally did not know. How can waste be prevented if one does not know what the costs are? Nor were there clear lines of responsibility. Obviously, resources of cash and staff were not being used as effectively as they could have been, but no mechanism existed to identify where the weakness lay. That was why the reforms were introduced.

The front line of the NHS are the doctors and nurses, who heal and care for patients. Every one of us has benefited from the work they do, but they do not work in isolation. It is easy to scoff at managers and administrators, but without them doctors and nurses simply could not do their work. Any successful industrial or commercial organisation depends on the skills, not only of those who fashion the final product, but of those responsible for managing the premises, for the purchase and supply of materials, and for programming the production process to make the maximum use of facilities within the organisation.

I do not suggest that the NHS is either an industrial or commercial concern, but, in staff employed and the money spent, it is big business. It must be sensible to apply business methods to its administration. Behind those front-line doctors and nurses there are now managers responsible for the premises, for record keeping, for ensuring that drugs and equipment are available when needed, and for effecting a match between operating theatre time, bed occupancy, treatments and patients' needs, thus reducing and, I hope, eliminating, waste.

We now have managers at purchaser level in the health authorities who know the cost of treatments and can allocate resources in the best interests of the local population. By contracts, they can get the best value for the funds that they have available, which are always going to be limited, whatever the ultimate figure. The fact is that the system is working. We are getting more and better treatment for the money spent.

In her opening speech, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State quoted some national figures. They are reflected locally. In my area, in 1992-93, Bromley health authority purchased homeopathic treatment for 232 out-patients, two day cases and nine in-patients, at a cost of £50,000. In 1993-94, it purchased 320 out-patient appointments, nearly 100 more, for £14,400 as against £50,000 the year before, thus releasing more money for other treatments.

There is a new administrative structure, or, as Opposition Members might like to call it, bureaucracy. But it is working. It is having the effect that it was intended to have. That is not to say that there is not scope for further improvement—of course there is.

We look forward to legislation to reduce the number of regional health authorities. It will also enable the merging of health authorities and family health services authorities. That is already happening in Bromley, in all but name, with advantages all round. It means that referral and discharge protocols have been developed to ensure the maximum benefits for patients, and the most effective use of resources. It has enabled the managing of joint budgets to ensure that authorities are able to make the most appropriate and cost-effective arrangements for the treatment of those for whom they are responsible.

Inevitably, there are problems as new systems are implemented. Hospitals may well complete their contracts before the end of the financial year, but that demonstrates the need for them to pace themselves and/or to consider whether there are ways of attracting new contracts. All the players are learning by experience in negotiating contracts and in assessing extra contractual referrals that are likely to be needed.

Of course mistakes will be and have been made, and where they are gross—some examples have been quoted today—that may well be due to sheer incompetence, and appropriate action should be taken against managers who are simply not up to the job.

The organisation and administration of the NHS is not perfect, but at least the Government have had the courage to implement revolutionary changes and have not been afraid to make adjustments and improvements where they are needed. All the Opposition seem able to do is to criticise in a manner that cannot help the morale of those who work in the service, whether as nurses or at management level.

It is not as if the Opposition's criticism is constructive, even though members of the Labour party are actively involved in working in the NHS at many levels. We simply do not know what the Opposition's policies are. Are they in favour of trusts? Would they put the clock back? Are they in favour of fundholding GPs? Yes or no?

Today was the opportunity for the Opposition to tell us what Labour party health policy is, especially since they initiated this debate. Once again they have fluffed it. There has been plenty of criticism but nothing constructive. It is just possible that when the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) replies to the debate she will tell us what Labour party policy on health is, but I would not put my money on it.

People will make their own judgments on which party believes that the NHS is a subject for party political point scoring but has no new ideas and which party is wholly committed to the NHS and is constantly working to improve it.

9.6 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Earlier today we heard a great deal about the large quantities of propaganda material being churned out of the Department of Health. My attention was drawn to a press release dated 6 January with the headline:

"NHS must learn to listen and respond to local voices says Mawhinney".

About the same date, a letter signed by 124 consultants —yes 124 consultants, more than 60 per cent. of the consultants in the south Birmingham acute unit—wrote a letter to the Secretary of State which was a cry for help. They are the local voices. They referred to the problems that they experience day to day and to what was going on in our health authority in south Birmingham—a series of reorganisations, relocations and administrative schemes that have consumed funds and countless working hours and have led to confusion, demoralisation and reduced efficiency. That is what 124 consultants working in south Birmingham said about what was going on in our health service.

If they are confused, the people are even more confused. The merger of south and central Birmingham health authorities had been forced through with inadequate preparation by the discredited former chair of the regional health authority, Sir James Ackers, who was appointed by the Government. A new accident hospital was originally

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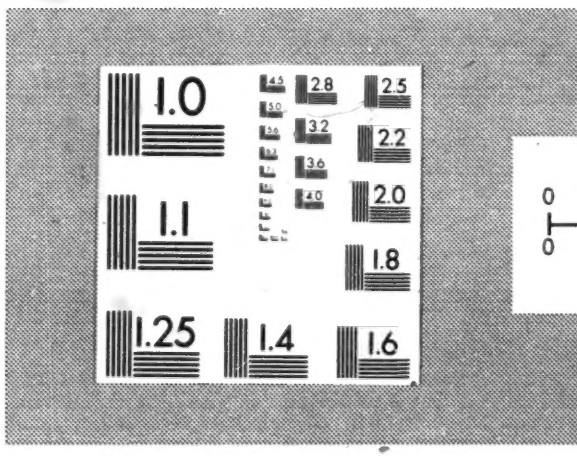

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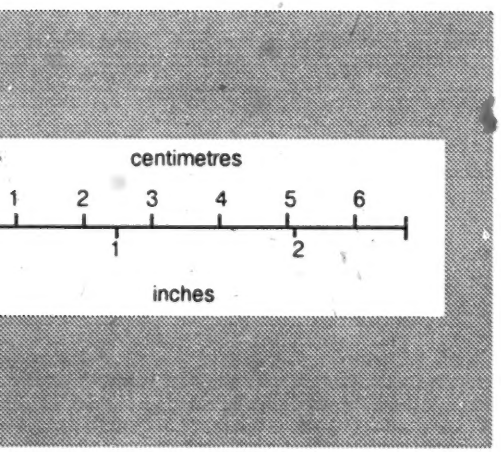

[Dr. Lynne Jones]

planned for Birmingham as part of plans for major capital investment. Sir James Ackers said that Birmingham had been starved of investment and he put forward grandiose plans, most of which local people did not want because they concentrated everything on the site of one mega-hospital. That plan was to go ahead and lots of money was to be spent, but, all of a sudden, that money dried up and the plan was shelved.

In the confusion, there were plans to close hospitals to try to save money. The accident hospital was relocated to the general hospital. Now, because we need a new hospital the accident hospital has to move out of the general hospital so that the children's hospital can move into the general hospital. The Royal Orthopaedic hospital that was to move to the general hospital will not now do so, and there are plans to move it to Selly Oak hospital. No wonder people are confused. They wonder what on earth is going on when decisions seem to change from day to day and money which at one time was readily available suddenly dries up.

We know what is happening. Because everyone is moving towards the idea of hospital trusts, new trusts can no longer guarantee that they will have contracts: that means that they cannot plan for the future and cannot make long-term capital investment. That is why Birmingham cannot have a new children's hospital and that is why we cannot have a new trauma unit.

The people of Birmingham have little confidence in the present arrangements. First, they were told that the number of beds in the Queen Elizabeth hospital must be doubled; then, only a year ago, the chief executive of the acute unit —who has now resigned—said that there was a greater demand for beds in that hospital and in the Selly Oak hospital. Last October, however, the new purchasing plans were published: they envisaged a loss of 236 beds. Only two months later, the regional health authority's plans appeared, stating that nearly 500 beds must go.

When I queried the discrepancies, the regional health authority told me that there was one year's difference in its figures; a steep decline in numbers was taking place. Now, the people of Birmingham are wondering whether they will have any hospitals left. The Minister talks about listening to local people, but he does not really want to listen to the voices of people in Birmingham, or to the views of those 124 consultants. I note that the Secretary of State did not mention the letter from those consultants when she referred to the various comments that she had received.

In its propaganda newspaper, "Heartbeat", the regional health authority proudly announced last September that beds, wards and even whole hospitals could be closing across the west midlands as patients and general practitioners exercised their new power to withhold custom from unsatisfactory hospitals. Beds, wards and hospitals are closing; but they are not closing because customers do not want to use them. Waiting lists have lengthened, and every week I hear from my constituents about their difficulties in securing the operations they need.

One consultant recently told a patient, "You are No. 144 on my waiting list of 238. Only very urgent cases—patients with cancer—can get treatment." A group of gynaecologists, frustrated by their inability to take patients from GPs unless they were fundholders, wrote a circular letter to all GPs, letting them know what was going on.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Lady has made frequent mention of the number of consultants who are complaining about the health service. Can she name a year since 1948 in which consultants have not complained about the state of the NHS?

Dr. Jones: Consultants have never spoken out as they are speaking out nowadays. That is my experience in Birmingham: they have never been willing to speak out in that way.

A lady who came to my surgery on Friday had been in daily pain, needing an operation. The consultant said that she could have the operation in January; there is no waiting list. She has been told, however, that because she lives in south Birmingham she cannot have the operation, because there is no money. A patient about to be discharged from a mental hospital in south Birmingham was told that she would be given counselling sessions and would be able to come in once a week for day care. When it was realised that she lived in south Birmingham, however, she was told that she could not receive that service.

Surgeons tell me that elective surgery is virtually being cancelled in Birmingham. Because of the closure of one of our local maternity hospitals, women are being forced to go out of the district, because the remaining maternity hospital cannot cope with the demand. The situation is ridiculous: patients cannot be given the treatment they need, although there are consultants willing to undertake the work.

I heard last week that, in the Birmingham maternity hospital—which has an intensive care unit for babies—demand is so great that nurses are rushed off their feet, because they are admitting more premature babies in need of intensive care than can be dealt with by their facilities. They are packing them in because they want to make a profit. That is a consequence of the market: we are measuring the success of hospital units according to whether they make a profit rather than the quality of service that they provide.

The internal market is not working in south Birmingham. I urge the Minister of State and the Secretary of State to take their own medicine and listen to the people who experience what is happening every day. Will they please accept our invitation to talk to local Members of Parliament, local consultants, local nurses and the local people?

I am confident that, with proper planning to get us over our current problems which are due to inadequate planning in the past and a lack of capital investment, south Birmingham could have good and efficient services on a reasonable budget. At the moment, however, the health authority is being asked to make impossible savings which are decimating patient care in my constituency and in other parts of the South Birmingham health authority area.

9.15 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): A few moments ago, a Labour Member accused the Conservatives of being obsessed with an ideology for the national health service—wanting to make it a commercial market and eventually privatising it. I utterly reject that charge, but I plead guilty to being obsessed with ensuring that the NHS provides the most efficient and cost-effective patient care possible. I also plead guilty to being obsessed with wanting to root out waste in the NHS. It was

interesting that virtually all Labour Members criticised the NHS for this and that, but they did not offer one constructive proposal to root out waste.

Listening to Labour Members, one would have thought that they had a magic method of improving efficiency in the NHS and that the experiences of other large organisations could be dismissed. Many large public sector organisations have a record of inefficiency. One need only remember the old nationalised industries—thank God there are very few left—or consider many sectors of local government, especially Labour-controlled authorities, to know the meaning of inefficiency. It is difficult for a large organisation which is spending £100 million a day to ensure that it gets the maximum value for each £1 spent and to remember that every £1 spent badly is £1 less for patient care.

The key test is whether we have now organised the national health service in such a way as to provide greater efficiency and improved patient care. It has been announced—rightly so—that the size and scale of the regional health authorities is to be reduced, and that is to be welcomed. The changes have inevitably led to a reduction in the number of staff employed by the district health authorities because many of their functions have been taken over by the trusts. It is true that the DHAs are spending very little in carrying out the purchasing function, but it is a key function.

There is a split between the purchaser and the provider, ensuring that there is an important distinction between those who decide what the health care needs are and those who meet them. That is also leading to improved efficiency. I believe that fundholding GPs are the key to the future. They are able to determine what they wish to buy without an intervening layer of bureaucracy, but we heard little about that from Labour Members. It is also clear that the way in which the purchasing authorities place their contracts is also leading to better value for money.

Perhaps most important of all are the measures that lead to efficiency. I do not have time to list them all, but we know that more patients are being treated than ever before. That cannot be ducked by Opposition Members.

We know that the measures in terms of indices of efficiency are improving in the national health service. There have been productivity gains of about 32 per cent. during approximately the past 10 years. There have been productivity gains of 1·9 per cent. last year and 2 per cent. this year. The NHS is a success story and we are determined to ensure that it continues.

To listen to Opposition Members, one would have thought that there was no need to have managers in the health service who monitor what happens. We know that the performance of individual hospitals varies greatly; length of patient stay varies considerably; the amount of use of operating theatres varies widely up and down the country. The challenges for the health authorities—it has not changed for many years—is to ensure that the standards of performance of the worst areas come up to the standards of the best, because there are such wide differences. We must aim for that.

The health service in London was also mentioned. Some difficult problems need to be resolved. We know that the number of beds in London needs to be reduced. My plea to Ministers is to control the pace of change in London, because we cannot afford to reduce the number of beds too quickly. We have to ensure that the number is reduced in line with other changes, especially in primary care, in London.

The motion that we are debating is a sham. The Opposition are not interested in the efficiency of the health service. We have heard little about what they would do to improve it. They wish to have a large, monolithic organisation, with the producer interests put first. We wish to ensure that the interests of the patients are paramount. That is why it is important to continue with the reforms that are leading to improved efficiency and—perhaps more important—improved patient care.

9.21 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Like the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day), I am associated with Unison as a sponsored Member and I have been a member of the National Union of Public Employees since 1979. I will not accept instruction from the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on how to represent Unison members. I fought the proponents of permanent revolution in my party and I will fight the idea of permanent revolution in the NHS with every breath left in my body.

I wish, however, to give the Minister the opportunity to take action that will halt the waste of £9 million of capital investment and at least £4 million of revenue costs per year —a waste of resources which, I believe, will have a direct and detrimental effect on the care of cancer patients in my constituency and which has not yet happened. There is an opportunity for the Minister to do something specific that will halt waste in the health service.

The Secretary of State said that it was crucial that the management of resources for the NHS should be effective. I agree with her, but a proposal is being considered by the NHS directorate of the Welsh Office to develop a cancer treatment centre at Glan Clwyd hospital in Bodelwyddan, north Wales.

The Welsh Office believes that Wales should be self-sufficient in the provision of services to its people. That has reached the point where services that are provided to Wales from England are to be substituted by provision in the Principality, irrespective of the financial illogicality of it or of the impact on the quality of service that will be offered in return.

The north-west of England and north Wales are well served by the two cancer treatment centres at Christie's in Manchester and Clatterbridge on the Wirral in Merseyside. Christie's, marginally larger than Clatterbridge, draws its patients from east Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Lancashire. Clatterbridge patients come from Merseyside, west Cheshire and north Wales—specifically Gwynedd and Clwyd.

The patients travelling from north Wales for diagnosis and radiotherapy have long distances to travel and usually stay overnight or are admitted as in-patients to Clatterbridge. I can understand how that must add anxiety to an already stressful and worrying time for patients and their families. However, the current proposal from the Welsh Office to develop an independent radiotherapy service at Bodelwyddan does not make financial sense, will not improve the quality of service provided and flies in the face of recent concerns about the non-uniformity of the quality of cancer treatment throughout the United Kingdom as a whole.

[Mrs. Jane Kennedy]

According to a Touche Ross report for the Welsh Office, estimates of the capital costs involved vary from £11·7 million to £12·9 million, depending on which site is chosen. Revenue costs would add a further £4 million per annum. The maximum number of patients forecast for the unit is 1,700 per year, and the expected number is 1,400 per year. That could never be enough to allow a centre of excellence to develop, and even those numbers could be achieved only if the health authorities of Gwynedd and Clywd committed the vast majority of their patients to the new centre, which would remove all choice from patients and their GPs.

Furthermore, I understand that Glan Clwyd hospital, the most likely site, has asked that the cancer centre's funding should be ring-fenced and underwritten by the Welsh Office. Otherwise, failure of the proposed unit could wreck the financial viability of the Glan Clwyd trust and damage the services on offer there. Such an open-ended financial commitment to the north Wales centre would inevitably be a drain on funds for the treatment of patients in England, and my constituents in Broadgreen would suffer because of the limitations that would be placed on the development of new treatment at Clatterbridge.

The Clatterbridge centre for oncology cares for about 6,000 patients a year, nearly 900 of whom come from north Wales. Its size has allowed it to develop a unique combination of people and equipment. Its neutron accelerator is used in the treatment of eye tumours, and that requires the support of specialist staff, who produce facial masks to hold the patients still while the treatment takes place. It is inconceivable that such treatment would be available at Bodelwyddan, so some patients would still have to travel to the larger centres of Clatterbridge and Christie's.

However, if Clatterbridge lost the 900 patients from north Wales, how would its own financial viability be affected? Obviously unit costs would increase. How long would it be before the case was made by the people whom we have come to know as "the purchasers" that we could not afford three cancer treatment centres in such close proximity? As the Welsh Office would be so financially committed to the unit in north Wales, the future of Clatterbridge would inevitably be called into question.

The Clatterbridge centre for oncology has submitted its own proposals to the Welsh Office. I know that the Minister has been involved in that process, and I hope that he will respond at the end of the debate to what I have said.

The Clatterbridge proposals would improve the treatment of patients throughout the region. The centre would like to develop network cancer treatment facilities throughout its present catchment area, including north Wales. That could involve potential for the installation of linear accelerators at Bodelwyddan. Alternatively, it could involve developing facilities at each of the three general hospitals that serve the area. Being part of the Clatterbridge management unit would allow for provision of the high-quality skills and treatment that we need to standardise throughout cancer care.

The capital cost involved would be as little as £2·4 million, depending on which option was adopted. Clatterbridge is developing for all its patients a system of delivering chemotherapy through local clinics, bringing the treatment to the patients in Southport, St. Helens, Walton and Warrington. North Wales should be allowed to benefit from that system, too.

At a time when the Government's chief medical officer is leading an initiative to improve cancer treatment across Britain through the standardisation of excellence, it seems a great shame that the Welsh Office should be poised to spend millions of pounds on a venture that will not only almost certainly fail to deliver quality in north Wales, but may also wreck the centre of excellence at Clatterbridge. I should be grateful if the Minister could find time to respond to that specific example of bureaucratic nonsense. However, if he cannot manage to do so in the short time that I know he has available, will he respond more fully later?

In the last minute of my speech, I shall deal with some of the nonsense being perpetrated by Conservative Members. When Unison-sponsored Opposition Members speak up and describe the chaos that they see around them in the health service, which has been caused by the introduction of the internal market, Conservative Members say that we are attacking the Unison members working in hospitals throughout the country. But it is nurses who are Unison members who have told me that, in Alder Hey hospital, they can no longer perform the role of key nurse, because they never know from one day to the next which ward they will be working on. They are redirected, as soon as they enter the hospital, to the ward with the fewest staff on duty that day.

Unison members are unable to carry out the professional role that they came into the service to provide. They feel bitter and tell me so. I wonder what they say to Conservative Members. I wonder whether Conservative Members have held surgeries or have opened their mail bags, because after the messages that I have received, not only from those who work in the health service and Unison members, but from members of the public who have written to tell me about operation cancellations, Conservative Members must have been living in a different world.

9.29 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Again, the debate on health has been in Opposition time. The Government claim to have had such wonderful sucess in the service, but they reflect and decide not to debate health in their own time.

In the debate, we have considered accountability, efficiency, bureaucracy, waste and the fundamental difficulties with the reforms. The Labour party is trying to make it clear to the Government that a system that is driven by cost, in which everybody knows the price of everything, affects the quality of care. It is true that staff nurses now know the cost of everything, and that perhaps they did not know before. We all know that canisters to warm blood before transfusions cost £60. However, what happens as a result is that they do not use those facilities.

We know that purchasing authorities use different specifications, which means different services are being purchased across the country, with the inevitable consequence of the undermining of the national health service. We know that commercialisation and privatisation mean a defensive, closed, secret system in which trusts, in order to compete, spend more time worrying about their balance sheets and what their neighbours are doing than

about the care of their patients. We know that competition is leading to duplication, where every authority thinks that it should have all the equipment and where planning is diminishing.

Opposition Members have detailed at length the waste, the bureaucracy, the waiting lists, the problems with GP fundholding and the two-tier system, and they have demonstrated how private gain is at public expense.

Mr. Day: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Primarolo: Conservative Members know that I have 15 minutes only. The Secretary of State took 50 minutes. I shall try to make some progress through my speech if Conservative Members will allow and I shall give way if time permits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) said that we ought to go "back to basics"—back to the basics of justness and fairness. Conservative Members spent their time saying how wonderful the reforms were everywhere, except in their constituencies, where their hospitals were having problems and they thought that perhaps it was a hiccup in the system. We have heard about bed crises, cheating on figures, and ways in which to squeeze treatment out of the system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) rightly pointed out that Tories claimed that they supported the NHS, have always supported it and were joint partners with the Labour party. I refer them to the vote in the House of Commons on 30 April 1946, when their Government voted against the creation of the national health service by 359 votes to 142.

As the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) pointed out, fundholding means that GPs have independence. That is one of the fundamental difficulties with the system. There is a conflict between the district health authorities and the GP fundholder. GP fundholders are not monitored or directed, do not have to ensure that they are buying the services correctly and are pulling in the opposite direction to the district health authority's purchasing strategy. In the middle, the hospitals, the patients and the workers are suffering. That is the problem with the system.

In January 1990, the then Secretary of State for Health said:

> "Next year . . . we propose to reform the NHS: the coming winter will end the last year of an entirely unreformed service. The winter of next year will not be dominated by cancelled operations, closed wards and cuts in services".—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. 1124.]

Where is the truth in that statement? It appears at column 1124 of the *Official Report*, for those who are interested in the facts.

For three years, we have constantly pointed out that the internal market reforms would mean the destruction of the national health service based on the principles of equity, universal access and comprehensiveness of service. Three years later, we have the cancelled operations, closed wards and cuts in services that the reforms have introduced. We have a two-tier health service, which is nothing to be proud of. A health service is emerging in which, if one chooses private care or one's GP is a fundholder, one is treated quicker than someone who goes to a non-fundholder—and massive waste, bureaucracy and a lack of planning pervade.

By contrast, the Government continually mislead the public about the crisis in the national health service. For example, a letter that was circulated in one of our hospitals states:

> "Theatre cancellation programme.
>
> I am writing to inform you that the cancellation programme for January and February of 1994 has been delayed. The reason is the expected reduction in the workload to counteract the overachievement of contracts in some specialities. I apologise for the delay"

in implementing the cancellation programme

"and hope we will be able to finalise the programme shortly."

That is the stupidity and chaos of the present system.

The Government and their flagship authorities tell us that they are getting waiting lists down. An article in *The Independent* of 5 January 1994 states:

> "Mersey has become the first regional health authority in England to have no patient on the NHS waiting lists for more than a year."

We telephoned some GPs in Merseyside to find out what is going on. A letter circulated in January states:

> "The waiting lists for out-patient appointments for the spine clinic is now in excess of 18 months."—

wait for it—

> "The total appointment booking facility on the hospital computer system is only 18 months, therefore the computer facility is exhausted. All appointments will be allocated when appointments are available."

Yet the Government, through their good news unit, are encouraging the idea that there are no waiting lists of more than one year. That is not true.

Another patient received a letter in October 1993, advising the date of the first appointment—Thursday 5 January 1995. That is what is going on in the national health service under the Government.

The Government say that the health service needs more competition, but what has competition meant so far? We are now three years into the internal market and what do we have? We have a system in which money talks. If one's doctor happens to be a fundholder, one has more chance of being treated quickly.

It used to be that hospitals ran out of money and took only emergencies towards the end of the financial year. That is now happening at the start of the financial year. I have been told that some cash-strapped hospitals are desperate and are asking their consultants to seek out friends who might be fundholders. What does the Secretary of State have to say about that? She says that they are discovering more quickly that they cannot meet their commitments because they are more vigilant. They discover at the end of the year instead of at the beginning. Presumably that is what all the bureaucrats are doing.

Mr. Day: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Primarolo: I have only 15 minutes.

The reforms have been about bringing the health service to the brink of privatisation. The interplay of the internal market, recent national policy changes and the activities of the private sector mean that the boundary between public and private health care is being blurred, so that soon—the Government hope—we will not be able to identify the boundary at all.

The number of people in Britain with private health care has grown. One out of nine people are now covered by private insurance, and GP fundholders have a financial incentive to encourage their patients to take insurance.

Mr. Day: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Primarolo: No.

National health service income from private patients has soared by more than 30 per cent. in the first year of the reforms. Almost a quarter of the charges were accounted for by the first 57 hospitals. Of course, such hospitals are not taking private patients because they have exhausted their waiting lists. When they have no one to treat, they sit round idly waiting for the next patient to walk through the door. They turn to the private sector for work because the public sector cannot afford to pay for more patients to be treated. Waiting lists grow while the Government starve the NHS of money.

The National Health Service Management Executive actively encourages the investment of private capital in joint ventures in the NHS. In April this year, the Government relaxed the rules authorising capital spending, and the NHS Management executive is holding up schemes such as kidney dialysis, magnetic resonance imaging, staff accommodation, clinical waste incineration and patient hotels as examples of successful private investment. Naturally, the trusts and the private sector are delighted and are developing more joint ventures with enthusiasm.

Mrs. Bottomley: Excellent.

Ms Primarolo: The Secretary of State says "excellent". I am glad that she agrees with our analysis of the Government's interest in privatisation.

Mrs. Bottomley: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Primarolo: Madam Deputy Speaker—

[Interruption.]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The House knows that if the speaker who has the floor does not choose to give way, other hon. Members must resume their seats.

Ms. Primarolo: The Secretary of State had 50 minutes. I do not have all that time and I am required to sum up the debate.

The Government say that they are treating more patients. When I asked them how many patients were being treated in 1991 and 1992 by trusts, shadow trusts and directly held units, I was told in a written answer on 8 February 1993 that they did not collect the information and did not know. Dr. Ian Bogle, the chairman of the general medical services committee, describes the Government as undertaking a national cover-up, having a lack of honesty and living in Alice in Wonderland's world. I could not agree with him more.

We want to develop a national health service on the basis on which it was established and which the people of this country demand to see maintained—a high-quality public service that is paid for from central taxation and free at the point of delivery for all who need treatment. There will be no self-governing trusts or GP fundholders operating as private businesses in our national health service. There will be no need for gagging clauses restricting health workers from speaking out on the ground of commercial confidentiality.

We will provide a public health service, rather than an ill health service. Instead of creating poverty, unemployment and a health crisis, and then leaving the NHS to pick up the tab for poor health, we will promote health through co-ordinated action against poverty and inequality. We will consult on the way to shape a national health service around those principles, and about how a Labour Government will fund that underfunding.

The British Medical Association said:

"The council endorses the view that prioritising treatment on the basis of a purchaser's ability to fund that treatment, rather than on the basis of an objective assessment of relative clinical needs, infringes the ethical principle of equity and should be vigorously opposed."

We oppose the Government's privatisation of the NHS. We oppose their reforms, but not because we do not believe that the NHS needs improving and needs changing. It is a dynamic service which deals with people and needs to respond to people's needs. We believe that the Government's vision of the health service will not provide for the NHS. Therefore, we will continue to oppose their attempts—they have tried to do it since 1946—to destroy our NHS.

9.45 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) pointed out that neither she nor I had much time to respond to today's debate, so I will take my lead from her.

I cannot ignore the speech by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). He pointed out that this was the first debate on the subject for a year, and that the Opposition had called it. After today's experience, I suspect that it will be a long time before the Opposition call another such debate. Indeed, so riveting was it for the Labour party that all of 34 Labour Members sat behind him as he delivered his scathing, vulgar and abusive attack on the Secretary of State.

The hon. Gentleman was unable to give, or to respond to questions and enunciate, any scintilla of Labour party policy. I thought for one moment that the hon. Member for Bristol, South had broken from cover and said something to do with policy. However, it was so ringed around with conditional clauses that I could see that she was entirely on a par with the hon. Member for Brightside.

He did say something, however, and I was interested that my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) picked up on it, as I did. This was the only policy that we have had from the Labour party tonight, and I want my hon. Friends to listen carefully. The hon. Gentleman said, "Our policies will have something to do with treating patients." I see that as being a big vote-getter around the country. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out that that will be next month, or the month after, or the month after that.

I want to pick up on the comments of two hon. Gentleman who contributed to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) encouraged us to listen to constructive criticism. We do that, but we are not interested in the mindless and ideologically based criticism that we have heard from the Opposition tonight. We are interested in constructive criticism. We recognise that, in a venture as large as the national health service, there are always ways to produce improvements, and we are always open to listen to constructive comments.

I heard what my hon. Friend said about community care. That it is a successful policy and helps frail elderly people enormously is agreed. It also helps people with mental illness, and I know that my hon. Friend is committed to them. I heard what he said about nurses and,

while I have always resisted the temptation to encourage colleagues to read speeches which I have made in the past, perhaps he will take the time to look at a speech I gave at the Royal College of Nursing congress in May 1993. He will find that I reflected exactly and in some greater detail the very point that he made earlier about the importance of creating space for nurses to care as a part of the professional discharge of their duties.

I would like to thank the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) for his kind personal comments. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) both recognised that it was important to increase funds to the NHS year on year, as we have done. My right hon. Friend pointed out that another £1·6 billion will go into the NHS during the next financial year. My hon. Friends pointed out that the way to maximise patient benefit from those resources was to improve management.

I was reminded of a comment made to me by a health authority chairman some time ago. He said that, when he was appointed four years ago, he inquired in his first week in office what the cost was for a hip replacement operation. Today, he says that he knows not only the cost of that operation, but the cost and quality of it in every single hospital in the area. He now knows that there is a sixfold difference in those costs. He is now able to manage the system in a manner that enables a better service to be presented to patients. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) also referred to that point.

The Labour motion expresses some concern about patient care. I know that the hon. Member for Brightside is extremely interested in beds. He issued a press statement —I read them all—on that matter on 10 January. I must admit that his press officer did not do an awfully good job, but, with reference to beds, that statement read:

"The NHS is slowly being whittled away"

I looked up the figures on the percentage reduction in the number of in-patient beds between 1979 to 1989. I discovered that, in this country, there has been a reduction of just more than 20 per cent. Spain, Greece, Portugal and the United States were in the 15 to 25 per cent. reduction band. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that even bigger reductions were made in Italy, Denmark and Ireland. Reductions were also made in Germany, France and the Netherlands.

The hon. Member for Brightside is probably incapable of getting his mind around those figures, but people outside the House will want to know why the number of beds available for health care is being reduced not only in this country but in every developed country in the world, except Belgium—I do not know why that is so. Let me give the hon. Gentleman the answer.

During the 1980s, the average length of stay in hospital was reduced from 10 days to six and a half days. In 1982, the average stay in hospital for someone receiving treatment for cataracts was eight days; today it is under three days, and many are treated as day patients. In the late 1970s, a person with a peptic ulcer would spend at least a week in hospital. Today, many patients do not go to hospital, because they are simply treated with drugs. The hon. Member for Brightside does not understand, will not understand and is incapable of understanding that, if the health system becomes more efficient, two things happen: more patients get treated and there is less demand for the hospital beds in which to treat them.

The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that I visited the Enfield Community Care NHS trust on Monday. Members of the trust told me—I did not ask for or know the facts they simply gave them to me—that it is now treating nearly 20 per cent. more acute elderly in-patients, and that treatment costs have been reduced by 40 per cent. in the past three years. The average length of stay in the hospital has been halved. It has fewer acute beds and more doctors and nurses per acute patient. Those facts reflect what is happening in the health service throughout the country.

Instead of thanking the senior managers or the administrative staff of that trust for the job that they are doing, perhaps I should have said something in keeping with the speech by the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn). Perhaps I should have said, "Ward clerks, the Labour party thinks that you are a waste of space. Medical secretaries, the Labour party wants you out. Wage clerks, the Labour party wants you on the dole. District nurses, no cars, the Labour party wants you on your bikes GPs on night calls, walk."

That is the sort of nonsense that flows from the ill-informed attacks by the Labour party on the management of the NHS, month in and month out. Do members of Unison think that they are being denigrated by Opposition spokesmen? Of course they do, because that is precisely what the Opposition have done in the debate.

I should like to draw the attention of the hon. Member for Brightside to the North West Anglia hospital trust in Peterborough. It runs the best hospital-at-home scheme in the country. I am told that this year it will treat 635 patients, 435 of whom will be discharged early from hospital as a consequence of the scheme and another 160 who would otherwise have gone into hospital but can be treated at home.

May I give another example for the edification of the hon. Member for Brightside? Based on the national average, the length of stay in an acute hospital for hip replacement surgery is 15 days. In Peterborough it is six days in hospital and six days at home. The hospital-at-home scheme has reduced costs per case by 20 per cent., the length of stay in acute hospitals by 60 per cent., and the total length of the care episode by 20 per cent. We on this side of the House welcome that. It is good patient care and more patient care, but it makes no difference to the Opposition.

Under the last Labour Government, the number of patients treated increased by 1 per cent. a year. During the 1980s under this Government, the number increased by more than 2 per cent. a year. Since reforms were introduced in 1990, the number has increased by more than 5 per cent. a year—*[Interruption.]* I understand that Labour Members do not like that.

Let me help the Opposition to understand it in a different way. That 1 per cent. a year under Labour represented 57,000 extra patients a year, whereas the 5 per cent. increase in the number of patients treated since the reforms represents 417,000 extra patients treated every year.

Let me put it another way for the Labour party. If I were to fill Wembley stadium on Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night and Thursday night, and put more people in it on Friday night than ever watch Sheffield Wednesday or Sheffield United, all of them together would represent

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

the increase in the number of patients treated under this Government each year compared with the annual increase in the number treated under the last Labour Government.

Let me put it another way. Had we not changed the system that we inherited from the Labour party in 1979, more than 2,600,000 patients who received treatment would not have been treated. That number would fill Wembley stadium every night for a month. Those facts give a new meaning to that well known song, "We're on our way to Wembley."

This debate has illustrated, like no amount of Labour press releases could, the difference between each side of the House. The Labour party has no policies, whereas we have a co-ordinated patient-focused policy that is producing more patient care. They have a fixation with beds; we have a fixation with patients. They have a fixation with hospitals; we have a fixation with patient care.

I call on my hon. Friends to recognise that, in every football ground in the country, people are singing our praises because they realise that we are on our way to Wembley in terms of the number of patients that we have treated. I urge my hon. Friends to throw out the Opposition motion and support the Government's policy.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 265, Noes 311.

Division No. 85] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Den[illegible]n, John
De[illegible], Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger

Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle, and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William

Walden, George
Waller, Gary
W[illegible] John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 264.

Division No. 86] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy

Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the improvement in the efficiency of the National Health Service which has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of patients treated, a reduction in long waiting times for hospital treatment and improvements in the quality of patient care; considers that these improvements show that the health reforms are working and that accountability has been strengthened by the clarification of responsibilities under those reforms; and looks forward to further benefits for patients resulting from proposals announced by the Secretary of State for Health to minimise the costs of administration through the proposed abolition of regional health authorities and streamlining of management.

Staff (Transport)

10.28 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has concerned me for some time that there is an archaic rule whereby, if the Adjournment debate starts before 10.30 pm, transport is not provided for staff although they might not leave the House until 11 pm or after. I understand that a Standing Committee is sitting tonight so that transport will be provided, but I am sure you will appreciate that to have to travel by tube or bus at 11 pm or later, and often for more than an hour, is not a pleasant prospect.

I therefore wonder whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would refer the matter to the relevant Committee to see whether the arbitrary rule according to which staff are denied transport for the sake of a few seconds can be changed to ensure that staff are properly catered for, as there is no doubt that it can be dangerous to travel on public transport late at night.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Is it on the same subject?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has raised this matter several times and has received some assistance from our Whips Office. When we have two votes, as we had tonight, they take until almost 10.30 pm and all the Members rush out —especially on a Thursday night—with the net result that people cannot get away before 10.30 pm because there is too much congestion. I should have thought that it would be better to relax the rule to 10 o'clock. There is all the talk about Jopling for Members. Why cannot a little committee get together in a huddle to sort out the matter, and then I would not have to speak until 10.30 pm?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to hon. Members for raising the point of order. I shall bring it to the attention of the relevant authorities.

Children's Homes (Streatham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.30 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): I am grateful to Madam Speaker for selecting my subject for the Adjournment debate this evening.

I welcome the opportunity to bring directly to the Minister's attention the problems that are being experienced by my constituents in the Greyhound lane area of Streatham arising from the concentration and proliferation of private children's homes in the locality.

In recent months, residents have suffered entirely unacceptable levels of crime and disturbance in the vicinity. Shops and homes have been burgled, local residents have been attacked and robbed in the streets, shop windows and other premises' windows have been wilfully smashed. Public disturbances in the form of fighting in the streets have occurred, passers-by have been subject to various kinds of harassment such as verbal abuse and jostling, and a local shopkeeper has even had a brick thrown at her.

Local residents, and especially those living in Greyhound lane and in the adjacent Barrow, Pathfield, Westwell and Stanthorpe roads, have described their predicament to me as "a reign of terror". They have felt themselves to be "under siege". The situation threatens the stability of the community and raises community tensions.

Although it has worsened recently, this unfortunate state of affairs is not new. In the view of many residents, the growing incidence of crime dates back some five years. Regrettably, it dates back to the first appearance in the locality of private children's homes, housing, among others, young people designated as hard to control, persistent offenders and those with considerable behavioural problems. It is not my wish to suggest that all, or even most, of the young people in the homes are responsible for the difficulties that have occurred. I know that many of them are highly vulnerable. Many have been subject to various kinds of abuse and some are often refugees who have undergone the most dreadful experiences in their young lives.

I am also aware that we live in an ever more lawless society and that Streatham, alas, is no exception, but the relationship between rising crime and the growth of such private homes in the area is too great to be coincidental. In any case, local residents know who the perpetrators of crime have been and where they live. They have seen incidents with their own eyes. I have in my possession detailed diaries of the most appalling disturbances that have been experienced by those living close to such homes. I name no names and give no addresses, for obvious reasons.

Police records link crimes to a hard core of the residents of the homes. There is now a general consensus in Streatham among the police, the local authority—Lambeth—and the local community that the concentration of such homes is excessive, that more rigorous regulation is essential, that the further proliferation of such homes would be a major threat to the well-being of the community and that firm action is now required to check the proliferation.

As the Minister is well aware, the law draws a sharp distinction between the powers to regulate so-called larger homes, which have four or more residential young people in care, and the regulation of small or satellite homes, which have fewer than four residents.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hill: I am sorry, no.

There are three main homes in the Greyhound lane area—those run by the Ebony, Omega and Vassel companies. I understand that those homes are capable of housing up to 24 young people between them. Planning permission is obviously required for the establishment of such homes. Frankly, it is a matter for considerable regret that a concentration of homes housing disturbed young people should have been allowed to develop in such a confined area.

Under the terms of the Children Act 1989, those main homes are in the process of being registered by the local authority. That means that the local authority will assess them in terms of staff ratios and rosters for supervision, on the suitability of premises—not least in relation to health and safety requirements—on policies and procedures, on administration and records and also on the qualifications and backgrounds of proprietors, managers and staff, including criminal records.

Unfortunately, the full rigour of that assessment will be limited by the fact that the three main homes in question were established before the coming into effect of the Children Act. I do not intend to speculate whether that was designed to escape the full requirements of registration. As a consequence, however, under the Government's guidelines, those homes are permitted a period of up to seven years before they have to comply in full with the maximum standards of staff qualifications in terms of social or psychiatric work or educational experience.

I believe that such flexibilty is a matter for regret, but, within those restrictions, I am sure that Lambeth will want to impose the most rigorous requirements for those homes before registration is completed by March this year. If they do not match up to the requirements, they should be closed.

I gather that Lambeth social services is responsible for the placement of five only of the young people in the main homes. I cannot understand how other authorities as far away as Brent, Tower Hamlets, Kensington and Camden can justify placing young people in the homes at such a long distance from their own localities. Those young people have no links or identity with the Streatham area. How can they be encouraged to resume a reasonable life in society in such circumstances? How, in all honesty, can there be any serious supervision of them by local social services departments at such a distance?

I appeal to other London authorities to reconsider their placement policies, especially when in practice they are placing young people in what has become a criminal environment. I hope that the Minister will support that appeal. At least the larger homes are subject to scrutiny under the registration procedure and their establishment is subject to planning permission. I sincerely trust that no further permissions will be granted in Streatham.

What gives rise to great anxiety among local residents, however, is the threat of the growth of small or satellite children's homes in the vicinity. Already the Ebony company runs three small units in Greyhound lane and Barrow road, and the Vassel company, based in Greyhound lane, runs a satellite unit a mile away, in Baldry gardens.

[Mr. Hill]

Local residents and councillors suspect that four more houses in the neighbourhood may have been purchased for further openings.

Unlike the larger homes, those small homes, because they have fewer than four young people as residents, fall outside the requirements for inspection and registration under the Children Act. They are therefore not subject to any scrutiny by the local authority with regard to standards of staffing, supervision or health and safety requirements.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hill: I am afraid that time prevents me from taking an intervention.

The local authority simply does not have the power to act. Equally, because proprietors describe those homes as fostering-type residences, the homes are deemed for planning purposes as single family dwelling homes and are not, therefore, subject to planning consent. A loophole in the law is being exploited. They are not family homes; they are residential institutions and should be treated as such. That is why the schedule in part C of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 should be amended to bring premises of that type under planning control. I very much hope that the Minister will make such a recommendation to his colleagues in the Department of the Environment.

By contrast, as the law stands at present, there is in principle nothing to prevent an entire street turning to that type of use. I do not, of course, suggest that that is likely to happen. Nevertheless, we should be in no doubt about how attractive opening small homes is to private proprietors.

With private children's homes of any size, we are talking big money. Proprietors charge between £650 and £950 per young person per week for placements, and the more challenging the young person, the higher the fee. We know that private companies are advertising their Streatham homes as suitable for young people with behavioural problems. If a private company can get away with opening a small home without having to apply for planning consent, with no inspection requirement and no systematic check on the quality of staff or supervision, the temptation is obvious.

I make no comment on the quality of staffing or supervision provided by Ebony, but I am informed that, as well as its three satellite units in Streatham, it operates four small units in Croydon and eight in Merton. That is big business by any standards. I also understand that Lambeth refuses to place any young persons in any of the small homes in Streatham, and has appealed to other London boroughs to reconsider their placement policies.

The Minister cannot claim to be unaware of the anxieties that have arisen about the growing numbers of small private children's homes. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey), who is a former social worker and therefore has special expertise, has tabled an early-day motion on the subject, and I understand that she has had several meetings with the Minister to pursue the matter. She has now given notice that she will introduce a ten-minute Bill, of which I am a sponsor, in early February. I gather that, when the Minister met my hon. Friend, he asked for evidence of wider concern about the issue. I am now supplying that.

In any case, the Minister must be aware that, in May last year, the London heads of inspection, the council officers with responsibility for the registration of children's homes, wrote to the social services inspectorate to highlight various concerns about small children's homes. I understand that the overwhelming majority of representations that the Government have received have favoured the regular inspection and registration of such homes, as under the Children Act 1989. However, the Minister has apparently chosen to ignore them, and his circular, published in August, responded instead with what I gather is known as the "lighter touch" approach.

That means that, although local authorities have the responsibility to register such homes, they will not have the right to inspect. All responsibility for deciding on the suitability of the home will rest upon initial pre-placement visits by social workers from placing authorities, and thereafter upon annual visits by those individual social workers.

The drawbacks to the "light touch" approach are obvious. No generally recognised standards of care will apply. If an authority has good cause not to place, there will be no mechanism for communicating reservations to others. It is unreasonable to expect an individual social worker to have all the skills necessary to assess general standards of premises, policies and procedures, staffing, services and facilities. Furthermore, I understand that, because of a dispute about costs between the Department of Health and the Home Office, there is still no facility for police checks on the records of staff and proprietors.

Of course I realise that a Conservative Government will have an ideological commitment to deregulation—but we are talking about the lives and futures of young people, and the quality of life of many local residents in the surrounding communities. Normal arguments about deregulation cannot possibly apply in such circumstances.

I realise, too, that the Government have an ideological commitment to the private sector. No one disputes that there may be a proper role for privately run children's homes, but the children and the local communities should come before profit. What is the special advantage of the private management of such homes when private proprietors have no charter, no requirement for professional qualifications and no professional association?

Why cannot we have the same arrangements for small children's homes as for small adult homes with fewer than four residents? After all, the Government extended the requirement for the registration and inspection of small adult homes this year under the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991. If it is appropriate for adult homes, why is it not for children's homes?

The case for the registration of such homes under the Children Act 1989 is crystal clear. That would help to ensure that such homes are properly run. There is an equally compelling case for bringing those small homes under proper planning control. That would help to prevent excessive concentration in particular localities. Without such measures, the future of the young people concerned and the balance and the well-being of a community such as that in the Greyhound lane area of my constituency may be even further threatened.

I hope that the Minister has listened carefully to my words and that he will act forthwith.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) on having the good fortune to secure this debate at long last. We both sat through the night before Christmas hoping that the subject would be on the agenda, but the procedures of the night precluded that on that occasion. He referred to one or two matters which relate to my hon. and right hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment. I shall pass his comments on to them, and no doubt they will take notice of what he has said.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the meeting that I had with the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey). As he said, that was at the time when we had just issued the circular. We said that we would wait and see how that turned out and that we would look carefully at any further evidence. I said that I would listen carefully, and I have listened carefully tonight and will keep an open mind about some of the points that he has made.

Let me put the issue into context. Children's homes have to deal with a range of young people who are there for a number of different reasons, and some of them would tax the skills and the ability of any of us to care for and control children. There have, of course, been examples, some notorious, of residential child care staff abusing the responsibility that they have for the children in their care, but let me say at once that the staff have a job that can be rewarding and is almost certainly exacting and difficult.

We should also recognise that children and young people who, for whatever reason, cannot be brought up by their parents in their own home have, by definition, problems in life with which they have to come to terms, and to be helped so to do. We must understand the distress that can sometimes be caused to residents living in the vicinity of children's homes when discipline in those homes breaks down. As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out, there have been problems of that nature in his constituency, and I will return to that matter in a moment.

The problems of residential child care have for some time been exercising all those concerned with policy and provision. The pindown revelations were followed by the Utting report "Children in the Public Care". The Frank Beck trial was followed by the Warner inquiry and its report on the selection of staff "Choosing with Care".

We appointed, as the hon. Gentleman may know, a children's residential care support force under the chairmanship of Adrianne Jones, former director of social services in Birmingham. The support force is working with local authorities and homes to develop collaborative approaches to planning and delivery of care and will work on the improvement of practice and of management. The support force will also work on the development of a code of employment practice.

I believe that one will not have well-run children's homes or good child care generally until and unless there are staff who are trained to professional standards of care and common sense. A large number of residential child care staff have benefited from additional training provided under the Department of Health's annual £30 million training support grant. Of that, £4 million is specifically for the residential child care initiative, under which 130 staff received training last year and the same number this year. We can never be complacent, but we can reasonably claim to be giving appropriately high priority to measures to improve standards of residential child care.

The subject matter of the debate is the regulation of private and voluntary children's homes. Private children's homes in which four or more children are accommodated are required under the Children Act, as the hon. Gentleman said, to register with local authorities. For historical reasons, voluntary children's homes register with the Department of Health, but to the same standards, on which they are inspected by the social services inspectorate.

The children's homes regulations govern the conduct of private, voluntary and local authority children's homes. The regulations require adequate numbers of appropriately qualified staff and suitable accommodation, which includes sufficient washing, bathing and lavatory facilities, adequate heating, decoration and maintenance, adequate laundering arrangements, and a telephone that can be used by the children to make and receive calls in private.

The regulations prohibit the use of physical punishment, deprivation of food or drink, and restriction on contacts with parents whether as punishment or otherwise. Food must be nutritious and a choice is expected to be provided, as far as reasonably practicable, for each main meal.

There are also children's homes regulations governing the administration and registration of the homes. Local authorities are required to visit private and voluntary children's homes regularly within specified periods in particular circumstances. Organisations responsible for private and voluntary homes are required to arrange monthly visits to the homes by a senior member of the organisation.

In addition, the arrangements for placement of children regulations require a written care plan to be prepared and maintained in respect of each child. The plan must cover the arrangements for contact with the family, arrangements for the child's health and education, and arrangements for preparing the child for when he or she leaves the home and, in the case of a child looked after by a local authority, when the child will cease to be looked after.

The review of children's cases regulations require the case of each child in a home to be reviewed formally at six-monthly intervals. All the matters covered in the care plan are included in this review, and formal records of reviews have to be maintained.

The representations procedure regulations for children require local authorities to provide complaints procedures with an independent element in respect of all children they accommodate in homes, and private and voluntary homes are required to do the same in respect of any children placed with them other than by local authorities.

It is clear that the regulations governing children's homes, and the care of the children accommodated in them, are very comprehensive and rigorous. That is as it should be.

Children's homes regimes should be geared to enabling children to overcome the disadvantages of their early life that have resulted in their being there. Children in homes also need to be protected from neglect or exploitation. Like any other children, they need to be brought up in an atmosphere of love, understanding and discipline.

The family provides the essential environment for bringing up children, and a children's home has to be a family environment for them. Children need care, compassion and common sense. They need to be brought up in an affectionate and responsible family atmosphere. Such surroundings provide the best environment for their emotional, physical and developmental needs, and prepare them to pass on family values to their own children.

[Mr. John Bowis]

The Children Act 1989 is among the most comprehensive legislation in the world for the care and protection of children. It asserts their right to be heard, their need for parents, and the continuing responsibility of their parents towards them, based on love and care. That includes instilling respect, responsibility and knowing right from wrong.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is the Minister aware that he is discussing 15 black children, and that the homes are owned by black people? The people in those homes regard the matter as nothing other than a racist attack on the children and on the homes themselves. Does the Minister agree that the so-called evidence that my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) has given has amounted to nothing? If crimes have been committed by those children, they should have been enumerated. That would have given a different picture altogether.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman disagrees with his own hon. Friend. I have to leave them to sort out their dispute. I hope that the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) will accept that racism has no part in my beliefs and that there is no racism in what I am saying in response to the problems that have been raised with me.

As well as all the regulations that I have referred to, voluminous guidance has been issued by the Department of Health on the Children Act and on the regulations. The guidance advises those running homes that good relations with neighbours are important. Children living in children's homes have as much right to live in a neighbourhood as other residents. But, by the same token, the staff and children in a home have responsibilities as good neighbours, and due consideration must be given to neighbours' privacy, property and way of life.

I am aware that there have been reports recently of an increase in street robberies in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and that a link has been suggested with an increase in the number of children's homes in the area. I understand that there has been considerable local concern about this, and officers of Lambeth social services department have met the proprietors of the homes and Streatham police.

The proprietors gave an assurance that they would not seek to open any further small homes in the area, and will establish a procedure for dealing with complaints from local residents. The proprietors were asked to review their admissions criteria and procedures for reporting absconders. A meeting has taken place involving the homes' proprietors and local residents at which the proprietors heard the residents' views and reported on progress made.

I understand that the London borough of Lambeth considers that some young offenders have been inappropriately placed in these homes by local authorities and there should be regulations governing these small homes.

Where three or fewer children are accommodated in an establishment under the Children Act, it cannot be a private children's home. If there is a single named carer for the children, the fostering regulations apply. However, when a small home is run by an organisation with staff on rosters and shifts, the fostering provisions in the Children Act do not apply. I understand that this is the situation with the establishments in Streatham about which there is concern.

The children in such homes are, I understand, nearly all placed in the homes by local authorities. Therefore, although the children's homes regulations do not apply, the placement, representations and review regulations to which I referred earlier do apply.

In response to concerns that arose earlier in the north-west of England, my Department issued a circular in August 1993 which reminded local authorities of their responsibilities under the placement, representations and review regulations, and provided detailed practice guidance for use were children are placed in small homes. I have decided to publish the report of an SSI study of small homes, and I shall place a copy in the Library.

Children in such homes should be visited by a social worker at intervals of not more than three months. Similar standards to those required by the Children Act are advised. In addition, I should make it clear that the local authority in whose area one of the small homes is established has an absolute right and duty to go in and take any necessary action, including removing children, if it is clear that children are not being properly cared for or are at risk.

The circular asked local authorities to extend police checks to prospective staff of small homes who will have direct responsibility for care of children looked after by local authorities. The circular reminds local authorities that they have full responsibility to ensure that police checks have been conducted before they place any child.

I shall keep the question of further regulation under review as we see how the guidance recently issued takes effect. For the time being, I am not convinced that greater regulation of the care of these young people is needed. Their welfare is already safeguarded by the existing regulations in so far as it is possible for that to be achieved by regulations.

Staff looking after the children have ample guidance on how they should care for and control them, including the guidance entitled "Permissible Forms of Control in Children's Residential Care" issued by my Department in April. It is, of course, for home managers to abide by that, and for local authorities to ensure that the children they have placed are being looked after properly and, that homes in that area are being run properly.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his constituents will be reassured that the arrangements that are in place for the regulation of children's homes and for the care and control of the children are more than adequate. I hope that the London borough of Lambeth will take steps to respond to the complaints of residents in Streatham to produce an improvement in the situation. I also hope that the care and control of the children in the children's homes about which the hon. Gentleman has been concerned will be such that the longer-term outcome for the children in the homes will be enhanced, and that they emerge as good and responsible citizens, who in turn will become good parents for their own children.

10.58 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I did not intend to speak, but I was concerned at the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) introduced the debate. He talks about evidence, but gives us none. I understand that there are 14 or 15 black children involved, and that the homes are owned by black proprietors. I also

understand that the police and the assistant director of social services in Lambeth are satisfied with what is happening.

In raising this matter in the way in which he has done, my hon. Friend is casting aspersions on the behaviour and the management ability of the proprietors of those homes. I was absolutely astounded when I was told that my hon. Friend had not even bothered to speak to any of the proprietors or to the children themselves in his constituency. That is an abrogation of his responsibility as a Member of Parliament.

I do not doubt that a number of residents in that area may be concerned about the behaviour of those young children. I believe that it is the job of the Member of Parliament to speak to everybody concerned, including the children and the proprietors, before he comes to a decision and talks about a reign of terror. I hope that my hon. Friend will meet those people, who have had to come to me. I do not know anything about the situation in Streatham——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 21 January 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Northern Ireland

9.35 am

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I beg to move, That this House welcomes and supports the insistent demand of ilstthe people of all traditions in Northern Ireland for peace, properly attained; and asserts its abhorrence and rejection of all violence, from whatever quarter, perpetrated in place of democratic persuasion.

It is a considerable honour for me to open the debate, and I shall say a little more about that in a moment.

During the morning of 15 December last year, I sat in the plenary session of the British-Irish parliamentary body in Church house. Most of those present allowed their thoughts to wander to events that were unfolding in Downing street a few hundred yards away. While we were discussing items of importance and interest to Members of this House and to Deputies and Senators from the Irish Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Mr. Reynolds, were signing an historic agreement—a joint declaration for peace agreed by the British and Irish Governments. Soon after midday, they made public the result of deliberations and careful negotiations stretching back to February 1992.

A lunch at the Irish embassy for members of the British-Irish parliamentary body was followed in the afternoon by my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on the joint declaration. During an hour and a half's questioning, my right hon. Friend received support from Members in almost all parts of the House and answered questions from 46 right hon. and hon. Members.

It was a good occasion and there was an optimism in the atmosphere that here at last was an initiative which might lead to an end of terror, murder and brutality in Northern Ireland, 25 years on from the civil rights marches of the late 1960s.

At the end of the statement and a further announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, you, Madam Speaker, drew the ballot for today's private Members' motions and, for only the second time in more than 10 years, my name was drawn. What is more, I was drawn in pole position.

It is a rare honour for a Back-Bench Member to be allowed to set the day's business for the House. I toyed with the issues presently exercising my constituents and decided that, having just completed many days of debate on the Gracious Speech and on the Budget, most of the contentious, topical issues had already been amply covered. Unlike the occasion when I was able to initiate a Friday debate on the iniquities of the Property Services Agency, no burning local issue was exercising the good folk of Gillingham, and I was briefly at a loss as to what my subject for today should be.

After a few minutes' thought, the prevailing optimism about the joint declaration reasserted itself and it occurred to me that today, five weeks on from the Downing street meeting, might be a suitable occasion for the House to debate the joint declaration and the current political situation in Northern Ireland in the immediate aftermath of that initiative. I reasoned that everyone would have had a chance to read properly the whole of the 12-paragraph statement and to understand its carefully crafted sentences, a chance to recognise the balance between the assurances to the loyalist community and to those who aspire to and yearn for a united Ireland achieved by peaceful means.

Five weeks should be long enough for a thorough analysis of what is on offer and I believed, naively perhaps, that it should be long enough for the leaders of Sinn Fein to convince the leaders of the IRA to announce a permanent cessation of violence so that the brief period of decontamination or quarantine before Sinn Fein is allowed to take part in exploratory talks might commence. Hence today's debate.

I am particularly honoured that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will intervene in the debate. I am also delighted that so many right hon. and hon. Members from the Province are in their seats on a Friday.

In the days following 15 December, many column inches in the press were devoted to the initiative. The principal tenor of the articles matched the mood of hope and optimism in the House on that memorable day. We also read of the chaos and disruption brought to public transport by bomb alerts on commuter networks and the underground. As there had been several bombs in recent days, police had no option but to take such alerts seriously, especially as they followed the pattern of previous Christmases, when the IRA sought to cause maximum disruption before announcing a three-day halt to its terrorist activity.

Before Christmas, there was speculation that the IRA might announce a longer, even permanent, cessation of violence to gain its place at the conference table at the earliest possible moment. In the event, the godfathers of terror proposed only their now customary three-day halt. Their cynicism was swiftly underlined by the murder of a young soldier, Guardsman Daniel Blinco, who was on patrol at Crossmaglen on 30 December. He was killed by an IRA sniper team that was known to have murdered nine members of the security forces in 16 months.

Two days before Guardsman Blinco's murder, a large meeting of republicans, including Sinn Fein representatives and parole prisoners, at Loughmacrory, County Tyrone, had indicated that the joint declaration fell short of the concession that they wanted to halt the violence. At that meeting, Sinn Fein, in the form of South Armagh Councillor Jim McAllister, started the spurious call for clarification. He is quoted as saying:

> "I think the overall view is that the document has a long way to go before it becomes a peace initiative. There is incredulity that we are being told we cannot have clarification. As the document stands, the general feeling is that it would be insufficient to produce an IRA ceasefire."

Since that republican meeting, the violence has continued. New year's day saw a dozen incendiary bombs start fires in shops and businesses in Belfast, causing millions of pounds' worth of damage and putting 200 jobs at risk. As if to match the IRA's renewed assault, the Ulster Freedom Fighters announced that they would respond militarily in 1994. The omens for the new year were not good.

[Mr. James Couchman]

On Tuesday 11 January, at least two attacks on the security forces were reported. A bomb secreted in the chassis of a vehicle that had been used in an IRA mortar attack blew up within a security base in South Armagh, badly injuring two soldiers. On the same day, two policemen and a policewomen were wounded by a bomb thrown at their vehicle as it patrolled the Short Strand area of Belfast. The following day, an unarmed military policewoman was shot twice and seriously injured as the IRA ambushed a joint police and military patrol in the New Lodge area of Belfast. The only slight consolation about that attack was that two arrests were made and a weapon was recovered.

Although the loyalist gunmen appear to have been more subdued during that period, a 21-year-old Catholic was shot by UFF terrorists on 6 January in the Lenadoon area of Belfast. However, the Ulster Volunteer Force has suggested that it will abjure violence if all sides accept the joint declaration as a way forward to peace.

Against a background of continuing violence since Christmas, some of the euphoria has dissipated. Some of the optimism has given way to realism and even some of the hope has moderated. What has brought that about? I suggest that it is not solely the brutality of defiant terrorism but also the smokescreen put up by the so-called political wing of the republican movement, Sinn Fein. The clarification issue mentioned by Councillor McAllister has been taken up by Sinn Fein's President, Mr. Adams, who has milked it for all it is worth. Adams's demand for clarification is clearly a demand for negotiation without having to order his friends of the IRA to give up the campaign of violence. His first reported reaction to the joint declaration was a demand for direct and unconditional dialogue with the British and Irish Governments.

It is suggested that the areas that Adams considers need clarification are, first, how the constitutional guarantee for the will of the majority will work in Northern Ireland and how the people of Ireland will exercise the right to self determination. Secondly, he demands that the British Government become a persuader in favour of a united Ireland. The third area in which he demands clarification —or rather concession—is on the question of amnesty for republican prisoners.

In his statement on 15 December, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister went to great lengths to explain precisely what was involved in the safeguards for the majority wish in Northern Ireland and how referendums, north and south of the border, might be conducted to fulfil the paragraph on self determination. The body of his statement did not touch on amnesty for prisoners, but my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and I pressed my right hon. Friend on the question of amnesty.

It is worth putting on the record again the questions and answers in the *Official Report*. I asked my right hon. Friend to reassure the House that

"no commitment—explicit or implicit—has been made for any form of amnesty for those who have been convicted of the most heinous crimes in Northern Ireland, and that the judicial process will pursue, with utmost diligence, those who have continued with their crimes of violence in recent weeks".

My hon. Friend replied:

"I can give my hon. Friend that absolute commitment."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 1083-84.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, whom I am delighted to see in his place this morning, asked whether my right hon. Friend's definition of a cessation of violence included

"the handing over of at least some weapons and explosives and will he assure the House that convicted murderers in Northern Ireland will serve the whole of their sentences".

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was unequivocal in his response. He said:

"I can certainly confirm that not only do I not have any notion in my mind of amnesty, but there is no suggestion of a reduction in sentences awarded by the courts. That is a matter for the courts and not something in which I wish to to interfere. Were there to be an end to violence, the crimes that are currently being investigated would still be the subject of investigation in the future—that is the way our criminal justice system operates and it will continue to operate on that basis."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 1089-90.]

He then commented on the surrender of arms.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Is not the hon. Gentleman being a little unfair to the Government? We heard many statements that the Government would not talk, directly or indirectly, to the IRA and Sinn Fein on those matters. In the event, they had to come to the House and say that they were talking to the IRA. Will not those matters be part of the debate, should the next stage of the peace negotiations take place? Our role today should be not to nail people to certain positions that they have or have had in the past, but to encourage people to approach the problem with a much more open mind than in the past.

Mr. Couchman: The hon. Gentleman makes a valuable point, but I am offering my opinions on what should happen, particularly on amnesty, and praying in aid the assurances that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on 15 December, which he has repeated in the intervening weeks.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In the hon. Gentleman's quotation of the Prime Minister's answer, the Prime Minister said that the courts would decide. Will he reflect on the fact that, within the Northern Ireland system, the review procedure is independent of the courts' decisions? That system has been operating for a considerable time and decides on the termination or length of sentences that people might serve. We should all look carefully at those mechanisms when we discuss this matter, rather than use pejorative and arbitrary terms such as "amnesty".

Mr. Couchman: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I am sure that he will wish to enlarge on that point when he contributes to the debate.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for quoting the answer that I received when I raised the issue. In view of what has just been said, does my hon. Friend accept that some hon. Members and many people in the country believe that murder is murder and cannot be excused in the name of politics? If the Government are minded to weaken on that point, some of us will not support such a weakening.

Mr. Couchman: I take my hon. Friend's words seriously, and wish to say more about the question of amnesty, which I think will make abundantly clear my position on that vexed subject.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): When the hon. Gentleman gives further detail of his view on amnesty, will

he comment on the detailed statement by the former Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, Dr. Garret Fitzgerald, who said that in July 1985 he had entered into an agreement with Mrs. Thatcher? The British Government had agreed that, if there was a cessation of violence or a major reduction in violence, there would be an early release of prisoners. Does the hon. Gentleman make a distinction between that and an amnesty?

Mr. Couchman: My belief in murder as murder remains absolute. Those who have been convicted of the most heinous crimes in Northern Ireland should continue to serve their sentences without early release.

Mr. Mallon: The Shankill butchers have had early release under review.

Mr. Couchman: I shall come to the very issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised in his sedentary intervention.

My right hon. Friend's continuing rejection of Sinn Fein's demands for an amnesty for republican prisoners will be welcomed by every hon. Member who believes in law and order. The prisoners under discussion are not prisoners of war or detainees. Those who have been convicted or who are on remand in custody are in prison because they have been convicted of committing, or are strongly suspected of committing, the most appalling crimes of brutality. Those crimes are often committed against men, women and children who are wholly innocent of any involvement in the conflict and are bystanders who have simply got in the way of thugs bent on violence in the pursuit of who knows what.

Such crimes have been committed in Northern Ireland, here in London, throughout Great Britain and on the continent of Europe. Who would contemplate awarding an amnesty for the Balcombe street gang who were responsible for at least six murders in the 1970s? Who could contemplate an amnesty for the Harrods bombers, Paul Kavanagh and Gilbert McNamee, who were convicted of killing six people outside Harrods 10 years ago? Who could contemplate an amnesty for Patrick Magee, who was responsible for the murder of four people at the Grand hotel in Brighton during the Conservative party conference in 1984?

We must remember that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The loyalist terrorists currently imprisoned include such psychopaths as the Shankill butchers, Robert Bates, Sam McAllister and William Moore who, with their eight accomplices, were sentenced to 42 life sentences for the torture, murder and mutilation of 19 people, often for purely sectarian reasons. Who could offer amnesty to such men or to Michael Stone, the Milltown cemetery murderer? There are presently more than 1,500 men and women serving sentences in Ulster gaols for terror-related offences, and a further 350 are on remand. There are a small number of terrorists serving their sentences in mainland prisons.

To allow an amnesty for those prisoners would be a grotesque insult to the memory of the 3,000 people who have died during the troubles and to the many more who have been maimed or injured mentally by the actions of those terrorists who have been so careless of the impact of their murderous attacks. My right hon. Friend has not been helped by the reported words of the Taoiseach in a BBC interview on 19 December. Mr. Reynolds suggested that the future of terrorist prisoners would be part of any negotiations flowing from the joint declaration. That was not the only apparently unhelpful intervention from Dublin over the demand for clarification from Sinn Fein. There should be no question of any amnesty for those who have committed the most heinous crimes during the past 25 years.

Sinn Fein's demands for clarification are but a smokescreen. The joint declaration is admirably clear. My right hon. Friend's statement on 15 December was equally clear, and his answers to my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne and me could have left no one in any doubt about amnesty. It is difficult to understand why the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who has done so much for the peace initiative, should urge clarification on the two Governments, as he is reported to have done. I also find it difficult to understand why the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, asks for clarification when the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), has made it clear that such a move would constitute negotiation before the abandonment of violence.

It seems curious that the Taoiseach should have been willing to offer the demanded clarification in a speech on 10 January. In an article in the *Evening Standard,* Lord Callaghan, who had much to do with the troubles in the early days, has also urged clarification of genuine points of misunderstanding. I am not convinced that there is any need for such clarification.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made a speech yesterday related to the declaration that could therefore be considered to be an elaboration of what has taken place. A well-developed speech was made by the Irish Prime Minister that seemed to be an explanation of the declaration. Might it not be relevant for such a process to continue and even for the Prime Minister to participate in that process? It would not be negotiation, but it would be a further explanation of what has already been put forward.

Mr. Couchman: I shall leave my right hon. and learned Friend to comment on the speech that he made last night. No doubt he will also have something to say about the words offered by the Irish Prime Minister last night.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again and apologise for making yet another intervention.

The hon. Gentleman complains about the search for clarification and about recommendations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and others to give that clarification before peace or negotiations have been established. However, he has spent the major part of his speech clarifying for the Government his position on something that may or may not take place as part of the negotiating process. Is there not an irony in his position? Not only is the hon. Gentleman clarifying or attempting to clarify a position for the Government but he is placing a marker on something that may arise in the negotiations. Is there not an irony in that?

Mr. Couchman: I think that I was unwise to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I am not convinced of the need for such clarification. I am convinced that Sinn Fein, in the form of Mr. Adams, is playing a devious and divisive game in trying to enter negotiations having yielded nothing in the way of a ceasefire. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my

[Mr. Couchman]

right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State are right to have none of it. Mr. Adams should order a total cessation of IRA violence—I have no doubt that he has the power to do so. We could then let three months elapse, after which time Mr. Adams can have ample clarification in properly constituted talks, not held under the shadow of the bomb and the bullet.

Mr. Adams has suggested that the IRA is prepared to fight for another 25 years unless his demands for clarification are met. If the IRA's response is to reject the present offer, there must be an uneqivocal follow-up to the joint declaration, and all possible action on both sides of the border must be taken to eradicate once and for all the terrorist threat from the IRA.

The loopholes in the Irish extradition law that have been contentious between the countries for so long must be closed. The co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana must become ever closer, particularly over intelligence matters. The efforts of both security forces to police the border must be intensified. Banning Sinn Fein in the north and the Republic must be considered. In the context of putting pressure on Sinn Fein-IRA, I am perplexed as to why the Dublin Government have chosen this moment to lift the 20-year ban on the broadcasting of interviews with Sinn Fein and paramilitary groups. That seems to be an untimely pandering to terrorists. The two Governments have set out their peace initiative and it is essential that they act in concert in all that they do to bring it to fruition.

The House does not need me to spell out how great is the prize for peace in Northern Ireland. On the day before the Downing street joint declaration, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced the public expenditure allocations for 1994-95 to 1996-97 and defined the Government's three public expenditure priorities for Northern Ireland as, first, defeating terrorism, with an allocation for law and order of £931 million—he regretted the need for this enormous budget when, in a peaceful and stable society, much of it could be devoted to other important social and economic programmes—secondly, to strengthen the economy, to which £455 million would be allocated—and how much greater would be the strengthening of the economy were a lasting peace to be established? There is no doubt that Northern Ireland would once again become a good place for inward investment if peace were established. His third priority was targeting social need, with extra funds under various budget heads. The total budget is £7·39 billion, a substantial part of which is spent on problems associated with the troubles.

Peace would undoubtedly allow the distribution of public resources on a different basis from the present one —a basis that would give a more positive impetus to increasing prosperity throughout the community. But the real improvement would be the enhanced attractiveness of Northern Ireland as a place for the private sector to locate, as a place for the most able youngsters, many of whom take their skills elsewhere, to carve out their careers and as a place for tourists to enjoy their holidays in the most breathtaking countryside. The committee of the British-Irish parliamentary body, on which I sit, sees immense advantages for tourism if only peace prevailed.

It would be impudent of me, as a south-east England Member, to lecture those who know Northern Ireland so much better than I. I have taken an interest in the Province since I entered the House in 1983, partly because I represent a garrison town from which soldiers regularly serve in Northern Ireland, partly because of my many Irish friends from north and south of the border and partly because every hon. Member, whichever constituency he or she represents, should take a close interest in the tragedy that has beset a part of the United Kingdom for a quarter of a century—almost half my lifetime and twice as long as the two great wars of the 20th century, the Korean war, the Falklands conflict and the Gulf war added together.

I am not an expert on Irish history, but sometimes I think that there has been too much regard for the past and too little thought given to the future. I have returned from visits to Ireland deeply saddened that two traditions of the same religion could have led to so much strife and enmity. Even as the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are drawn closer together through our common membership of the European Union, so would I hope and pray that the declaration of 15 December 1993 might act as a basis for people of all persuasions, north and south of the border, to come together to work for peace.

I reiterate that it has been a great honour for me to initiate our debate this morning. I hope that I have not detained the House too long.

10.3 am

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The whole House, all Northern Ireland Members and hon. Members who represent constituencies on this side of the water and every law-abiding citizen of the United Kingdom are deeply indebted to the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) for providing us with this opportunity to take stock of the situation in Northern Ireland. We are especially indebted to him for his comprehensive chronological survey of the situation and, although it may be slightly different from what we would like it to be, we on this Bench pay tribute to the hon. Member.

The hon. Member for Gillingham noted the good attendance of Northern Ireland Members today and he will be gratified by the attendance of Members representing constituents in Great Britain, including three Northern Ireland Ministers and a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be something of an expert on attendances in the House, and it is the only point on which I seek to involve you: today's attendance compares favourably with the attendance on any normal Friday.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Or on any day.

Mr. Molyneaux: Yes, or on any day. The cameras do what they are not supposed to do: pan around the Chamber to show the lack of interest in, for example, Welsh affairs and, yes, Scottish affairs, legislation on the Mersey Docks and Harbours Board and all such enlightening proceedings. I pay tribute to all hon. Members present who are proof that Northern Ireland is not a forgotten place.

The Sinn Fein-IRA buzzword at the moment is clarification. One Oxford dictionary meaning is:

"to make a liquid free from impurities."

Many IRA criminals will have experience of the illegal production of poteen. They should not need clarification of a simple matter in which the only remaining impurity is

their criminality and conscience. The Government cannot enable them to remove that impurity—they must do so themselves; they can simply stop murdering people. They seem to lack the courage to take that crucial decision. First, they said that they needed time to contact the various elements in their band of brothers, but we saw evidence in the "Cook Report" that one Mr. Martin McGuinness can apparently order the murder of a soldier or, when he considers it beneficial to the cause, the execution of an alleged defector. Those who saw that programme waited for a detailed account of the informer's trial. What counsel "learned in the law" appeared for the defence? Was there a jury, because Sinn Fein condemns the Diplock system and it would be unthinkable not to have a jury? Did the accused have any right of appeal?

In the absence of proof of such safeguards, why, for example, does one body that I can think of, but there are many others—Amnesty International—keep silent, as Sinn Fein wheels out that apparatus when an IRA man gets his elbow grazed? Denied, as we all are, the evidence of torture and the execution of even their own, we must conclude that one Mr. McGuinness is so much in control of the organisation that he can order the taking of life within minutes. Is not it strange that he needs five or six weeks to contact and consult those whom he unashamedly claims to lead?

Just as that ploy is seen to be rather less than convincing after all this time, the leadership of Sinn Fein-IRA invent another device. They need to evaluate and weigh the pros and cons. They say, if you please, that they have to take time to make a balanced judgment. Of course, they have taken that line before when they have had to consider their future strategy—for example, in 1967 when one of their godfathers, in a case of mistaken identity, confided in a friend of mine:

"We shall have to restart our campaign before our people are demoralised by the British welfare state."

When prominent people assured us that peace could be achieved within a week and proclaimed peace before Christmas, we did not believe a word of it; but many innocent souls did and they were rewarded by Mr. Adams publicly thanking the thousands who marched and prayed in support of the IRA's campaign for peace. Mr. Adams and Mr. McGuinness long ago stopped blushing when they proclaim themselves to be men of peace, but they and all associated with them will never be forgiven by the thousands whom they betrayed and misled.

That disillusionment would have been greatly lessened had Mr. Adams even suspended the murder campaign while he and his so-called "army council" were studying and reviewing the situation. Instead, they issued a pre-Christmas statement, no doubt "using the recognised code word", wherever that is supposed to come from, as they have done over 20 years, wishing the people a happy Christmas, and adding, "You won't be murdered until Boxing day." One never ceases to be amazed by the gullibility of people who are otherwise intelligent. Some in the ranks of the chattering classes are now being sucked into whining about clarification, not realising that that is the only tactic that can rescue the IRA from the condemnation of world opinion. That is the operation on which they are presently engaged.

It is curious how little notice has been taken of an utterly unprincipled departure from what for decades has been the basic demand of "Brits out", summarised in the translation of Sinn Fein into the English language as "Ourselves alone". The mumbo-jumbo of recent months has cleverly concealed the conversion to acceptance that a British withdrawal would not suit Sinn Fein-IRA at all. They used to refer to Ulster as Britain's last colony, and asserted that they were determined and would succeed in driving out the British Army. They forgot that when Britain withdrew from a colony, it did so in response to the demands of the majority, or the greater number of the native population. On the day of ceremonial departure, Britain transferred all authority to that majority, but never to a neighbouring state.

I might be tempting the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to ask us how that stands in regard to the Bill that he presented yesterday to terminate British jurisdiction in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The right hon. Gentleman will recall that we terminated our jurisdiction of Palestine, are handing over Hong Kong to China and that we conceded to a white minority in Rhodesia at the time of the universal declaration of independence. This is a more complex matter than perhaps he allows.

Mr. Molyneaux: The simple question for the right hon. Gentleman and those who share his view remains: By "Brits out now", do they mean now, at the end of the year or—as it is in the minds of the modernised IRA—phased over a period of 11 years? The full horror of that scenario has only recently struck the IRA. A British withdrawal would leave it in an independent Ulster, not a united Ireland. It may even have crossed its mind that the ethnic cleansing that republicans have practised all along the United Kingdom frontier could suddenly become a two-edged sword. I will not go any further than that for obvious reasons. We now have the supreme irony of the IRA murdering British soldiers of the British Army, which the IRA would require to enforce phased joint authority and eventually Irish unity on British citizens of Northern Ireland. Where now stands the principled idealistic freedom fighters of Irish republican mythology? Where now stands their moral courage?

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have rightly refused to set a deadline for an IRA response. Having provided the IRA with an opportunity to cease its criminal activity—if by some miraculous chance it were so minded—Her Majesty's Government do not need to set a date for acceptance of the offer. Could I suggest that Ministers urgently consult their French and German counterparts in regard to the techniques that they used so efficiently in stamping out their indigenous terrorists? Both those Governments have great respect for our Foreign Secretary. They know that he has the right ideas, as evidenced when he was Home Secretary. At that time, he declared that there was no point in talking to the IRA, and that they just had to be extirpated. Being a man of sound judgment and high principles, the Foreign Secretary will not have changed his views in the interval.

The Government as a whole will be equally determined to do everything in their power to protect the citizens from the resumption of terrorism. If more powers are needed, no responsible Member of the House can refuse to grant the necessary authority. In that respect, the Secretary of State is to be commended for his vigorous approach to security. In his speech last evening, he said:

"If the violence continues, the work of opposing it will of course continue with the utmost vigour. We shall work to ensure that the law is strong enough to counter these criminal

[Mr. Molyneaux]

conspiracies, that the police have the necessary resources in terms of manpower, equipment and military support, and that co-operation between the two jurisdictions is as creative and pro-active as possible."

We would all support those words. The Irish Government also joined in making the offer to Sinn Fein-IRA. They, too, appeared to believe in peace by Christmas. They, too, feel badly betrayed, and I shall not embarrass them by making security demands of them in public. They know where their duty lies as a sovereign nation with pride in its international standing.

Nor is there any deadline with regard to political progress. During his pre-Christmas visit to Northern Ireland, the Prime Minister discussed the way ahead with party leaders. He agreed on the desirability of pressing ahead with the restoration of accountable democracy. He, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State have accelerated the process. Nationally, the news industry has ignored all that—perhaps in some cases suppressed it—but the fact is that the Minister of State has been patiently proceeding with bilateral discussions since early September last year. I do not complain about the lack of media interest. We are all the more likely to make real progress if we are relieved of the need to compete in sound bites. But, for the sake of accuracy and their professional reputations, journalists might refrain from using inaccurate phrases such as "talks being in abeyance" for the past year.

Ideally, in our drive for the restoration of accountable democracy, we should aim to make progress on three fronts —first, Westminster, which is responsible for the good Government of the entire United Kingdom; secondly, Stormont as a location for sound administrative democracy; and thirdly, local democracy in the ranks of councillors freshly elected less than a year ago. But, as we operate in the real world, we may not find it possible to progress at the same speed on all those fronts. However, progress must be made where progress is possible. We must not be stalled by those who decline to move with the times. We should not ignore the stimulus contained in this week's Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which applies to Northern Ireland and bears the name of the Secretary of State. The powers to repeal and amend in the first four clauses could provide a solid launching pad for a campaign to open doors and gates that have remained closed for far too long.

10.18 am

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): It is a great privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). It will be fair to say that many people who have been following events since 15 December have been struck and impressed by the manner in which he has analysed the joint declaration and responded to it. It is a privilege to follow him in this debate.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) was successful in the ballot and that he chose this motion. These Friday morning debates on Northern Ireland have provided a valuable opportunity to explore issues related to the Province. Today, we have the additional bonus that the debate is taking place in the shadow of the speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last night, in which he positively restated the position as he sees it in the light of the joint declaration.

I am intrigued by accusations that last night my right hon. and learned Friend was indulging in clarification. I do not mean to suggest for one moment that anything he says could be boring, but we have heard what he said last night before and he was merely restating a well-definded position, which was first stated in the House on 15 December. Virtually every phrase in his speech can be found on the floppy disks of the word processors in the Northern Ireland Office which contain the texts of his previous speeches. It is advancing rather far to say that it was a clarification; it was a restatement of a well-defined position.

About five weeks have passed since the joint declaration. Sufficient time has elapsed and sufficient developments have taken place since then for it to be worth while to take stock of where we stand. From that point of view, I warmly welcome the speech by the Secretary of State last night. A number of its salient features are well worth bearing in mind. First, he once again reminded his audience that the joint statement is not a settlement in itself but the framework through which peace may be found and that it is very much to be seen as complementing and underpinning the talks process. That is always worth repeating, because I have encountered a mistaken belief in many comments in the media and from constituents that the joint declaration was a settlement, which would or would not be signed and achieve the desired objective. It is a means rather than an end.

I was glad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend quote again the words of Cardinal Daly:

"The Declaration excludes no-one and predetermines no single political or constitutional future. Nothing is excluded except the use of violence for political ends."

At this stage in the proceedings one must be wary of becoming too bogged down in conditional debates about what may or may not be on the agenda in the event that Sinn Fein-IRA declare an end to violence and serious talks start.

In his speech last night to the Trinity College Dublin dining club, my right hon. and learned Friend drew attention to the fact that the joint declaration was a balanced document with reassurances to the two traditions within Northern Ireland. I noted with interest the question of the hon. Member for Newry—I am sorry; I cannot remember the constituency——

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): There are certainly doubts about it at present. It used to be known as Newry and Armagh, but who knows what the future holds?

Mr. Hunter: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. His question yesterday afternoon demonstrated an awareness that the Government's presentation had been insensitive to nationalist feelings. I deeply regret the fact that he has formed that opinion because I am sure that it was not the Government's intention or that of any hon. Member who has spoken publicly on the joint declaration.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising the subject as I welcome an opportunity to compliment the Secretary of State on his remarks last night on the matter that I raised yesterday. I said that in every public utterance by the Prime Minister on the subject there has not been one iota of recognition that within Northern Ireland and the nationalist community there are people who do not support violence and whose sensitivities and views have to be

taken into account. I ask all hon. Members and the Government to examine every statement made by the Prime Minister and refute what I have said.

Mr. Hunter: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that observation, which I am sure will be borne in mind.

The joint declaration certainly contains assurances to the nationalist tradition within Northern Ireland. I believe that it also contains the assurances that Unionists can look to and expect. I have never concealed the fact that I regard myself as a staunch Unionist and I am satisfied that the document is sufficiently balanced to protect what, as a Unionist, albeit an English one, I regard as very precious indeed: the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. The document is balanced and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State can be congratulated for reminding us forcefully of its balanced nature.

Last night, my right hon. and learned Friend also spoke of the "golden threads" in the joint declaration: agreement and self determination. With those words he can be seen to echo the theme of the speech by the Prime Minister of the Republic on 10 January—when Mr. Reynolds said that there was no room for "coercion" in any new settlements that may emerge.

As for reactions to the joint declaration in the past five weeks, I do not believe that there are any real grounds for optimism, in the light of the available evidence, that Sinn Fein-IRA will renounce violence. That is deeply to be regretted. My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham summarised that matter, so I need not go into it in depth, but the search for clarification is a will-o'-the-wisp—a game of diplomacy, which is being pursued to blur the joint declaration and to initiate meaningful negotiations before the rejection of violence.

Perhaps insufficient attention has been paid to the six principles that Mr. Adams pronounced in an interview with *The Sunday Tribune* at the beginning of January. That interview with the editor, Mr. Vincent Browne, could not encourage one to believe that a positive response from Sinn Fein-IRA was likely. I must highlight the sentence in the article in which Mr. Adams says:

> "The six counties cannot have a right to self determination, that is a matter for the Irish people as a whole".

It is regrettable that that remains his position.

The violence has continued and I therefore do not believe that one can look ahead with great optimism——

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): To follow on from the intervention by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), from the way in which my hon. Friend is talking one would think that Sinn Fein-IRA represented the nationalist community. It does not. Is not it time that people were reminded that it has little electoral support in the Province and even less in the Republic? There are some people here and in the Republic who are not enthusiastic about the use of violence and indeed rightly condemn it. We should be reminded of that time and again.

Mr. Hunter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, which reminds us of the argument that is often put forward by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who has tried to draw a parallel between Mr. Adams and the Sinn Fein/IRA movement and past colonial situations. The great difference and the fundamental flaw in the right hon. Gentleman's argument is that Gerry Adams is not a prime minister or president-in-waiting of a united Ireland; nor is Sinn Fein/IRA like the African National Congress—a political party waiting to take over the reins of power. The parallel does not exist. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) reminded us, only a very small minority of extreme republicans adhere to violence.

There is no value in indulging in any Dublin-bashing at this time. Nevertheless, the speech of 10 January by the Prime Minister of the Republic has commanded much attention. In one or two respects, it did not help. As we have already referred to questions that were asked yesterday, I shall, if I may, expand on mine, which I tried to get over amid a lot of noise just before questions to the Prime Minister started.

In the speech of 10 January, three or four enigmatic lines have attracted insufficient attention. The Prime Minister of the Republic said:

> "It is important to note that the requirement for the consent of a majority is related by the Declaration to the constitutional issue. It does not mean that all forms of political progress or other decisions are subject . . . to a similar block."

It greatly disturbed me to read those lines. They strike me as hard to reconcile with other aspects of the joint declaration.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Is the hon. Gentleman telling me and the House that people who represent less than 2 per cent. of the United Kingdom should be able to dictate to Government what their policy is on everything?

Mr. Hunter: I think that the hon. Gentleman misses the point entirely.

Mr. Hume: No; the hon. Gentleman missed the point that the Irish Prime Minister was making.

Mr. Hunter: I am delighted with the clarification. Let us continue the debate afterwards. It is certainly not my understanding of the words that I have just quoted, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman and I can meet in due course and he can explain why I have failed to understand what the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland was trying to say.

The other observation that I must make about the speech of 10 January is about the use of the concept of persuasion and persuading. In the joint declaration, the word "persuade" or the words "to be a persuader" or "persuasion" are not used. The declaration speaks in terms of encouraging, facilitating and enabling an agreement. There is a subtle difference between being a persuader to an agreement and encouraging, facilitating and enabling a decision. The former suggests directing towards a certain conclusion, whereas the joint declaration perceives no predetermined conclusion whatever.

As for the way forward, I hope that the talks that have taken place, especially between the Minister of State and the constitutional parties, will advance and that something approaching the three-stranded process which was explored a few months ago can be resumed. It is important that the process is not halted by the continued refusal of Sinn Fein/IRA to accept a ceasefire, to accept peace and to renounce violence. I look forward to a meaningful dialogue round the table between the constitutional parties. In that respect, I have noted carefully what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said a few minutes ago. That dialogue is to be accompanied by the continued remorseless assault on terrorism from both sides of the traditional divide in Northern Ireland.

10.33 am

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In the past 25 years, I have had many traumatic experiences in relation to violence in the area in which I live. The one that touched me most happened when I visited the scene after an incident in my constituency at the very end of the year. It was the period of new year—a period of celebration and joy. When I arrived at Crossmaglen, the body of a young soldier was lying on the ground. It was covered with a blanket. I asked a number of people what his name was, and the thing that touched me most was that no one could tell me his name, not even those associated with him. There was a dead body lying in the street of my constituency, on a part of my country, but no one knew his name, and no one knew he had lost his life.

That affected me deeply, and it affected the people of Crossmaglen deeply. They had read in their newspapers that morning a semantic argument from members of Sinn Fein and the IRA as to what words meant—what "agreement" was or was not, or what "self determination" was or was not—and yet, at the same time as they issued their new year's messages, a body lay there and we could not put a name on it.

It is from that point of view that I want to address my words today. I address them to that section of the community from which I come in the north of Ireland—that section of the community which is represented by myself and my hon. Friends in the House. That section of the community has never supported violence or the type of coercion that is inherent in that which has motivated violence down through the years. It has accepted always the democratic right to work for its objectives and its aspirations through the political process, through any forum, be it in the House, in Northern Ireland or wherever it may be.

For that reason, I sought to remind the House yesterday that there was another view, that it is the substantial view of nationalist people in the north of Ireland, and that it is held by much more than 65 per cent. of that population in political terms and much more in non-political terms. That view is that there is no place for violence in the solution to our problems; that we must solve them through the democratic political process, and that we must do so by peaceful means.

It is from that starting point, and for that reason, that I wish to address my arguments directly to those who would contravene what I believe to be a legitimate political philosophy and a legitimate political approach. I shall refer to two subjects that cropped up in the debate and were mentioned yesterday.

First, I can understand the obvious impatience with the delay in reaching a settlement and a solution to the problem as a result of the joint declaration that was made by the two Prime Ministers on 15 December. I can feel the frustration. I ask hon. Members, however, to remember that it took 18 months of negotiation and discussion for the four constitutional parties in the north of Ireland—or was it five?—the Democratic Unionist party, the Ulster Unionist party, the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party, to decide how to get to the negotiating table. That was with no guns, with none of the baggage that Sinn Fein and the IRA have and with none of the problems that may or may not arise in terms of the matters that were mentioned by the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman).

In the light of that, I would ask people to be patient and to realise that there will be no quick way of getting to the negotiating table in much more difficult circumstances. If it takes the constitutional parties 18 months to do it, please accept the fact that if the peace process is to work, as I hope and believe that it will, we have to exercise patience.

Let us not succumb to a danger that I have heard so often—"Let us give them until such-and-such a date and then . . ." Then what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That is what people should ponder very carefully indeed The "then what?" options are very limited and very dangerous and we have had them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) says, for 25 years. I make that point because it is valid and it is worth remembering the difficulties of the political process when one is trying to end what is a virtual war. It is something that we must all deal with sensitively.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the terms in which the expectation of peace were announced raised hope to levels where peace could not be delivered?

Mr. Mallon: The desire for peace among all of us is and was such that we want, did want, and still want peace. If there was a little hyperbole in what any of us may have said, it may be forgiven in respect of that hope and desire to save lives and to create peace.

The second point that requires clarification is the difference between the principle of consent in the definition of self determination, as contained in the joint declaration, and a veto over policy. That is a substantial difference. I hope that we have been dealing with the element of self determination and the consent which is inherent in that, deriving not only from the joint declaration, but from the circumstances and realities of Northern Ireland. One cannot have a change in the constitutional position without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. That is inherent in their position, in their numbers and in the geographical factors as well as in the joint declaration, and we abide by that.

Does that mean that that same majority of Northern Ireland has a veto over British Government policy? Does it mean that that same majority has a veto over its relationship with the Republic of Ireland? Does that mean that that veto can aye or nay what the British Government may decide to do with or without the Irish Government? There is a clear distinction between that principle of consent in self determination and the implied or assumed veto over what decisions may be made by a sovereign Government. That should be cleared up carefully, and I believe that the hon. Member for Gillingham would accept that distinction and that it would be intolerable to have anything else.

Mr. Molyneaux: I do not think that anyone would imagine that Ulster Unionists, Democratic Unionists, or SDLP Members, even when they are combined, would claim to have a veto over how the United Kingdom is governed or over British policy. The hon. Gentleman will remember a dramatic demonstration of that when the education order was passing through the House. The three Irish parties represented in the House voted unanimously against it and Her Majesty's Government defied our wishes and went ahead with it to such an extent that bishops of the Catholic Church sought a judicial review to reverse the decision. Surely that was an example of the fact that, in the

end, as three minority parties in the House of Commons, we bow to the wishes of the greater number of Members of Parliament in the House.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for confirming that; but to take that on to a different plain, I repeat that there is a substantive and crucial difference between the element of consent in the joint declaration and the requirement to meet the political needs and desires of the majority of people of the north of Ireland on every other issue.

Clarification has become almost a weasel word. I have heard it analysed as the difference between analysis and explanation. I shall leave the Secretary of State to speak about whatever clarification may or may not have meant in his fine speech last night. Those who have read the speech and do not seek further clarification or interpretation have not been reading the same speech as I have. I leave it to the Secretary of State to expand on that if he so wishes. Let those who can read, read.

Mr. Frank Field: On the point of clarification, I have not had an opportunity before to say how important I think the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has been. However, I am puzzled in that, when the Downing street declaration became public, great emphasis was put on how similar it was to the Hume-Adams dialogue/agreement. Since then, Mr. Adams has said that he has had substantial difficulties in accepting the Downing street agreement. Would not it help the process of clarification if the Hume-Adams statement, agreement, document, whatever it is, were published so that some of us can consider the differences and draw our own conclusions, both in the name of clarification and in trying to speed the debate along?

Mr. Mallon: I have referred to the fact that, on the issue of self determination, there is not a whisker between what is in the joint declaration and what is in the document to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I shall stand by that statement at all times. It is not for me to publish the Hume-Adams document; it is for the authors of the document to make it public. I am sure that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) would agree.

Mr. Frank Field: Of course, I accept that it is not our property to do so, but does the hon. Gentleman accept that it would help our deliberations if it was published?

[*Hon. Members:* "No."]

Mr. Mallon: I will give way to anybody who would like to elaborate on that matter.

Mr. Hunter: Would the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) clarify this point? If the Hume-Adams document is so similar to the joint declaration, why did Adams's six principles go so far from the joint declaration a fortnight or so later?

Mr. Mallon: The publication of the Hume-Adams document is not a matter for me; but the truth and integrity of what is said about the means through which we are trying to get a resolution of the problem is a matter for me. The IRA and Sinn Fein tell us that that centres on the core issue of self determination which is defined in the joint declaration. I emphasise that there is not a whisker of difference between the definition in the joint declaration and what is contained in the document to which the hon. Member for Birkenhead referred.

I shall go further than that and say that, in the joint statement issued after the meeting on 10 April between Mr. Hume and Mr. Adams, it became public and was clearly recognised that the problem could be resolved only by peaceful means, that it could be resolved only through agreement and, that the Irish people have the right to self determination—there is a difference of opinion on that—that it can be achieved only by agreement and, for that agreement to be viable, it must have the agreement of all the people and all the traditions in the island of Ireland. If that is not saying the same thing as that contained in the joint declaration, again we are not reading well.

Mr. Peter Robinson: As I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument in relation to the issue of whether clarification should be given to the Provisional IRA on the Downing street declaration, does he view the prize of peace as being of sufficient importance that clarification, if necessary, should be given? If he feels that, although it is not his responsibility to clarify the Downing street declaration, will he give us his viewpoint in relation to whether there should be a publication of the Hume-Adams proposal? Should not there be clarification of that, and has not the hon. Gentleman got a view on that matter?

Mr. Mallon: I have spent the past five minutes trying to provide clarification of that document. Let me repeat what I said in case there are any mistakes: in my view, there is not a whisker of difference between the factor of self determination in the document and the document that is now known as the joint declaration. I am providing the clarification, for which hon. Members have asked, as publicly as I can.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I appreciate that the document is not the hon. Gentleman's and he therefore cannot decide to publish it, but does he not understand that the fact that the document is not in the public domain is adding to the confusion about clarification? As it was the leader of the hon. Gentleman's party who had the discussions, who produced the document and who received the praise of everyone in this House in respect of the document—and rightly so—and for moving matters forward, why can we not see that document? What is so secret? If the document is not published, surely that will give more people ammunition to talk about confusion and misunderstanding. Will not the hon. Gentleman ask the leader of his party to publish the document, place it in the public domain and let us all see it?

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Lady will recognise that I can give my opinion in terms of what I see on a piece of paper before me as I have done in terms of the document to which the hon. Lady referred and in relation to the joint declaration. I am giving my view and I stand by it. I stand by it because if people use the issue of self determination to kill other human beings, it is my duty to challenge it if that is the reason they give for taking away the lives of other human beings.

Mr. Couchman: I hate to belabour the point, but there were two parties to the Hume-Adams document—the hon. Gentleman's party leader who is sitting beside him today, who presumably is not blocking publication of the document, and Adams and Sinn Fein. Is Sinn Fein blocking publication? Which part of Hume-Adams is blocking publication?

Mr. Mallon: I can say which part of the process is assuring the House that if the IRA believes that the core element is self determination, but it is continuing to kill people because of that core element, that is spurious and cynical because there is no difference between what the IRA agreed in the other document and what is in the joint declaration. Surely that is the importance and the essence of it all.

There are no valid grounds for misunderstanding or misrepresenting the purpose of the declaration as opposed to the text and interpretation. With regard to purpose, the declaration does not claim to be a solution to the Irish problem. If it did, it would rightly be condemned for failing to deal adequately with many aspects, including security and north-south structures. The declaration is not an attempt to provide a solution.

However, the declaration opens the door very widely to a solution. It does that by recognising formally, and in a way without precedent in Anglo-Irish relationships, that the future of Ireland is to be decided and agreed by Irish people alone. British Cabinet papers of the past 30 years that were released recently show how matters have advanced in that regard in relation to what could not be obtained from the British Government even 30 years ago.

If what the declaration states had been said early enough and often enough, we might not have these problems. There would probably not have been an IRA. Indeed, I have gone further and have said that, had that been stated in 1921 during negotiations, there would not have been a civil war on the island of Ireland. However, it has now been said. Let us now all recognise that it places the determination of the future of Ireland for the first time in the hands of the Irish people alone.

The declaration is consistent with that principle and it leaves the shape of the future arrangements for the island of Ireland for negotiation between the Irish people themselves. It confines itself to the essential purpose of offering

"the people of Ireland, North and South, the basis to agree that from now on their differences can be negotiated and resolved exclusively by peaceful, political means."

That is a singular radical step and it could transform the situation in Ireland and open an entirely new political vista free from the straitjacket of violence. It is a challenge for every form of leadership on the island of Ireland, but especially for the leadership of the paramilitary organisations.

The declaration goes further than ever before to offer a political alternative which paramilitaries can operate and acknowledge. It assumes that they resort to violence not from any psychological preference, but as a last resort in terms of their own particular logic. The declaration seeks explicitly to be the starting point for an alternative political approach which will be meaningful for all, as both aspirations are reflected in it with no qualifications or limitations save that which arises from the abiding reality of the other tradition in each case which neither side can wish away.

The nationalists cannot wish away the Unionist people of the north of Ireland and they do not want to do that. Nor can they wish away the strength of the Unionist position in the north of Ireland even if they did want to do that. Unionists cannot wish away the substantial section of the population which is non-Unionist and nationalist and, I believe, they do not want to do that. Nor can they wish away our aspiration towards Irish unity, even if they did want to do that. That is the abiding reality we live with and, as we live with it, the declaration becomes crucially more important for all of us.

Coming from the nationalist tradition, I am sure that there is no one within that nationalist tradition who will take upon himself lightly and justify the awesome decision to take people's lives, having for the first time had that clear understanding and recognition formally that it is for the Irish people to decide what the future of the island of Ireland may be.

There are certain basic fundamentals to republicanism which I would like to measure against the joint declaration. Does the island of Britain still assert colonial rights over the island of Ireland—the basis of republican views? The declaration states:

"The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self determination"

alone, as of right without outside impediment. There is no economic or strategic selfish reason for Britain remaining in Northern Ireland. That tenet of republicanism surely cannot stand up.

Are the British Government setting limits to what Parnell, a former Member of this House, called the "march of the nation"? In the declaration, the British Government formally accept that the right of self determination of the Irish people can be exercised

"on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland if that is their wish."

The declaration also states that agreement among all the people living in Ireland

"may, as of right, take the form of agreed structures for the island as a whole, including a united Ireland achieved by peaceful means".

Does that tenet of republicanism stand up when it is put beside the declaration?

Would the British Government thwart the process of agreement between the people living in Ireland? According to the joint declaration, the two Governments formally pledge

"the role of the British Government will be to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of . . . agreement"

between all the people of the island of Ireland. They

"make a solemn pledge to promote co-operation at all levels"

and to

"create institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest."

There is nothing to say that the British Government will thwart the wishes of the Irish people.

Is it that the declaration does not determine and advance what the new arrangements for the island might be? One of the ironies of what are euphemistically called community activists in Northern Ireland has been that the document has been criticised because the British Government do not decide what nationalists will have. Surely, if the British Government were to decide what the Irish people would have, it would be a contradiction of the self determination that the very same community activists have been demanding for so long. It is a contradiction of the very essence of self determination.

The declaration also holds out prospects for a forum for peace and reconciliation to heal the divisions caused by violence over the past years. The persistent taint of atrocity has caused many people, particularly in the Republic of Ireland, to reject not just violent nationalism but nationalism itself. A border reinforced by public opinion in the south would be a formidably permanent one.

Let me send clearly a message to the IRA and Sinn Fein. They have done more damage to the cause of Irish unity in the past 25 years, through their violence, than any other single factor. Let me assure them that they have gone a long way to creating within the Republic of Ireland a partitionist point of view which, in many ways, has become anti-national and anti-nationalist. If the IRA and Sinn Fein want partition to continue, they are going exactly the right way about it. That message must go out to them very loud and clear. I, as a nationalist and as a republican in the true sense of the word, want to take this opportunity of again saying that to them, straight from the Floor of the House.

We have debated self determination at length, but I make one basic observation about it. The vast majority of people in Ireland, north and south, Unionists and nationalists, self determined long ago that there should not be violence on the island of Ireland. Who is standing in the way of that right to self determination? It is those who are carrying out violence. We have the right as Irish people, north and south, to determine that our problems cannot be solved through violence. Yet those people who make issues of self determination are the people who are negating the right that the Irish people have already taken on that issue, that violence should not be the way in which we pursue our objectives.

I am conscious of the time, but I make one further point. We have heard about confirmation, elaboration and interpretation, but I finish by asking for clarification, or asking others to clarify. In this case, I do not request the Government for clarification. I shall ask the leaders of Sinn Fein and the IRA now to have the courage to give three elements of clarification to their supporters, voters, members and activists. First, I ask them to be honest enough publicly to say to them, "Violence will never achieve the objective of a united Ireland." They must say that to them. If they have the courage of their convictions and the integrity of leadership, they must spell out the reality that we can never unite people by killing them and that Irish unity will never be achieved by violence. I ask the leaders of the IRA and Sinn Fein to make that public declaration to their own members, not to the rest of the people of Ireland who already believe it. That is what leadership is about.

Secondly, I ask them to tell their own membership, supporters and voters that, in essence, they have agreed to the principle of self determination for the Irish people, with the consent of the majority of the people of the north of Ireland. That is another piece of honesty which I should like to see instilled. Also, I ask them to explain and clarify that self determination without that principle of consent is not self determination but coercion. There is a little bit of clarification, interpretation and elaboration which might help the situation.

Thirdly—and this is very important—I ask them, as with the role that my hon. Friends and I have chosen, to become the persuaders of those who do not agree with Irish unity and do not want it. The logic is that if I accept the principle of consent in self determination, my role as a nationalist is to persuade those who are not that their future would be better in a country which was unified in whatever form that unification might take. That is the role of nationalists if we wish to pursue the noble objective of creating Irish unity.

Will Sinn Fein and the IRA join us in becoming the persuaders, through the political process, through peaceful means, through persuasion and through every form of political action that will not and cannot entertain or include violent action against anyone on the island of Ireland?

Mr. Barry Porter: How long would the hon. Gentleman give Sinn Fein and its supporters to weigh up his very wise words?

Mr. Mallon: I do not put time scales on the matter. Time scales have no place in politics. I made my position clear when I said that it took the constitutional parties 18 months to get started, even to get to the table, never mind obtain any type of agreement.

I make my point about persuasion. There are those within the process who have said to me, "But that is a pipedream; you will never get Unionists to agree to any form of Irish unity."

I finish with two very pertinent quotations. The first is:

"There is no one in the world who will be more pleased to see an absolute unity in Ireland than I would."

I do not want to enter into the game of "Who said that?", but it is relevant. It was Sir Edward Carson, a former Member of this House, in January 1921. The second quotation is:

"In this island we cannot live always separated from one another. We are too small to be apart or for the border to be there for all time. The change will not come in my time but it will come."

I will not enter into the business of saying, "Who said that?", but it was James Craig, Lord Craigavon, the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. Persuasion can, will and must work.

11.8 am

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): It might be for the convenience of the House if I now make what I hope will be a reasonably brief intervention to offer a Government view of the issues that have been addressed to eloquently so far. The motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) invites the House to assert

"its abhorrence and rejection of all violence, from whatever quarter, perpetrated in place of democratic persuasion."

We have just listened to a devastating examination of the claim of the IRA and Sinn Fein to justify the perpetration of violence in the circumstances that apply now, after the joint declaration by the two Governments. We listened to a penetrating examination of those claims by my hon. Friend and other hon. Members—indeed, all who have spoken in the debate so far. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend not only on his choice of subject but on his most careful and, if I might say so, perceptive and moving speech.

My hon. Friend mentioned the meeting of the British-Irish interparliamentary body, which he was attending when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach signed the declaration in Downing street on 15 December. I was to have answered questions before that body that morning and was looking forward to it, but I had to withdraw at the last moment in order to be present at Downing street. I regret that, and perhaps there will be another occasion when I can attend that body. But I entirely agree with my hon. Friend when he describes the declaration signed that day as an historic agreement—it patently is—which offers a real opportunity to see an end to the inexcusable violence which has so marred the image of Northern Ireland.

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

My hon. Friend described the joint declaration as a declaration for peace. That is exactly right. It is profoundly for peace and profoundly against violence. Peace—not peace at whatever price, but peace properly attained—and an agreed political settlement are the Government's twin objectives in Northern Ireland. Each of the objectives supports the other, and we share them with the Irish Government.

To my mind, the motion's reference to the "insistent demand" of the people accurately captures the present mood for peace that is so apparent in Northern Ireland today. Violence leads nowhere; in a democracy, it is wrong, inexcusable and always revolting. Last year, 84 human beings were killed in Northern Ireland alone—murdered. All of them were killed by terrorists; none by the police or Army. Hundreds more were injured. We do not and will not forget in particular Tim Parry or Jonathan Ball, the children of Warrington, or the victims of Shankill or Greysteel. They and the other victims were not mere statistics. Sometimes, we give the impression that we treat them as mere statistics as we compare one year with another, but we do not mean to do so. They are not mere statistics; they are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

People demand that the violence stop now. There is a great yearning everywhere to hear that the days of the bomb and the bullet are over for good, and that those who wish to seek political change in Northern Ireland—and why should they not?—will now follow the democratic path, and only the democratic path.

The joint declaration sets out in full public view a clear framework for peace provided by both Governments. As my hon. Friend said, it is not a settlement in itself. It is a framework in which a settlement can be achieved, and it removes any doubt that violence can somehow be justified. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and the leader of his party have made that abundantly clear. On 4 January, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said:

"past reasons given by the republican movement for armed struggle no longer exist."

The declaration is clear for all to see. As the Taoiseach said last night, it is not open to renegotiation.

Let me make it clear that the declaration places nobody's interests at risk. It represents the shared view of the two Governments on how to pursue peace, stability and reconciliation through agreement. It represents a balanced statement of the constitutional principles and political realities that safeguard the vital interests of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland—and I stress the word all. The words of Cardinal Daly have already been cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). Cardinal Daly said:

"The Declaration excludes no-one and pre-determines no single political or constitutional future. Nothing is excluded except the use of violence for political ends".

That is precisely what the two Governments intended.

In the past, the use of violence in one form or another on many sides has led to much of the pain and division that we see today. This is a cause of real and general regret. Today, both Governments and most people believe that the way to break this vicious circle is to stick rigorously to the principles of agreement, consent and democracy. The declaration is founded on those principles. I suggest that its most important characteristic is its balance.

For those who support the Union, the declaration offers real reassurance. In it, the Prime Minister reaffirms the constitutional guarantee and declares that the British Government will uphold the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the specific issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland. The wishes of the people of Northern Ireland on this point are and will remain decisive for the reason given by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh—self determination that is not based on consent is not self determination at all; it is coercion.

Elsewhere in the declaration, the Taoiseach states:

"It would be wrong to attempt to impose a united Ireland, in the absence of the freely-given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland",

and he accepts, on behalf of the Irish Government,

"that the democratic right of self determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".

In the event of an overall political settlement, the Irish Government undertake to put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland. The declaration therefore offers the key reassurance to the people of Northern Ireland that their future lies in their own hands.

Today, I reiterate that while Northern Ireland, by its own volition, remains part of the United Kingdom, all its people can continue to count on the whole-hearted commitment of the British Government to upholding them in that status, with all the entitlements and obligations that that entails.

On the other side of the coin, to those who hope to see a sovereign and united Ireland, the declaration gives reassurance that their aspirations, when pursued by peaceful means, are fully legitimate. Reassuring those who are encouraged to believe that the British Government have narrow, colonial or strategic ambitions in Northern Ireland, the declaration says that, on the contrary, they have no selfish strategic or economic interest there. Our primary interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland established by agreement among all the people who live there.

Accordingly, no single outcome to the process of agreement is ruled out in advance. Nor will any be ruled out in the event. We accept a binding obligation to introduce the necessary legislation to give effect to any measure of agreement on future relationships in Ireland. That is for the people living in Ireland freely to determine without external impediment. But, equally, the outcome cannot be predetermined.

The declaration commits us to encourage, facilitate and enable all the people living in Ireland to achieve agreement—not agreement of a particular character, but simply agreement—through a process of dialogue and co-operation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland. The declaration provides explicit recognition of the aspirations of both the main traditions. Above all, it emphasises the need for agreement and consent, and for devising a stable future.

It specifically asserts:

"The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland as a whole, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish".

Both Governments will stick by the declaration. We have laboured to produce it for many months, and it is going to stand.

We want to know, together with millions of people around the world to say nothing of these islands, whether all those who are now engaged in violence will recognise that there is clear encouragement to end the violence, and to open the way to political dialogue. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly pointed out that talk of clarification is but a smokescreen to distract attention from that crucial question.

The House should know that the Prime Minister has today placed in the Library a letter, unsigned but written on Mr. Adams's headed notepaper, together with the reply which was issued yesterday. The letter talks of clarification of the joint declaration, but does not give particulars of anything that needs to be clarified. Instead, it seeks to reopen issues for negotiation by pointing back to a position that was attributed to the Irish Government in June last year.

Mr. Benn: Would I be wrong in thinking that all of the correspondence with Sinn Fein that the Secretary of State published during last year was, in effect, the British Government seeking clarification from them about what might be done? Is the word clarification quite such a problem when, in fact, we are discussing talks about talks? Is not that a very familiar procedure in any peacemaking process?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I dealt with that matter at Question Time yesterday. It is perfectly true to say that during the exchanges which were carried out through the channel of communication in the years going back to 1990, the Government did clarify their thinking and sought clarification in return. That is a very different position from that which applies today when, after many months of discussion, the two Governments have made a declaration which sets out constitutional principles and the political realities which govern—in their view—the future of Northern Ireland.

If that document, which has been fashioned after consultation on a wide scale, were to be glossed, or if it were to have interpretations placed upon it, it begins to unravel. It is then induced that the process inevitably becomes one of negotiation when clarification, thus defined, is entered into at the request of an outside party. That is why both Governments have said that they do not propose to do that.

Mr. Benn: This is the core of the current argument, and I am grateful to the Secretary of State. If the Downing street declaration was, as he said, a framework and not a solution—the means by which a solution could be achieved—is it unreasonable to suppose that the framework should be fully understood before it is entered into by those who are parties in the matter? I am trying to assist, and not to obstruct, what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is saying. Will the statement, "This is the declaration and there will be no explanation—take it or leave it" increase the prospect for a positive response which everybody in the House would like?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Of course, everybody hopes for —indeed demands—a positive response. However, the document is substantial and sets out a framework for peace in a way which makes it clear that only the absence or the giving up of violence is required before there would begin a process of exploratory talks. Those talks would begin within some three months, within which three separate factors can be discussed. I will come to those in a moment. I suggest that that is when clarification could be appropriate.

That would be the time when it would be possible to clarify what is to be done to ensure that Sinn Fein may enter into the political process. That is a way in which clarification can be obtained of the consequences of giving up violence. However, it is violence alone that prevents that from happening at the moment. The first stage of the route to participation in politics is already as clear as it possibly could be, and it is that stage which it should take now. I do not want there to be any doubt about it. We cannot add to, take away from, gloss or interpret that text. We shall not clarify it, because it speaks for itself and, so far as we are concerned, it will continue to do so.

So I say to Sinn Fein and its leaders address the issue that counts. They should heed the overwhelming desire among the people of both traditions of Ireland, north and south, to see an end to terrorism. If they call for it to end now and for good—they claim they want to—then, once their good faith is plain, we will engage in exploratory dialogue within three months. We will not negotiate before they have disclaimed violence.

It is already in the public domain what the purpose of that explanatory dialogue would be. It has been there since my statement of 29 November, and there is nothing new in it. It would be threefold: to explore the basis upon which Sinn Fein would come to be admitted to an inclusive political talks process, to which the British Government are committed, but without anticipating negotiations within that process; to exchange views on how Sinn Fein would be able, over a period, to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland; and to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

It is in this exploratory dialogue that clarification, as I have said, could be appropriate—not clarification of the joint declaration but of the three processes. It is significant, when testing whether the claims that clarification of the declaration is needed are bona fide, that I am aware that there is no specific particular of which clarification has yet been sought.

The first stage of the route into political dialogue lies straight and clear before Sinn Fein. It cannot be made more clear, and that is the route Sinn Fein should take if it truly wishes to represent, in political dialogue rather than by violence, those who have voted for it.

As has been said in the debate, if the violence were to end, it would create a new era for Northern Ireland, an era in which opportunities which have been denied it for the past 20 years again become available. It is difficult to put a limit on the possibilities if violence were to end. Paramilitary violence has cast such a cloud—a pall would be a better word—over Northern Ireland.

It is only in response to that violence that troops are on the streets of Northern Ireland in such numbers. It is the response to violence in Northern Ireland that requires gallant young men and women to accept the risk that their lives may be taken in an instant by less than heroic villains, who take over people's houses and who treat them with ruthless cruelty. They hit and then run, and they sully disgustingly the cause of Irish nationalism. It is to enable the forces of law and order to combat violence that

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

Parliament renews our very necessary emergency legislation. However, were violence to come to an end for good, the need for all of those measures and for other responses to violence would also end.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham rightly attached much importance to whether there should be an amnesty as some settlement price or inducement to bring violence to an end. Whatever happens, the rule of law must be upheld. So I endorse what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said on the subject. There must be no misunderstanding. There are no political prisoners in Northern Ireland or any other part of the United Kingdom.

Terrorist crime, both past and future, will continue to be vigorously investigated by the police with the aim of bringing the perpetrators to justice. That must be so. There is at present no let-up in this, and there will be none. Those convicted after due process of law must expect to serve their sentences according to law. One vital feature of any peaceful and civilised society is respect for the rule of law, which means the consistent application of the legal process to all its members without partiality. There can be no compromise on this.

I turn lastly to the consequences for building on the progress already made in the talks process, if violence comes to an end.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Secretary of State think that a useful step in the peace process might well be to lift the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein, as the Government of the Irish Republic have done, and, as a gesture towards negotiations, to lift the exclusion order against the president of Sinn Fein to enable him to travel to London to put his views and perhaps further the peace process?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: If Sinn Fein announces that it no longer justifies the use of violence and turns away from terrorism, there will be no need for special legislation that spares the people of the United Kingdom the humiliation, indignity and gall of not only suffering terrorist attacks but seeing the perpetrators of those attacks justify them, with their words broadcast into every sitting room in the land. That could go. As I made clear yesterday, the Government's position is that the justification for introducing that legislation in 1988 is no less strong today than it was then.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has spoken greatly as a lawyer about the rule of law and so on. If Mr. Adams is guilty of an offence, why is not he taken before the courts and convicted? If he is not guilty of an offence, why is not he allowed as a member of the United Kingdom—which the Secretary of State proclaims as a democratic country—to travel to any part of the United Kingdom? The denial of civil liberties in Britain is the price that we are paying for the policy that has been pursued.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The right hon. Gentleman speaks as if each of those matters derogates from the rule of law. But each of those matters is a factor by reason of the will of Parliament. Exclusion orders have been made available by Parliament in the emergency legislation in response to the need to counter terrorism. That is the first instance. The broadcasting legislation is also the will of Parliament. Those matters derive solely from terrorist attacks in this democracy. If the terrorist campaign ceases and a party ceases to justify terrorism, the need for those matters falls.

I was speaking about the political talks and the talks process. I believe that we can build rapidly on the progress that has already been made. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) spoke of the progress that had been made. I am grateful for the words that he used in that regard. The declaration complements and underpins the talks process. We are determined for our part that the talks process covering all three strands should be carried forward intensively, and with additional focus and direction which we will be minded to provide. The need to develop political consensus in Northern Ireland and to create institutions that command support from both sides of the community, within a stable framework of wider relationships, grows ever more urgent.

I have long thought it unsatisfactory that the Secretary of State should hold so many of the reins of power in Northern Ireland. I have said so almost from the beginning of my term of office. I judge that there is growing impatience within the community at the lack of arrangements that would increase local accountability and give Northern Ireland's own political representatives a greater say in the running of the Province's affairs. That is what strand one of the talks is about.

There is also, I believe, increasing recognition of the interests which all the people of Ireland, north and south, have in common. And so, where it is to their mutual advantage, it makes good sense to work closely together and to have arrangements that make this possible. That is the substance of strand two. Finally, there are important issues that only the two Governments can address. They are doing that now, at official level, in strand three.

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach stated on 29 October last year that the two Governments would work together on a framework to carry the process forward. I attach great imortance to developing a clear understanding with the Irish Government. For that reason, I very much welcome the Taoiseach's call on 10 January for

"an early restart to the wider talks process, in order to pursue agreement".

The contribution of the Irish Government is vital if we are to achieve a comprehensive agreement covering all three strands.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the previous maxim stated in the March agreement, which was the basis of the previous talks process, that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed, be the basis of the new talks process?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It was a sensible maxim to adopt at that stage. Whether it will apply to the future talks will be a matter for all those who participate in them.

I am convinced that the talks process, involving the two Governments and the main Northern Ireland parties in Northern Ireland, and based on a broad agenda, offers the best hope of achieving an agreed, durable and comprehensive settlement. The talks process must therefore press forward with all urgency, based on the statement of 26 March 1991. I continue to agree with the view of the independent chairman, Sir Ninian Stephen, that the objectives of the process remain valid and achievable.

There can be no question of allowing the momentum to drop. There is a momentum for agreement; a hunger for the dignity and responsibility of deciding and governing local affairs; a determination to work together throughout the

whole island. The people of Northern Ireland want peace and agreement: the joint declaration provides the framework in which this can be achieved. The talks process offers the way forward. Sinn Fein can join in, or stay out, but it cannot stop the process. It has only one rational choice.

11.36 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): On 15 December my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, speaking on behalf of the Labour party, enthusiastically welcomed the joint declaration as an important first step in the peace process which will lead to a new political settlement. But it is just that—a first step. The declaration represents a framework for peace in Ireland. We hope that it will provide the basis for a just and lasting political settlement for the people of Ireland.

The declaration contained the first official recognition by a British Government of the right to self-determination of the Irish people as a whole—a right to be exercised with the consent of the people of Ireland north and south, freely and concurrently given. In his speech today, the Secretary of State made it clear that he agreed with the Taoiseach's assertion that, under the declaration, the nationalist people of Northern Ireland have had their existing rights of self determination, which they share with the rest of the people of Ireland, formally recognised.

The expression of the right to self determination was not imposed on the Irish people by the British Government. The majority of the Irish people, through their elected parliament and with the agreement of the elected constitutional northern nationalists, have chosen to declare that a united Ireland requires the consent of a majority in the north of Ireland. The two traditions within Ireland can never be united by coercion. So the only way forward must be through peaceful negotiation and dialogue.

We welcome last night's clarification—or, if the Secretary of State prefers, "elucidation", "illumination", "promotion of a more full understanding"—of the declaration by the Government. Last night, reading the Secretary of State's speech, I thought that he came perilously close to becoming a persuader. However, it was a good speech and an important one, as indeed was that of the Taoiseach.

In his speech, the Secretary of State made it clear that no outcome of any talks is precluded other than a united Ireland achieved through coercion and that, equally, no outcome of any talks is predetermined. All other constitutional possibilities and institutional arrangements are, in principle, open to discussion: they are for anybody to put on the agenda.

The Labour party is happy that the Government have confirmed that this is so, because that confronts Sinn Fein and the IRA with a stark choice. They must either openly reveal whether it is their policy to continue to seek the coerced unification of Ireland, or they must abandon violence, enter constitutional dialogue and seek to persuade the Unionists of the merits of Irish unity through peaceful, practical and co-operative politics.

Thus, the Downing street declaration is entirely consistent with Labour's declared policy and that is why we have supported it. We wish to see the unification of Ireland by consent and we oppose any general veto on political progress being given to any political party or community, other than the right of a majority to veto a united Ireland within the north and the expulsion of Northern Ireland from the Union.

Last night, the Secretary of State asserted that the talks process requires

"ideally, the involvement of the two Governments and the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland committed to the democratic process."

While we welcome the Government's reassertion that no single, constitutional political party can veto the talks process, may I ask the Secretary of State to confirm that he did not mean to imply that the Irish Government could conceivably be excluded from any constitutional talks on the future of Northern Ireland?

The joint declaration reiterates the Anglo-Irish Agreement by making it clear that "as of right" Irish unity would be implemented if a majority so wished—just what we have always sought to support in the House. In the absence of consent for Irish unification, we have frequently expressed our wish to encourage all constitutional parties in Ireland, north and south, to agree institutional arrangements that will enable them to live together in peace and prosperity. That can also be part of the dialogue.

The declaration commits both states to foster agreement leading to

"a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island, and between these islands".

The British Government have also committed themselves to reaching an agreement that will

"embrace the totality of relationships".

Those statements recognise what should be plain to all and what the Secretary of State reiterated last night: that there can be no lasting resolution of the conflict in and over Northern Ireland which does not address all the relevant relationships, internal and external, north and south, east and west, between parties in Northern Ireland, between the Republic and Northern Ireland and between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It follows from that, from the declaration and from the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that there are three important matters. First, the Government have said, and the Secretary of State said today, that they still adhere to the three-strand structure of talks agreed in March 1991. Secondly, any attempt to decouple one strand of the talks from the others could be a recipe for failure. Thirdly, the principle holds good that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, because these three strands are inextricably intermingled and if one is pulled out the rest will unravel. Any abandonment or equivocation on those matters will only arouse the deepest suspicions.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is it the official Opposition's view that Dublin should have a real say in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland? That matter was once relevant to stage one of the talks that ceased.

Mr. McNamara: The Opposition's attitude is that one cannot have agreement on strand one which would be acceptable to all in Northern Ireland unless there is a considerable Irish dimension within it.

The Secretary of State signalled last night and said today that he intended to seek a resumption of the round table inter-party talks. While we welcome such a development, we should like the Government to clarify —if I am allowed to use that word—that they do not intend

[Mr. McNamara]

to give focus and direction solely to strand one of the talks. We must never forget that it is equally vital to secure progress on strands two and three.

Last night, the Secretary of State asserted:

"there can be no going back to a system which has the allegiance of, and is operated by, only one part of the community."

We welcome the fact that the Government now appear to preclude any simple majoritarian approach to the establishment of a devolved Government for Northern Ireland under strand one.

In the debate and in his speech last night, the Secretary of State spoke about the need for local political institutions and about giving power back to local assemblies and councils. There may be an argument for that, but I caution the Secretary of State to remember the history of Northern Ireland and the fact that it was precisely in those areas that much of the discrimination and unhappiness that led to the civil rights movement had their origin. If any powers are to be given back, it must be done in a way that will prevent the possibility of the abuse of any of those powers at local level.

It is of particular importance to bear in mind the carryings on of some local authorities in Northern Ireland. It would be a brave man who would be prepared to return powers to some of those councils.

I realise that it can be argued that the very absence of powers may make people operate in that way because they lack the ability to take responsible, authoritative decisions. There may be some substance in that argument, but I repeat that when the councils had power to make important decisions, many of them used those powers arbitrarily in the interests of only one group. One must look carefully at any proposals for returning power to local authorities without adequate safeguards.

The Secretary of State will have noted from my reply to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) that we think that it is wrong to try to get one internal settlement in Northern Ireland which does not have the full support of all the parties and which lacks a substantial Irish dimension.

In a letter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition on the question of the Northern Ireland Select Committee, the Secretary of State said that it had been agreed in the talks on strand one that such a Committee should be established. That may or may not be so, although if it is correct it would seem to be contrary to the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. More importantly, there has been a constant drip of comments on what has or has not been agreed earlier in strand one. It is important to have some understanding of what was or was not agreed, because there are conflicting statements from the different parties. I realise that it is important that the parties negotiate as much as possible in confidence, knowing that statements that they make will not be immediately relayed to the enemy or its supporters —sometimes one is not certain which is which—but statements made since the Brooke talks on the basis of what the Secretary of State said about Sir Ninian Stephen suggest that the information should be more widely distributed.

We welcome the fact that the Government have also fully understood the stark realities of the existence of the two national communities, which look to their respective nation states for protection and the institutional expression of their identities. That is particularly important given the Prime Minister's gloss on paragraph 9 of the declaration in the *Newsletter* of 4 January. The relevant paragraph says that the two Governments will work to create through agreement

"institutions and structures which, while respecting the diversity of the people of Ireland, would enable them to work together in all areas of common interest."

The Prime Minister said that that was simply

"two countries sharing a border on an island"

looking

"for ways to work together that made sense to both."

The message that such language conveyed was that a future Irish dimension would be minor and almost derisory. There should be no preconceived and narrow perception of the future of north-south institutions. Part and parcel of the apparent narrowing down of the agenda by such matters as the Prime Minister's minimalist interpretation of paragraph 9 of the declaration have caused people to ask for precise clarification. So we welcome again the point made clearly by the Secretary of State yesterday evening that there were no inhibititions or preconceived solutions whatever and that any matter could be discussed.

The onus is now on Sinn Fein to respond to the declaration and the clarification that has been given by both Irish and British Governments. Like the British Government, we are and will remain steadfastly committed to encouraging, facilitating and enabling agreement among the people of Ireland through a process of dialogue and co-operation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland.

The challenge is now for Sinn Fein and the IRA to enter that dialogue and seek that co-operation, based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland, which means ending the violence.

11.51 pm

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): The theme on which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) ended his speech has echoed through the debate. It is the absolute justification for my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) having chosen this subject for debate today. It has enabled the House to speak clearly on the matter and, in the case of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), to ask direct questions that must now be addressed by the Sinn Fein leadership. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made clear, no amount of wriggling or trying to find ways to avoid addressing those questions will last. Sinn Fein must now say whether it is prepared to accept the challenge.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh gave a moving description of the murder of a soldier in his constituency. As he described that event, I reflected that what had also shocked the people of Crossmaglen was their knowledge that, whatever excuses had been made for violence in the past, they no longer existed. That death was an outrageous act. Such murders are always outrageous, but that one was even more outrageous because there was simply no excuse for it.

I believe that the possibility of peace still exists. I agree with the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) that there was an unhelpful over-optimism at the start of the process. That is often followed by over-pessimism that the opportunity no longer exists. Clearly, difficult questions must be addressed by the

leadership of Sinn Fein. It must admit that the path on which it set out is not only a dead end but is increasingly recognised as hostile and positively damaging to the cause of nationalism. It is an obstacle to achieving a united Ireland, not a way of advancing it. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh made that point clear.

Another obstacle that has worried me greatly since the publication of the joint declaration is the approach of the media to the subject. The enterprise is a difficult one which needs careful handling, leadership and quiet discussion and I worry that the media's handling of it will not be helpful. I listen to the ever-active Mr. Peter Snow, the persistent Mr. John Humphrys and Sue MacGregor trying to drive people to make statements and corner them on various issues.

It will take considerable leadership of Sinn Fein to deal with some of the issues. Bringing the subjects out into the open, shining a blinding light on them and calling for categorical statements is seriously inimical to the chance of quiet discussion and persuasion that is necessary. I hope that my comments will be taken in an entirely constructive spirit. Newspapers do not have anything like the force and power on this subject as on others. However, when the principal protagonists are challenged on such issues in front of television cameras it raises real difficulties. Every hon. Member listening to me knows the difficulty of facing such interviews. We all wish the peace process well and I hope that the media's responsibility will be recognised in those quarters where it matters.

Today, and in an excellent speech last night, my right hon. and learned Friend echoed the phrase that was used when I was Secretary of Northern Ireland, when we first received approaches, which go back to before 1990. It was said that we did not really mean what we said about the principle of consent in the Anglo-Irish Agreement because there was a secret, strategic reason why Northern Ireland had to remain part of the United Kingdom. That argument went back to the U-boats and Winston Churchill—indeed, some people still thought that it had something to do with the first world war. It illustrated the awful time warp in which some people in the republican movement live. People still thought that there was a secret agenda.

Hon. Members may have seen Mr. Adams's recent comments following the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. He said that we were hearing the language of Lloyd George all over again. I do not think that many hon. Members live on the speeches of Mr. Lloyd George, as they feel that the world has moved on in some respects, but for some people in Ireland it has not. Such views are still very much part of their mythology.

Lloyd George wrote an interesting letter, dated 29 May 1916, to Sir Edward Carson when it was proposed to implement the 1914 legislation. It stated:

> "My dear Carson,
>
> I enclose Greer's draft propositions.
>
> We must make it clear that at the end of the provisional period"—

when the 26 counties would have home rule and the six counties of Ulster would be excluded—

> "Ulster does not, whether she wills it or not, merge in the rest of Ireland."

Lloyd George's comments made it clear that, regardless of the views of its people, there were reasons why Ulster should remain part of the United Kingdom.

I first made the statement that there was no selfish strategic or economic reason that could override the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland. It is due to the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland that it is proud to be part of the United Kingdom —we welcome and value that.

Some people in Sinn Fein are still in a time warp. They believe that we need desperately to keep trade routes open from America to allow corn to come in. They have not heard that Great Britain is now a food and grain exporting country and that, unlike in 1916, the port of Liverpool is no longer regarded as the vital link for the nation's commerce and trade—Southampton, Felixstowe and a few other ports would say that time has moved on. Air travel may have made some small contribution to the change in the position.

"Prisoners of the past" was the phrase that echoed through my right hon. and learned Friend's speech. Sinn Fein must realise that the situation has changed. We are in 1994; 1916 or 1921 are not being fought all over again.

Mr. Mallon: The right hon. Gentleman's reference to Lloyd George prompts me to remind him that there were also two documents during those negotiations—one for Collins and one for Griffith.

Mr. King: Not those negotiations—they were a little earlier. I noted an amusing commentary that the letter to Carson is signed, "Ever sincerely, D. Lloyd George". Sir Edward Carson may have greeted that with certain reservations.

People still seem to believe that we are in the Lloyd George era, but the situation now depends on democratic choice. As the Taoiseach said in his excellent speech last night, no fairer statement of the nationalist ideals could have been made in the Anglo-Irish declaration. As we said in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, although it seems to have taken a little time to sink in, and as we have repeated in the declaration, the future of the people of Northern Ireland is a matter for their consent.

As the Taoiseach said last night, partition may be considered by many to have been wrong, but that wrong, if that is how it is seen, will not be righted by another wrong of coercion. Under the principle of self determination and the generally accepted principles of the United Nations, any transfer of sovereignty must have the consent of those concerned. The idea that sovereignty can be transferred against the wishes of those concerned is clearly unacceptable.

That is why the Taoiseach was right to say to those who wish to achieve Irish unity that there is no short cut to agreement and consent. I respected his comment last night that the agreement must be freely entered into. He added that the agreement might involve an united Ireland, but he accepted that any other form of agreement might be reached between the north and south of Ireland. That is precisely the point. Those who believe in self-determination and in the principle of consent must accept whatever the people wish to achieve.

The challenge, as the House has said with impressive clarity, is that the declaration offers the best opportunity for the cessation of violence that has arisen certainly in the past 20 years, but Sinn Fein finds itself in a catch-22 situation. It has become wedded to violence to achieve its objective, yet the perpetration of that violence is now counterproductive to the objective that it seeks to achieve. With all the history and suffering for its own communities, as it would see it, with the legacy of tragedy, with the number of boys behind the wire, and with whatever

[Mr. King]

mythologies exist, it is not easy for Sinn Fein to recognise that that road is leading nowhere, that times have moved on and that there is now an agreement.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North made the point extremely well. The democratic voice of those in the island of Ireland who pursue the cause of nationalism —the cause which they claim to support—has spoken and has determined the way in which that cause will be pursued: either now, as very much a significant minority, Sinn Fein decides to use the force of coercion and continue its path, or it accepts the democratic route. The question then is, can it accept the challenge of argument? Every act of violence is an admission that it does not believe that it can achieve its aims by persuasion. That is the challenge that it faces. Each atrocity that is committed, each further death, is further confirmation of lack of confidence among members of Sinn Fein in their ability as Irishmen to persuade other Irishmen of their cause. The House has spelt out the matter clearly. We stand absolutely together across the Chamber—in the parties and among the overwhelming majority of those who speak for the people of Northern Ireland—in saying that the opportunity is there. The question is whether Sinn Fein will release the island of Ireland from the pall of violence from which it suffers and give it a chance to enjoy the future that it deserves.

12.16 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I agree that the debate should be set against the background of the historical perspective. There was a debate in the House of Commons in November—November 1641. I looked at the record and it said:

"Monday in the House of Commons they received letters from *Ireland*, intimating that theire troubles are so great, that they have scarce time . . . to write . . . the Rebells doe much increase and presse hard towards *Dublin*"

and that they

"expect Armes and supply from . . . England, France and Spaine."

A letter was sent to ask what the trouble was about. It was, of course, the time of Charles I. The rebels sent a remonstrance, because they were not allowed to worship as they wished. The Government of the day—presumably the then Secretary of State—answered that

"if they would lay down their Armes and repaire to theire owne dwellings, they should have pardon and that they would bee a meanes to the Parliament for the satisfaction of theire demandes."

I am not for going over every atrocity and every horror of Hamar Greenwood and Lloyd George and the rest, but the House of Commons must discuss this in a proper, historical context, because Sinn Fein is a relatively new body. The Fenians were not there all the time. The one consistent element throughout that period is that Britain has governed Ireland, or a part of Ireland. The only contribution that I want to make to the debate—it is not without importance—is that there is a deep British interest in peace in Ireland, apart from the interests of the Irish people themselves. The war, and it is a war, between the British Army and the Irish Republican Army, however small and unrepresentative it may be, is costly in lives, money and the civil liberties of the British people.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: No; I am going to continue my argument. The hon. Lady will have to listen. I have no doubt that she will be called.

I feel that the British people have scarcely been brought into the argument, even by the Government. We have been told about the discussions between the constitutional parties, and there have been the so-called Hume-Adams talks. There have been contacts or exchanges with Sinn Fein. But the British interest has hardly been mentioned.

I feel very strongly about the denial of my civil liberties. I was in the Jubilee Room on Monday when at my suggestion Mr. Hartley, the chairperson of Sinn Fein, presented his version of the exchanges. The room was crowded with television units—Americans, Australians, Swedes and the French—including one from Radio Telefis Eireann. I knew that British television units would be committing a criminal offence if they broadcast the words of a Belfast councillor about an exchange with the British Government.

I felt that my rights were being taken away, as I do when I enter the House and see people being searched. It is about security——

Lady Olga Maitland *rose——*

Mr. Benn: The hon. Lady will have an opportunity to speak. I intend to make my speech because I am entitled to do so.

I invited Mr. Adams to come here to present his side of the peace argument. I announced it in the House after meeting the Speaker. There was a debate—the Secretary of State was present—during which I referred to the visit. Although the right hon. and learned Gentleman knew that the Home Secretary had already banned Mr. Adams, he did not mention it during that debate.

I want to bring the denial of our rights into the argument. Where have we got to? I agree with the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) about the importance of the Downing street declaration; the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) emphasised that importance. For the first time, we are saying that the United Kingdom Government are not committed to the Union because a part of the United Kingdom could leave it, with the consent of that Government. That is a very important change and the right hon. Member for Bridgwater made much of it, saying that it was no longer a case of trade and Liverpool, U-boats and so forth and that we must get up to date.

If we—the British people—do not have an interest in maintaining the Union, why do we maintain it? Is it simply to protect the people whom we drew out of Ireland and placed in a partitioned state? Why are we there? My argument is that once a United Kingdom Government have solemnly announced that we have no interest in the Union —something that a former Secretary of State with great knowledge of the matter has emphasied—there is no going back.

Mr. King *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Benn: Well, that is what the right hon. Gentleman said. He said that it was for the people in the North to decide whether the Union continued. I listened to his speech and it was important. I therefore think that it would be sensible to jump back from the day-to-day argument for a moment and consider the true position, which I understand is that the British Government would like to get

out of Northern Ireland. That is my conviction. I may be wrong, but I was a member of the Cabinet for 11 years, and when I used to speak to my colleagues about the matter they always said, "Of course we agree with you, but we can't say it."

Sir Patrick Mayhew *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Benn: The Secretary of State shakes his head, but I am saying that the cost of the war and the failure of the military enterprise must influence present Cabinet members, as it influenced members of past Cabinets.

Mr. King: I should not like there to be any misunderstanding over what I said about a very important matter. I made it absolutely clear that the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the joint declaration make it clear that it would be wrong to override the wish of the people of Northern Ireland if they wanted a different outcome.

I also made it clear—the right hon. Member may not have heard me—that I have always hoped that Northern Ireland would remain a part of the United Kingdom by virtue of the wishes of its people.

Mr. Benn: I am not disputing what the right hon. Gentleman said. He would like the Union to continue, but the Government whom he supports have said——

Mr. King *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Benn: That was the meaning of the Downing street declaration. That is why the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is so angry about it. He says that we have subcontracted the future of that part of the United Kingdom to a mere part. The hon. Member also thinks that we have subcontracted it to Dublin, but I shall not go into that.

We are in a new situation. Although it may be embarrassing for the Secretary of State, I am emphasising the importance of the Downing street declaration. Secondly, I do not think that Dublin has any interest in taking over Northern Ireland. The bogey of the greedy Dail waiting to grab those angry Protestants is a complete illusion. The last thing that Dublin wants, with its own problems, is to take on the hon. Member for Antrim, North and others. The bogey created by the loyalists is, therefore, imaginary.

Thirdly, I think that it has penetrated into the minds of Sinn Fein, and certainly those of other nationalists, that they cannot force the north into the south without the consent of the people of the north.

Mr. Mallon: The right hon. Gentleman has always said that.

Mr. Benn: I have always said it, but if one puts the three ingredients together, that the British Government do not care—I shall put it like that—what happens because they are prepared to subcontract the decision, that Dublin does not want to take it over and that the nationalists could not cope, the bits of the jigsaw puzzle are there but someone is obstinately refusing to put them together.

Mr. Molyneaux: Independence.

Mr. Benn: I am determined not to be another British politician with an answer to the problems. I am speaking about the British involvement.

The United States has lost all interest in the policy because, whatever may have been the position in the past, President Clinton is not interested in British troops remaining in the north, whereas Bush and Reagan saw them as NATO troops.

The other part of the jigsaw puzzle that has to be considered is that not only is Sinn Fein in a difficulty about whether to say yes or no because it has to persuade the IRA —Adams could say, "No fighting!" and the fighting could go on—but the Government are in a difficulty. That difficulty is that, in spite of all the trumpeting about "If it is turned down we shall have all those terrible penal ways of dealing with it", they did not work. We have had those policies since 1969.

I have listened to the right hon. Member for Bridgwater, the Secretary of State as he then was, warning that terrorism would be rooted out. It did not work. The policies did not work. So if there are people in the House who think, "Aha, when Sinn Fein turns this down we will get them; we will return to internment without trial and put Adams in gaol", they should realise that it will not work. Not only will it not work, but world opinion will be very much more angered by an increase of the measures that have been attempted.

What I am saying is simple. I am saying that the elements of a settlement are there. It is no good saying, "You cannot have clarification". The word "clarification" has suddenly jumped out of the dictionary and acquired an importance that I have never attributed to it before.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): They clarified Maastricht.

Mr. Benn: I am speaking about "talks about talks". Every time there is a settlement there are talks about talks. Just before the Vietnam war ended, there was a huge step-up of a military bombardment by the Americans. Anyone who knows anything about trade union negotiations or the military knows that that goes on; people take positions.

I agree with the hon. Member for Bridgwater when he said that the media do not help by pinning everyone into a corner when acutally they are all more flexible than they make out. The Secretary of State is much more flexible than sometimes he makes out or than others make him out to be.

If one wants to end the fighting, one has to talk. I heard Churchill say from the Dispatch Box, "Jaw-jaw is better than war-war." Those are elementary lessons. Every possible opportunity must be taken to remove misunderstanding.

The ban on the President of Sinn Fein is a great mistake from the Government's point of view. The ban on broadcasting is not only an outrage for my civil liberties but also an absurdity as one can sit in Belfast and listen to Gerry Adams broadcasting from Dublin now.

Mr. Skinner: They all listen to him.

Mr. Benn: Of course, and he is quite happy.

My solution, which I put to Sinn Fein the other day, would be that if Gerry Adams joined Equity he could broadcast and they could say "actor's voice" on the television screen. What nonsense it is to deny us the right to hear from one of the participants who are being pleaded to come to the table.

We should reconsider what contribution we could make. Yesterday I introduced a Bill into the House. It will not be debated because presentation Bills earn no time. I do

[Mr. Benn]

not apologise for the fact that it is the fourth time that I have put before the House the idea that one element of a settlement should be a statement by the British Government that they will terminate their jurisdiction in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Molyneaux: When?

Mr. Benn: The date in the Bill is 31 December 1999, the end of the century, which is about as long a time as the Chinese had to discuss the future of Hong Kong.

The Bill would have a number of important consequences. It would remove the one continuing element of conflict in Ireland, which is that it has been controlled by the British for hundreds of years. It would recognise that there is a growing demand for peace. It would build on the Hume-Adams talks. It would recognise what is implicit —I have tried to make it explicit—in the Downing street declaration, that there is no British interest or British commitment to the future of the Union, that British sovereignty and military presence have been totally unsuccessful over hundreds of years in bringing peace to Northern Ireland and there is no reason for believing that it would be any better now. It points out that our civil liabilities have been lost by our presence there and that the peace dividend in Northern Ireland and in the whole island of Ireland is probably—pro rata—the greatest in the world and greater than the cold war, because both the Republic and the north are highly militarised states. I welcomed the Taoiseach's reference to demilitarisation because I saw it as the peace dividend.

People in Britain have for a long time favoured withdrawal from Northern Ireland. I was on a train a while back and three young lads came up to me so I asked them what they did. They said that they were soldiers so we had a chat. I asked them where they had been and they replied Northern Ireland. I asked them what it was like and they said awful, but that if they were Irish we would be in the IRA. I was absolutely staggered. I did not approach them. They approached me and they clearly saw the troubles as a military conflict. They could understand. It cannot be pleasant for the soldiers there to be shot at. The young corpse in Crossmaglen, mentioned by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, was a tragedy and a waste. People have asked why was he there and why was he shot?

A certain anxiety has been expressed about articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. If we want to increase the prospect of the Dail considering again its claim on the north, we should make it clear that we have no claim ourselves, because there would have to be a new constitution. If Irish unity came, by no stretch of the imagination could it mean the reabsorption of the north into a constitution which was devised for the Republic.

I say all this with sincerity and I hope that the House will accept that such an indication of British intention on a fixed date would create the most favourable atmosphere for peaceful talks, because a British withdrawal is not the same as coercing the north into the south. It is a separate and parallel issue. I believe therefore that it would be right for the British Government to do what they have done on many occasions and indicate, not just that they have no commitment of their own to our interest, but that they are prepared and indeed determined to extricate themselves from the Irish sovereignty question. If that were done even in six years' time—the date does not matter, but the determination does—it would contribute immensely to the prospect of a peace which could be durable rather than merely a renewal, under a new name, of a conflict that cannot be won under the present constitutional provisions.

12.23 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) would not expect me to go down the road that he has been following. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I welcome the fact that he takes the view of the Downing street agreement that I and many other people have taken. It was unfortunate of him to quote 1641, because if he had any knowledge of 1641 he would have known that the basic targets for genocide were the Protestant colonisers in the north. That is what sparked off the rebellion of 1641 and that has continued to this day. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) mentioned the fact that the genocide of Protestant people is continuing along the border of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, I want to make a little progress.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield referred to the people who were drawn out of Ireland into a partitioned state. The people of Northern Ireland were never drawn out of other parts of Ireland. They were there already. I find it very disconcerting and alarming that some people inside and outside the House seem to think that the presence of British troops keeps Northern Ireland within the Union. The people of Northern Ireland have made that decision. If every member of our Army were taken out of Northern Ireland, that would not change the views of the people one iota.

However, announcing a date for the withdrawal of the British Army would be a signal to the IRA to step up its campaign with even more intensive vigour. Who would then protect the right-thinking citizens of both religious communities in Northern Ireland?

I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that there is much hypocrisy in Dublin. Members of Dail Eireann do not want people from the north of Ireland to come to an all-Ireland Parliament. That would spoil their little game. However, that is not an argument for Unionists to sell their heritage and to enter such a position. It is a pity that Members of Dail Eireann are not honest about that matter and do not state publicly that they have no interest in getting Northern Ireland into their grasp.

The old controversies are resurrected today in Northern Ireland. It is noticeable that there was no mention in the Downing street declaration of articles 2 and 3. There is a question of consent, but, as I said when I questioned the Prime Minister in the House after the declaration was signed, the question of consent does not relate to articles 2 and 3. Those articles deal with a territorial claim which has not been faced up to and is not being faced up to by Her Majesty's Government.

The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) was right to refer to the catalogue of IRA crimes that have been committed since the Downing street declaration. The list of those crimes, which was published recently in the press, is staggering. IRA violence occurred on 15 December, 16 December, 19 December, 20 December, 27 December, 29 December, 30 December, 31 December, 1 January, 3 January, 6 January, 7 January, 10 January, 11 January, 12

January, 13 January, 19 January and 20 January. However, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield would have Gerry Adams on the box telling us that that was all in the process of peace. That is not peace.

I received a very sad letter from the widow of one of the latest victims, a prominent business man, of IRA violence. She wrote to me, saying:

"As the wife of one of the last victims of the IRA killings I, through the press, have appreciated what you have said. I do not want peace on the IRA's terms. I think history has proved that the IRA keep increasing their demands. Deep down, we all want peace, but not on the enemy's terms. While they were talking peace, at the same time they planned my husband's murder and carried it out."

There is a heartfelt cry from a person who has experienced what violence is doing and will continue to do.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) talked about the constitutional parties taking a long time to get to the conference table, and a long time at the conference table before the axe was brought down on it by the Dublin Government insisting on having an Anglo-Irish conference. But as the time was spent by constitutional politicans trying to get the talks going, their people outside were not engaged in killing. They were not advocating continuing violence to kill people. That is the difference. This time, the IRA is talking peace while its soldiers—so-called—are committing murders. How long must the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland tolerate that?

The Prime Minister says that he has a little more patience. I read today in the press that Mr. Adams says that it will be April before they get their consultations going. After those consultations, they have to consider, and then Gerry Adams has to consider whether he can go to the IRA, whether he can get up in the morning and take off his political hat and say, "Now, Gerry, I am talking to you as an IRA man." That is the folly. The Government are pursuing a course and saying—I have heard it repeatedly —"It is over to the IRA." If we are going to put the IRA into the driving seat and give them the initiative, what is going to happen to the law-abiding people of Northern Ireland?

It is all very well for the Secretary of State to make speeches such as he made last night, but the interesting thing is that he quoted two people: a cardinal and the leader of the SDLP. Those two men advocate that their constituents or religious membership could not join the security forces. We loyalist people are told by the Secretary of State that we should heed them, but the cardinal is on record in an article in the *Belfast Telegraph* as saying, "I will not call on Roman Catholics to join the security forces." The SDLP's policy on that matter is the same; it will not call on its constituents to join the security forces.

When I was at Downing street, I faced the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) on that matter before the Prime Minister, and he had to admit that that was his policy. Yet the Secretary of State thinks that the loyalist people of Northern Ireland will somehow be convinced because he quotes sources that have made no contribution to trying to defend all sections of the community against violence from whatever source. But, for the vast majority of the security forces, who come from the loyalist community—not all of them, because I have Roman Catholic constituents who are in the security forces—it is a big sacrifice. They cannot go home, their parents have to visit them 50 miles from where they live, and they cannot visit their grandmothers or grandfathers when they take ill. I salute them. Of course, they are prime targets for IRA violence. The Secretary of State should be careful when he calls to his aid those who have not made any contribution to defending the rights of all individuals in Northern Ireland by becoming members of security forces.

Let us look at the Downing street declaration. What was its purpose? Why do we have the Downing street declaration? We have a Downing street declaration because the Hume-Adams talks took place, and those talks were the womb from which the declaration came. In fact, it has been suggested that the first draft of what the southern Government should put to Her Majesty's Government was made out of a draft from the Hume-Adams talks. It is interesting that today hon. Members asked why could we not see the Hume-Adams document. Why can we not see it? Why is it hidden? Why is it concealed? The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh said that there was no difference between documents on the subject of the right of self determination. I am glad about what the hon. Gentleman said—it will make my business in Northern Ireland a lot easier—when he confirmed vigorously the view that the document advocates self determination for all the people of Ireland.

We are told that the northern people must give consent. I put this to the House today. What if we went to Gibraltar and said to the people of the rock, "We will have a referendum on your future, but it will have to run concurrently with a referendum throughout the whole of Spain. The votes cast in Spain will have nothing to do with what we will abide by, but we will still have a concurrent referendum"? I wonder what the people of the rock would think about such an outrageous proposal.

What if we went to the Falklands and said, "We will give you a referendum on your future, but at the same time we must have a referendum in Argentina. Of course, the votes of the Argentinean people do not really count but we must still run in tandem with them"? What would the people think? Yet the loyalist people of Northern Ireland are supposed to be happy. They are supposed to accept that this gives them what they want.

I said to the Prime Minister in Hillsborough house, "Perhaps the Government are determined that the final situation will be decided by the people of Northern Ireland, but they were not consulted about the Anglo-Irish agreement." As for my party, I was not consulted about the Downing street declaration. I want to make it perfectly clear—because I hear all sorts of rumours that all the constitutional parties were brought in and consulted about the Downing street declaration—that I was not consulted. I told the Prime Minister that we have legislation which can come in with a stroke of a pen. It is called Northern Ireland border poll legislation and has two questions: "Do you want Northern Ireland to be part of the United Kingdom? Do you want Northern Ireland to be joined with the Republic of Ireland, outside the United Kingdom"? I told the Prime Minister, "Actions speak louder than words. You can allay the fears of the people of Northern Ireland by having an immediate border poll."

The Prime Minister said that that was not the right question. I said that I had got the message. That was supposed to be the question which the people of Northern Ireland were to be allowed to answer. I asked when, because I do not believe that, when it comes to those issues, they will have the opportunity of giving the answer to the right question. They could give that answer today and the Prime Minister can prove that he will allow the people of Northern Ireland to decide their own destiny.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

What has taken place is a tragedy, but it is better seen from a statement made by the Taoiseach on 10 January. He made a very interesting speech which dealt with the matter of consent. He said that the people of the south of Ireland —or the people of Ireland, for whom he took himself to be the spokesman—have agreed in Parliament that such and such a thing should happen. He went on that it was important to note that the requirement for the consent of a majority is related by the declaration to the constitutional issue. It does not mean that all forms of political progress or other decisions by the two Governments are subject to a similar block. That was mentioned today by the chairman of the Tory Back-Bench Northern Ireland committee, the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh tried to argue that that related to matters of legislation which dealt with administration. However, the Taoiseach made it clear. He said that home rule had been blocked in any form, that all-Ireland institutions had been blocked, that the deal on equality and advancement of nationalists within Northern Ireland had been blocked and that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was, to a considerable extent, frustrated.

The Taoiseach was talking about all-Ireland institutions, the type of institutions which the Opposition spokesman talked about today. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's forthright and clear statement from the Opposition Front Bench that any institutions in Northern Ireland which deal with the internal affairs of Northern Ireland must have an Irish dimension. He spelled that out clearly and that is exactly what the declaration is about.

The Secretary of State has made that clear and has sent all hon. Members a letter on the subject. That letter makes it clear that the declaration complements and underpins the talks process; the declaration reinforces the firm foundation for future political development; the joint declaration represents a sound platform for the talks process. So the present talks process is on the basis of the Downing street declaration. There is talk about a prerequisite, but we have one now: the precondition of the talks process is that one must accept the Downing street declaration because that is the platform, the foundation and what will underpin the talks process. My party rejects the Downing street declaration.

It may interest the House to know that *The Lurgan Mail* announced on Saturday last:

"The Ulster Unionist Party does not support the Downing Street Declaration, party workers in Craigavon have been told. They were given this clarification at a party meeting in Brownlow House, Lurgan, attended by leader James Molyneaux. A statement released after the meeting said:

'Those who accuse us of supporting the Declaration have a duty to explain why they are uttering deliberate falsehoods.'"

A lot of people have made claims. The Government have claimed loudly that the Unionist party is on board. Members of the Unionist party made it clear that they were on board and that there was no sell-out whatever. One member said that the declaration was green, but that when one looked at the map, no principle of Unionism had been conceded.

The Democratic Unionist party was attacked for not being in favour of the declaration. So it would be wise for the House to know who is for the declaration and who is against it.

Mr. Molyneaux: I have consistently made my position clear. We sit on this side of the House because our party does not support the Government. It is for the hon. Gentleman to decide why he sits on the Government side and whether he supports the Government. All Opposition parties sit on Madam Speaker's left. That is the constitutional position. I have made it abundantly clear at all times that I reserve the right to dissent from any action or policy of the Government.

I made it clear during all stages of the consultations that I would not put my name to any document. I reserve that position and will continue to do so. My formula has always been—it goes back even to 22 July—that so long as Her Majesty's Government of the day are governing in the best interests of the United Kingdom in general and Northern Ireland in particular, we will not terminate the life of the Parliament prematurely. We have never varied from that.

Rev. Ian Paisley: That is an interesting statement from the right hon. Gentleman. He said that the declaration was a comparatively safe document and that it could not possibly be a sell-out. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) said:

"It is not necessary to oppose it. It is a pleasant contrast with the Anglo-Irish Agreement."

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) gave the declaration a guarded welcome. He said:

"There is no threat to Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom."

The right hon. Member for Strangford said:

"For us as Unionists there are disappointments but also some things which we welcome."

Chris McGimpsey said:

"There are certain aspects of the document which are valuable. It is a positive document."

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) said:

"We have given tentative approval to the agreement."

If that is not in some way supporting the agreement, I do not know what is.

I make a simple point to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley. I sit on the Unionist side of the House and I have always done so. When the Unionists changed over, I sat on that side of the House. I wonder whether we should have Cross Benches in the House. If we did, I could take up a different position. I came to the House as an independent Unionist. In similar circumstances, other Independent Unionists, including Johnston of Ballykilbeg, did likewise—I am in good company——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, I will not give way because time is short.

Mr. Canavan: The hon. Gentleman sat on this side of the House when Labour was in Government.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I crossed over with the Unionists, as the hon. Gentleman knows well, because there was an incident to which I shall not refer now.

Mr. Peter Robinson: I shall put another quotation on the record. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) told the *Sunday Express* on 2 January that if the Government did not

"move to stop the continuing IRA campaign they will be seen to have gone back on what they have agreed with the largest political party in Northern Ireland, the Unionist Party, and they will no longer have them on board."

How on earth, if the Unionist party does not support the agreement, could it be "on board"? Hon. Members should go and look up the quotation.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The people of Northern Ireland know exactly what is happening. An officer of one of the branches of the Unionist party wrote a long communication in the Official Unionist newspaper the other morning. It stated clearly that he had news for the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. He had not found one member of the Official Unionist party who accepted the party line of the leadership and of Unionist Members of Parliament. That is what he said in the letter. If they want an argument they should have it with their own people.

I am glad that two national British newspapers took the view that I take about this declaration. On the day after the declaration, *The Daily Telegraph* said:

"The Declaration treats the British only as custodians of Northern Ireland, licensed by democratic mandate. The view that Northern Irishmen and women are British as the people of Surrey or South Yorkshire are British becomes no longer sustainable. This is unlikely to worry political opinion in mainland Britain but it would be naive to deny that it will trouble many Ulster Unionists, even beyond the ranks of the fanatics and paramilitaries"

That newspaper, which supports the Tory party, says that the United Kingdom Government are only the custodians of Northern Ireland, licensed by democratic mandate. Is that full United Kingdom citizenship?

In an editorial on 21 December, *The Times* stated that when the Prime Minister was challenged to reconcile the "strong Unionist rhetoric" used during his election campaign

"with the neutral language of last week's declaration, he has described his Unionist conviction with great precision as a 'personal right'. Though he himself believes in the Union, he does not appear to regard it as a cornerstone of British national identity or of the Conservative tradition. Should the majority in Northern Ireland wish to leave the United Kingdom, he will happily facilitate reunification. Thus the prime minsiter has distanced himself still further from the waning Tory Unionism of Bonar Law, Randolph Churchill and Enoch Powell. An article of party faith has become a clear matter of private conscience . . . But no nation should tamper carelessly with its deepest roots. In its challenge to old ideas of Britishness, Mr. Major's initiative has implications far beyond the steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone."

Those are not the words of some Democratic Unionist politician: they are the words of *The Times*. These are the serious issues which the House must address when examining the declaration.

We were told that this is what we have to build upon. That is very strange. What was negotiated between the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and me and the Government in the talks about talks all seems to have changed. First, those talks were for a specific purpose—to find a replacement for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, an alternative to it. That has been completely forgotten and no Minister says that today. It has completely vanished.

Strand one had to do with Northern Ireland politicians alone and the British Government finding an agreeable system for the administration and government of Northern Ireland. The Dublin Government wanted to be included in strand one. The first proposal put to us was that they should be included, but we said on no account should they be there because the internal affairs of Northern Ireland are matters for Her Majesty's Government, this United Kingdom Parliament and the people of Northern Ireland alone. So Dublin was rightly excluded from strand one. Strand two was about the relationship that the new administration which was agreed to by the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland would adopt with the Dublin Government. Now, that, too, has been forgotten. Strand three was about the relationships between the two Governments. The goalposts have been moved.

The Secretary of State said that he did not know whether the principle that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed still stood. The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), said that it must stand. May I give the Secretary of State the news that the talks and everything that was agreed in them are finished? Nobody told the Government more vehemently than I did that if they pulled down the shutters on the talks, the talks would be over and the Government would have to start again. When the Government resumed the second talks, the then Secretary of State was careful to say that they were new talks.

So all the background is wiped out. Given that foundation of sand, my party is not prepared to sit down and talk under those auspices. The response has been that there is now a difference between the Irish and British Governments. There was supposed to be a document to bring unity, but the Irish Government believe that the declaration should be clarified and have proceeded to give that clarification. Every speech that the Taoiseach makes is an attempt to clarify. Brian Lenihan, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Dail, has been having face-to-face encounters with IRA-Sinn Fein and says that he is clarifying the situation. The hon. Member for Foyle went to Downing street and, when he left, said that he was going back to have further meetings with the IRA.

It is very well for the Government to say that there is no clarification. We heard statements from them before that they had no links, channels or talks with the IRA and we found out that those affirmations were unfounded. The people of Northern Ireland are asking what is really happening.

We are told that there will be a "get tough" attitude to the IRA if it does not agree to the declaration. Why did not Governments get tough long ago? Why did not they save us the orphans and widows? The ordinary people of Northern Ireland say that the Government will make more concessions and continue down the slippery slope.

If the House really believes that the people of Northern Ireland have a right to a final say, the legislation exists and the House can give them the opportunity to have that say. They did it in the days of the Sunningdale agreement and the nationalists boycotted it. They never attended the Stormont Assembly. I am amused when the leader of the SDLP tells the House that his party will go along with what the sovereign Parliament does. This sovereign Parliament set up an assembly to produce a plan for the government of Northern Ireland and they boycotted that assembly and did their best to bring it down. In the end, it was brought down by the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The people of Northern Ireland need a tangible assurance. If they do not receive it, the words of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley will be true; it is a two-edged sword. We have to face that reality. Those of us who live in Northern Ireland know exactly what is happening there. Therefore, the best thing for the Government to do is to say that, as the declaration states that the people of Northern Ireland must give consent, let us have a border poll to see what the people feel. That could be the starting point for a series of talks to deal with a form of government of Northern Ireland in which the Dublin Government can have no say.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

Why should the Dublin Government dictate to the people of Northern Ireland about what sort of Government they should have? If there is agreement between the parties in Northern Ireland, should not the Dublin Government be happy with that agreement? Why must they interfere and why should they demand their sort of Irish dimension?

The document is about a united Ireland and is in the context of a united Ireland. The question before the people is: do you want to go into a united Ireland? How can that be facilitated? The Taoiseach has made it clear by saying, "You will have absolutely no say on the institutions that straddle the border—we will decide, the British Government will decide and the institutions will be set up. You will have no say." That will lead to more trouble and more problems.

I trust that the House will learn from the experiences of history. I was amused when I was told by the Secretary of State that I should trust the word of the Taoiseach. It is not much consolation for a Unionist to be told to put his faith in the Taoiseach's word. The Secretary of State should remember that every treaty that Dublin has made with this Parliament and its Governments has been torn up. What about the treaty of 1920, the ports and the arrangement that was taken away in 1937 by the new constitution? What about the claim over Northern Ireland that the Dail Eireann refused? The treaty making Northern Ireland part of the United Kingdom and would remain so was ratified. The international border was agreed and the legislation was signed. The Dail Eireann agreed it, this Parliament agreed it and the Stormont Parliament agreed it; they all signed it and it was taken to the League of Nations where it was lodged. But De Valera tore it up and introduced his new 1937 constitution.

I reminded Irish Ministers of those events at the talks and asked them how they could expect a Unionist to trust them. We are then told that we should trust the Taoiseach's word. I do not want my United Kingdom citizenship to rest on the word of the Prime Minister of a Government who claim jurisdiction over the part of the United Kingdom in which I live, which is what we are being told to do.

I trust that we in Northern Ireland will have an opportunity of dealing with the subject at the polls. I trust that the other parties will see the wisdom of that. Once that is settled, we can begin to build, not on the sinking sands of the Downing street declaration, but on the firm rock of a democratic vote in which everyone has a say in what they want to do in future and in where their citizenship lies.

1.4 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The House is grateful to the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) for the further opportunity to discuss the problems and needs of the people of Northern Ireland. As we all know, their most compelling need is an end to the sickening violence, the manic and serial killings there, and I hope very much that today's debate will make some contribution to hastening the pursuit of peace. That hope is shared by the vast majority of people on this side of the water and overwhelmingly, too. I believe, by the people of Ireland, north and south alike. With Arafat shaking hands with Rabin and Mandela smiling at de Klerk, many people are daring to hope new hopes for the people of Northern Ireland. Let us pray that they can soon be realised.

My purpose today is briefly to focus on an issue that unites people of all persuasions in Northern Ireland. It is one that affects, among some 200,000 other disabled people, the innocent victims of violence there. They will spend the rest of their lives trying to cope with severe and long-term disability, yet the law as it stands permits unfair discrimination against them, not only in employment policies but in housing, education, transport and all other public and private services.

Northern Ireland's Members of Parliament, without exception, gave strong and persistent support to the Bill that I drafted—the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill —to make such discrimination unlawful throughout the United Kingdom. Indeed, it was the unanimity of their support that prompted me, when the Bill's progress was blocked for the second time by the Government on 26 February 1992, to draft a more limited version of the Bill applicable solely to Northern Ireland in an effort at least to secure its benefits for disabled people there.

It was totally unreasonable and manifestly unfair for the Government to have delayed the application to Northern Ireland of a Bill supported by all its Members of Parliament and which applied solely to their constituents. To obstruct this more limited measure in the only Parliament that can legislate for the disabled people of Northern Ireland, when all their parliamentary representatives want to see it enacted, is both constitutionally and morally indefensible.

It calls sharply into question the sincerity of the Government's repetitive insistence that the only certain way for Northern Ireland's Members of Parliament to achieve meaningful progress for their communities is to unite. One Secretary of State after another has given the impression that, if only they would act together, there is nothing they cannot achieve for the betterment of the people they were sent here to represent. The Secretary of State has given that impression, but its validity has to be judged by his attitude to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Northern Ireland) Bill.

It may help the House for me to recall some of the background to the drafting of this more limited Bill and its First Reading in the House on 16 June 1993. The story is not a happy one for Britain's 6·5 million disabled people. Nor is it a creditable one to the Government; but it needs to be told for there to be full understanding of the unanimous decision by Northern Ireland's Members of Parliament to back the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Northern Ireland) Bill.

By last June, my original Bill, for the United Kingdom as a whole, had been subjected, over the previous 18 months, to every procedural device available for obstructing its progress. On Second Reading on 31 January 1992, it was talked out by Robert Hayward, who lost his seat at the ensuing election and, more recently, the Christchurch by-election. He apologised for his behaviour after the debate in a personal statement to the House, but his action ended all hope of my Bill becoming law in that parliamentary Session.

To keep the Bill before Parliament, I arranged for it to be introduced in another place by Baroness Lockwood and by 4 November 1992 it had completed all its stages there. When it came back to the House, a further Second Reading was timed for 26 February 1993 to coincide with the debate on a motion calling for its enactment in the following terms:

"This House believes that anti-discrimination legislation is necessary to ensure equality of opportunity for people with disabilities; and calls for the early enactment of specific provisions relating to public transport and other public and private services, employment and housing."

Notwithstanding the approval of that motion by the House, the Government again used a procedural device to block the Bill. So for a second time, and after seven hours of debate on its provisions, this House was prevented from giving it a Second Reading.

Lord Renton, the Prime Minister's predecessor as Conservative Member of Parliament for Huntingdon, said in the Third Reading debate on the Bill in another place that he found it strange as well as wrong that unfair discrimination against disabled people was not already unlawful. He thought it extraordinary and not very creditable that Parliament had not already legislated and said that, after all the thought that had been given to the Bill in the House of Lords, he did not believe that many hours of discussion would be necessary in the House of Commons.

The Government's tactics in the House made it clear, however, that they had no intention of responding to Lord Renton's plea. The Government's principal reason for blocking the Bill, for the United Kingdom as a whole, was said to be cost. When the Prime Minister and I met to discuss the Bill, he said that any action to end discrimination must proceed "without cost implications". In other words, we could afford civil rights for everyone else, but not for disabled people. They and their organisations found that deeply offensive, just as they resented the criticism that my Bill did not "sit comfortably with the Government's policy on deregulation".

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the right hon. Gentleman continues—I realise that he wants to sketch in the background—I must point out that we are dealing with current developments in Northern Ireland. Although passing reference to previous events is in order, the right hon. Gentleman is going into considerable detail. I ask him to bear that in mind.

Mr. Morris: I am trying to put into context the Bill's importance to the victims of violence in Northern Ireland, but I shall abbreviate my look at the past. What needs emphasising is the sustained blocking of the Bill and what has been said in justification of what has been done. As I said at the outset, my concern is for more than 200,000 disabled people in Northern Ireland today, including many innocent victims of violence.

I was told also by the Prime Minister that the Bill did not "sit comfortably with the Government's policy on deregulation". Nor does the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Commission for Racial Equality. Nor does the Fair Employment Act for Northern Ireland. The Government's third criticism—and I want to be fair by explaining their attitude to the Bill—was that discrimination against disabled people is best dealt with by piecemeal change. But that view is rejected by many employers in Northern Ireland, as it is totally rejected by many employers in Great Britain. They argue that the Government are trying to divide the indivisible, that one cannot improve the employment opportunities of disabled people without looking at their transport problems and securing training for them on the same basis as other people. One employer told me recently that piecemeal change would be a total waste of time and money.

That is the story—some will think the shabby story—behind the blocking of my Bill for the United Kingdom as a whole and my decision to draft a Bill applicable solely to Northern Ireland. Before giving his approval to the blocking of that more limited Bill on 2 July 1993, did the Secretary of State fight the corner of Northern Ireland's Members of Parliament and the disabled people they represent in discussions about the Bill within the Government? Did he talk about his decision to approve the blocking of the Bill to Disability Action in Northern Ireland? He is aware that I myself met them in Belfast to discuss my Bill, as the guest speaker at their last annual general meeting in June 1993, and that its members were as one in wanting the Bill to succeed.

If he has not so far done so, will the Secretary of State now meet Disability Action—the Northern Ireland Council on Disability—to discuss the Bill? I hope very much that he will discuss the Bill with them soon and then act to give some validity to ministerial statements about the gains to be won when Northern Ireland Members of Parliament work together. He will have a clear opportunity to do so when my good and hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) reintroduces the original Bill to help disabled people in the United Kingdom as a whole for which, happily, he has won a place in the private Members' ballot.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assist the progress of that Bill so that it secures a Second Reading? If not, will the Government stop telling——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I tried to warn the right hon. Gentleman gently that he was straying rather far from the terms of the motion. I must now tell him that he is going far beyond what we are discussing, which is issues of violence and peace. I must therefore ask him to return more closely to the motion under consideration.

Mr. Morris: I am very near to my conclusion and addressing myself to the problems——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Whether the right hon. Gentleman has reached, or is getting near to, a conclusion is not the point. He must address himself to the terms of the motion.

Mr. Morris: As you said, Madam Deputy Speaker, the motion refers to violence and peace. I was seeking to ensure that the voice of Northern Ireland's victims of violence was heard in this debate and that the legislation they seek will be looked at more sympathetically by the Government.

Britain used to lead the world in legislation for disabled people. Now we lag behind. I hope that the Secretary of State will recognise that the issue that I have raised is a very important one for some of the most needful people in Northern Ireland. He will be praised, I believe, by both communities if he can respond positively to the plea I have made on their behalf.

1.17 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): The House could be forgiven for wondering why an Englishman with no personal links with either part of the island of Ireland takes a close interest in these matters. Indeed, some hon. Members might even question the sanity of this particular Englishman in wishing to join the debate when surrounded by so many experts on such a difficult subject.

[Mr. David Wilshire]

Let me explain why I take an interest. First, because my predecessor as the Member for Spelthorne, then Sir Humphrey Atkins, was a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Working alongside him as the candidate while he was the Member of Parliament taught me a great deal about the tragedy and bravery of the Province and about the opportunities and frustrations facing politicians of all types on both sides of the water. My experience as a candidate aroused my interest and concern. It made me determined to try to do a little to help.

The second reason why I became interested and concerned was because the Province is part of my country. It is not a colony, but an integral part of my country until its people choose otherwise. Together with all Members of the House, I believe that I share some little responsibility for trying to ensure the security and the safety of my fellow countrymen, whichever tradition they come from.

That interest in the Province has led, in my six years in the House, to an ever-closer involvement with Northern Ireland issues and with the politicians in Dublin. It has resulted in my now being a member of the British-Irish interparliamentary body and a member of its political and security committee.

With that type of involvement, I have always felt it right and proper for me to think through a clear and consistent approach to those matters, and to think through exactly what I seek to contribute and to achieve. Let me, therefore, put on the record the conclusions that I have reached when I have thought along those lines.

Here is my approach to the issues of Northern Ireland. First, I believe that I have to try to understand the reality of Northern Ireland—the reality as distinct from the political rhetoric, not only of the north, but of the south. The second part of my approach is to ensure that I always work within that reality rather than the rhetoric, and to try to avoid being seduced by the siren voices that claim that concessions lead to peace and, at the moment, to try to avoid the siren voices that say that clarification leads to peace—it does not.

The third part of the approach that I have always tried to bring to bear is to try to avoid at all costs any policies, any initiatives and any deals that fall outside the reality, as I see it, because history—history is always mentioned on such occasions—teaches me the awful lesson that any policies, initiatives or deals that fall outside the reality make matters worse in the end and lead to more violence.

Using that approach, let me try to explain what I have been trying to achieve in my own small way. First, I have tried to put something of a brake on any over-enthusiastic searches for undeliverable solutions, because of those awful lessons of history, if we go too fast down an unsustainable route.

Secondly, through the British-Irish interparliamentary body I have tried to help to foster a greater understanding in the south of the island of Ireland of an English persepective as distinct from the Northern Ireland perspective. The more I have got to know Dublin politicians, the more I have realised how important it is that they are told of the English perspective as well as the Northern Irish perspective.

Let me explain the way in which I have tried to apply that approach and those objectives to the issues raised by the joint declaration.

Although I—and I am sure everyone else—welcome the goals of the joint declaration, and although I commend the spirit behind it, and although I am delighted that the world has now been shown that both democratically elected Governments can agree on a peaceful future, which I believe is one of the things that the IRA finds difficult to swallow, I said, when I was with my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) at the meeting of the British-Irish interparliamentary body on the day that the joint declaration was announced, that I feared that it would run into the sand. I said, "I pray that it will not, but I fear that it will." I said that then because I could sense something of a fatal flaw behind the thinking that led to the joint declaration. I sensed that the joint declaration was based on an assumption that the members of the IRA are reasonable people who will agree to allow the people of the Province to choose their own future democratically.

The joint declaration seems to assume that the IRA members are people who will accept continued imprisonment of their demonic members and it seems to be based on the assumption that the IRA would bow to pressure from the Dublin Government, which I believe it abhors almost as much as our Government in London. The sickening truth, as it appears to me, is that the IRA members are not reasonable people. They are psychopathic murderers driven by a blind hatred, not by sweet reason.

As well as that flaw in the assumption of the joint declaration about the state of mind of the IRA, it bothers me that some realities are being overlooked in the general debate. In my short speech, I have time to highlight only four of those realities which concern me. First, it strikes me that there are some who forget that the desire for peace in Northern Ireland is most certainly not the same as the desire for unity. It is blindingly clear to me, as, I am sure it is to all hon. Members, that almost everybody in the Province wants peace. However, it is equally clear that the majority do not want a united Ireland and that that majority, judging from my experience of visits, includes more than a few Roman Catholics.

I maintain that it is essential that Her Majesty's Government remain neutral on the question of a united Ireland. If they do not, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is right, we shall be washing our hands of the future of the Province. The Government must remain neutral if there is to be a decision, if the people of the Province are to make their minds up in a free manner and it is not for us to bring any pressure whatever on them.

Secondly, I sense that some people forget the reality that the understandable demands of the nationalists in the north to be Irish implies a similar right for the Unionists in the north to remain British. If we forget that, any deal that we seek to strike will not stick and will be doomed to failure. Any way forward must square that circle.

The third reality is that some people seem to be forgetting that before we can have any sort of agreement, it is necessary to define what we mean by an acceptable majority for change. As I see it in the Province at the moment, we have a majority of 60-40 or 55-45—I do not know exactly; I bow to expert internal judgments. Clearly, there is a majority at the moment for a union with the remainder of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I shall try not to hold up the hon. Gentleman. When he considers the sectarian head count in Northern Ireland, will

he be careful not to use that as the basis for counting those who favour the Union? Earlier in his speech, he got it right, but he is going down the wrong road now.

Mr. Wilshire: I hope that I am not. I certainly accept the point made by the hon. Gentleman and, earlier, I tried to say that I did not use the sectarian head count in a simplistic way. The point that I seek to make is that however one makes up the majority and from whatever tradition those people come, it is clear to me at least that there is a majority for the Union. It concerns me that some people seem to forget that, if the current majority for the continuation of the Union does not bring peace, why in heaven's name should anybody assume that a 51-49 per cent. support for a united Ireland from whatever tradition slightly in the other direction, should be any more peaceful than the majority we have at the moment? Until we can define what is meant by an acceptable majority, I fear that any deal will run into the sand.

The final reality which people seem to forget is that geography and history, on their own, do not justify a united Ireland. Everyone who listens to a debate like this is aware of how much history figures in debates about the future of the island of Ireland. If geography and history alone were to justify the definition of sovereignty, Spain would argue that it should take over Portugal, and Norway would be sucked into Sweden because the lessons of history certainly point in that direction. A simplistic view of an atlas would suggest that geography argues the same thing.

Simplistic arguments about the history of Ireland and about how the island looks in an atlas worry me when they are used to justify a united Ireland, irrespective of the social and political realities. That is not the basis for a united sovereign state. The only basis that any of us should recognise is when two different traditions realise that they have a future together because they share more than what separates them, based on the present and the future and not on the atlas and history book.

I realise that what I call realities other people may call contentious and quarrelsome nonsense. I equally recognise that such realities, or whatever we choose to call them, represent formidible obstacles to peace. I would be foolish if I did not also realise that, by raising those points, I open myself to the accusation that I sound negative. However, I do not believe that I am.

I raise those points because, like everyone else, I am desperate for peace. However, I believe that peace at any price is no peace at all. If we ignore the realities, we will make matters worse. I also raise those points because I know from experience that many people inside and outside this place share my worries and feelings. It is up to someone to stand up and spell them out during a debate of this kind.

Having said all that, I applaud the work of both Governments. I am acutely aware of, and amazed by, the bravery of many politicians and Ministers on both sides of the water. As they continue to search for a peace that will stick, I plead with them: please do not do deals that will run into the sand; please do not do deals that ignore the realities; please do not negotiate and clarify things with terrorists; please do not redefine murder as an excusable political tactic and, above all, please do not abandon the wonderful people of Ireland, both north and south of the border.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the debate continues, may I point out that several hon. Members still wish to make contributions. We have only about one hour left. If hon. Members would make shorter speeches than they might otherwise wish, hopefully all hon. Members who want to take part will be able to do so.

1.33 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): This is an appropriate time to have this debate and I am grateful for the opportunity, five weeks after the Downing street declaration, to be able to contribute to it.

What is happening in relation to the declaration is now becoming clear. Indeed, the IRA's attitude is becoming exceedingly clear. Its attitude does not fall in line with the prediction by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) who suggested that he could bring peace to the Province in seven days. Nor does it fall into line with the prediction of the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic who predicted that that could happen by Christmas. The peculiar thing was that the Taoiseach said that he would not sign a declaration which did not give him confidence that he could fulfil that promise.

Before I talk about the IRA, its reaction and the dangers, I cannot ignore the speech by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). One becomes not a little tired of the hon. Gentleman's constant harping in relation to my party's performance and its contribution to the constructive interests of Unionism in general and Northern Ireland in particular. Perhaps I should not have been surprised at the long rambling regurgitation of what we have all heard before—bland statements that there was no consultation for the hon. Gentleman's party in terms of what has been happening throughout the past year and a half to two years and particularly in recent times. If there was no consultation, I would be very interested to know exactly what he and his colleagues were doing at 10 Downing street on 24 November.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maginnis: I have much more to say, and then I will give way.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it right for an hon. Member not to give way when he challenges the integrity of the hon. Member who has just spoken?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The rule of the House is that, unless the hon. Member concerned agrees to give way, he has the right to continue.

Mr. Maginnis: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have many more connected points to make and then I most certainly will give way. I will be particularly interested to hear the answers.

I get a little tired of the frightening speculation—it is frightening speculation—which appears not to be based on anything that I have read in the Downing street declaration, for example, but appears to have the European election interests of the hon. Member for Antrim, North at heart. The way in which the interests of Northern Ireland are subverted in the interests of the Democratic Unionist party's overwhelming need to top the poll on 9 June is somewhat disgusting. The hon. Gentleman has made no

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secret that that is what he intends to do, and it involves the usual sleight of hand when one connects two issues which are totally unrelated.

The hon. Gentleman says that he will test the joint declaration. How? It will be by making his vote on 9 June a referendum on whether Ulster Unionists want to be sold out to a united Ireland. For far too long, such misleading and such misuse of the Unionist vote and of the Unionist strength in Northern Ireland has been an impediment to progress that would benefit all the people of Northern Ireland. It has been going on for years—we try to ignore it.

For example, in 1970, the hon. Gentleman frequently attacked the new Ulster Defence Regiment—the "dad's army", he called it—and frequently called for the Ulster special constabulary to be brought back. I served in both organisations and I have tremendous respect for them. But it was a good idea to frighten the old and the bold in 1970 by shouting in favour of the Ulster special constabulary. Twenty years on, when the old and the bold have perhaps learnt how shallow that support is, it becomes the hon. Gentleman's job to shout in support of the UDR and to denigrate the Royal Irish Regiment. I do not know the Latin for it but if I can find out, I suggest that a slogan for the Democratic Unionist party might be "flogging dead horses".

Until 9 June, we will have a tremendous contribution by the DUP to the interests of the people of Northern Ireland. The DUP will embark on yet another poster campaign and, by the look of what happened in Portadown on Monday, we will have one or two Free Presbyterian rallies in order to build the hon. Gentleman's vote on 9 June.

The people of Northern Ireland are getting a little sick of rallies and posters. They want hard work, and they want their views represented directly and effectively to Government. They have seen the Third Force; it has come and gone, and it has done nothing for them. They have seen the leader of the DUP leading people with firearm certificates up a hill in the middle of the night, and it has done nothing for them. They have seen the Carson trail. They have seen the Ulster Resistance, of which the hon. Gentleman was nominally the leader until three poor fellows were caught trying to buy guns in Paris, then it turned out that he had not been a member of the Ulster Resistance for a few weeks. We have seen all those things come and go. They peculiarly coincided with elections in Northern Ireland.

It is time that an hon. Member from Northern Ireland stood in the House and told the hon. Gentleman, "Stop using and abusing the Unionist people who have suffered too much without being exploited once again by a 'Save Ulster' campaign."

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) quoted part of an article from the *Sunday Express*.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not want to answer the rubbish that the hon. Gentleman is speaking. It is interesting that, after all those happenings, the same hon. Gentleman was glad to have a coalition with the Ulster Democratic Unionist party, to take the joint leadership from his leader and me and to stand at City hall. It was his party which expressed great worry about the European elections; it was not me. Members of his party said, "Paisley will be be grovelling for our transfer votes." I remind the hon. Gentleman that his party member had to get 40,000 of my votes to be elected. I remind him that in every European election in which I have stood, his party member gets in only on my election surplus. Therefore to say that I want that is completely wrong.

I have put the alternative. Let us have a border poll. If we have a border poll, we will then have the European election. The hon. Gentleman is afraid that his party, having issued a manifesto which he signed and supported, went back on Maastricht and voted with the Government on that issue. That is what he is worried about.

Mr. Maginnis: The last point has nothing to do with this and is not entirely accurate.

Let me take up the point of a border poll. As an Ulster Unionist, I know the strength of support in Northern Ireland for the Union within the United Kingdom. I do not want Northern Ireland to be put up for sale every 10 years, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North would want. If the pro-Union vote is 80 per cent. on the first occasion and only 77 per cent. next time, everybody will say, "The desire for Northern Ireland to remain within the Union is not as strong as it was 10 years ago". The clamour will return to make more allowances for the alleged increase in support for a united Ireland.

There is no increasing support for a united Ireland—that support is decreasing. I would not have raised the matter if the hon. Member for Antrim, North had not chosen his ground and attacked my party here today. Everything that the hon. Gentleman does undermines the credibility of Unionism in Northern Ireland.

Ulster Unionism is justifiable, and is more justifiable than was demonstrated by the efforts of the hon. Member for Belfast, East. He decided that he would lead "Robinson's raiders", as they were called, down into the Protestant enclave of Clontibret in county Monaghan. As a result, the hon. Gentleman got lost, had to hitch ride in a Garda car and eventually had to pay £15,000 to the Irish Exchequer for the privilege of that ride. The hon. Gentleman was lost on that occasion, and he is still lost.

Let me leave that matter, and move to the threat of the IRA. The IRA, along with Sinn Fein, made a decision at the end of December that they would reject the declaration as a basis for the peace process. However, their recognition of the weight of national and international opinion has left them with a dilemma. They want to be able to retain the myth that they have widespread support in a struggle against a colonial power, whereas we know that more than 70 per cent. of the people in Northern Ireland want to remain within the Union. To this end, Sinn Fein and the IRA have tentatively agreed to announce a temporary ceasefire at an appropriate moment during the next couple of months. They are hopeful that such a move will place irresistible public pressure on the Irish Government to begin direct talks with Sinn Fein. However, they assume —I hope that they are right in their assumption—that the British Government will not meet them on the basis of such an interim ceasefire.

After a few weeks, it is intended that the IRA will resume with a particularly intensive campaign, while Sinn Fein sits in Dublin expressing regret, but, at the same time, its complete understanding of the IRA's total frustration at what it will claim is the intransigence and provocation of the British Government and their military machine. We have heard all that garbage before and we will hear it again.

Sinn Fein will have agreed to appear to distance itself from the IRA onslaught at that stage, and continue to

protest its desire to pursue the peace process with the Irish Government. That is in expectation that the Republic will not dare to test public opinion at that stage by aborting any of the talks which have begun. After the Irish Cabinet's capitulation over section 31 of the Republic's broadcasting ban to allow Sinn Fein back on the air, one could hardly expect Dublin not to submit again.

Listening to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) today, we get a glimpse of what the so-called Adams-Hume talks were about and what the proposals were. There, I am convinced, is the hidden agenda. It is about the gradual withdrawal of support by our own Government from the people of Northern Ireland over a period moving towards the end of the century. I might tell the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that the end of the century is not 31 December 1999. It is 31 December 2000.

The Government do not have to reassure me today. I have heard their reassurances and I have to accept them. As I implied on 2 January in the *Sunday Express,* obviously, my party is monitoring and will continue carefully to monitor the extent to which the Government meet the commitment that they have given in the House. That is why we are here as an Opposition party. What I want to hear is that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are trying to ensure and obtain agreement from the Irish Government that they will not fall into the trap of the IRA's proposed tactics that I have just outlined.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that you want me to be brief. I wanted to talk both in hypothetical terms about what would need to be done if we were fortunate enough to move towards peace and about what would need to be done if the negative response that we anticipate were given. I will deal with the matter as briefly as possible.

In any peace process pre-planning for not only disengagement but verification will be important. We must assume that there is a tremendous amount of information and military intelligence in the hands of special branch and the Foreign Office on exactly what weapons were brought to Ireland from Libya. As we understand it, Mr. Gaddafi has supplied that information. That has to be balanced against the weaponry that has been discovered, the ammunition that we know has been discharged and the explosives that have been used or captured in order to set our targets for verification. That is essential.

We cannot travel towards some false dawn in which we believe that we shall have peace but find ourselves in the midst of another onslaught five, six or seven years down the road when the IRA has reorganised. Verification must be about not only that weaponry and ammunition which is presently in hides somewhere in the Irish Republic; it must be about how we ensure that no further shipments from eastern Europe or wherever get into Ireland. That is a matter of grave concern to us.

Other matters of equal concern include what we will do with the 20,000 or 30,000 people who, if peace breaks out tomorrow, will be redundant—to put it bluntly? We have had violence within the Province for 25 years. Even if it goes away, there will be a vacuum for many years to come. There will be a space to be filled by evil men. Even if they are not involved in political violence, they will be involved in drugs and racketeering. We all know how the Mafia began. Therefore, there must be no reduction whatever in the level of home-based security services. We must carefully monitor the extent to which regular battalions are taken out of Northern Ireland. My party will want to have its say in that area because we want to influence how the Government tackle that problem.

Difficulties will flow from the ultimate loss of 30,000 jobs some years hence, and there will be a knock-on effect on the economy. All those matters must be thought about now if we hope to move towards peace. I hope that I am wrong, but I believe that the IRA has no intention of moving in that direction. That makes it important to maintain the present security force capability in Northern Ireland in every respect. That relates to regular troops, the maintenance of our police services and the use of special forces. All those will be absolutely necessary, but there is more than that.

As the Irish Republic signed the joint declaration along with Her Majesty's Government, it has an obligation that has not been fulfilled to its full extent in the past. In his speech last night, the Secretary of State alluded to the extent to which border security was deficient. There must now be consultation between the British and Irish Governments about the areas along the frontier where the greatest threat occurs.

South Armagh has seen one sniper attack after another. Although I do not predict where the snipers are domiciled, we know that they mount their attacks from south of the frontier and retreat there after the killings. A great deal more is required in terms of the Irish Republic's obligation in that area. Of course, there are other areas. There is the Dublin bomb team that operates out of the midlands and primes the mortars that are brought across into Northern Ireland. That matter has to be followed up more effectively.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): The hon. Gentleman speaks about the border separating Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland. When going to Dublin or crossing the border, one sees many soldiers along different parts of the border. Those soldiers would not be there if there were peace, if the IRA declared a total cessation of violence. Does he agree that the border has become an IRA border?

Mr. Maginnis: Unfortunately, that is so. In terrorist warfare as distinct from conventional warfare, a border such as ours will be dominated by an organisation such as the IRA when there is no effective security with a high degree of co-operation on both sides.

The Government must indicate to constitutional politicians how they will prepare for either eventuality. I hope that those in Northern Ireland who call themselves Unionists but who act in a selfish way against the general interest of Unionism will rethink their position and realise that, for purely electoral purposes, they cannot for ever hold to ransom people who have endured so much.

1.59 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): In concentrating on the joint declaration relating to Northern Ireland, a debate so ably initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), we must not fail to condemn the evil men of violence on both sides of the sectarian divide, whose murderous campaigns have lead to the death and maiming of so many totally innocent men, women and children.

Let us also be clear about placing the blame for the conflict that has so divided the people of Northern Ireland. Some, while claiming to be loyalist, have sunk to the

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republican terrorists' level. But although the hand of Ulster may be red, the hands of the IRA and their apologists in Sinn Fein are steeped in the blood of so many victims—a blood-red stain that can never be removed by pious platitudes, joint declarations or hypocritical messages of regret. Indeed, it can never be removed until those responsible are identified, apprehended, tried and sentenced for crimes of such grotesque barbarity that they have turned the stomachs of the world.

We have heard too many words and noble statements from the Front Benches on both sides of the House. Noble words are all too often used to mask ignoble deeds, and 10 years' service in this House lead me to suspect that that position might have arisen in connection with Northern Ireland.

Even in agreeing the joint declaration with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland, the Prime Minister has sent a clear message to the IRA terrorists. Ministers have sought, through weasel words in their statements, to portray themselves as defenders of the Union while endorsing the signing of the declaration—a Trojan horse that heralds the death of the Union and may prove the downfall and break-up of our nation.

The message that the Government's actions have sent clearly and unmistakably is that the IRA has succeeded in one of its most fundamental aims: it has brought about a position in which the Government are now presiding over the dissolution of the Union and are prepared to negotiate with overseas Governments about the future of British citizens. We have only to compare our Government's attitude to, and neutrality on, the Union's future with the attitude of the Irish Government who, in articles 2 and 3, make perfectly clear their territorial claim to Ulster.

I am sorry to introduce a discordant note to the debate, but I believe that the declaration was a fundamental political error in the principles that it espoused and particularly in the clear message that the spaces between its lines sent to the terrorists. Far from feeling that they have failed, they will now feel that they are making good progress and that the wages of their evil are not the political death which they and their aspirations deserve but the realisation of their dreams—a united Ireland.

Ministers have talked about respecting the views of the majority of the people of Ulster and said that they see no prospect of that majority seeking to secede from the Union. Much has been made in this debate of the right to self-determination. That may be the case today, but, for so many years, the people of the Province have borne the brunt of terrorist atrocity after terrorist atrocity. When, in the coming months and years, they inevitably gradually realise that the Government's commitment to the Union is but grudging, that the Government see the Province's problems as a burden which they are forced reluctantly to bear for historical reasons, that, although they are members of the Union, they will never be brought fully within it, and that the cost of their presence within it is resented in some quarters of the United Kingdom, their views will turn.

I have no crystal ball and I cannot accurately predict how the break-up of the Union may be brought about. However, the signing of the joint declaration, both in terms of its words and its coded message to the terrorists, has commenced a process that will lead irrevocably to a united Ireland unless the Government change their views, and do so quickly, robustly and publicly.

We can be certain of one thing: moves towards a united Ireland will not solve the troubles of the Province. They will not bring an end to the bloodshed. In their resentment at such a move—and what many of us consider to be such a betrayal—it is inevitable that the loyalist terrorists will, in turn, increase their violence. The signatories to the joint declaration will have condemned the people of Northern Ireland to further decades of bloodshed. There is only one way for peaceful change in Northern Ireland—to defeat the terrorists on their own terms.

We in the House cannot abandon the people of Northern Ireland to the fate of being ruled by terrorism, any more than we can abandon any other part of the United Kingdom. We must take the opposite course and fully incorporate Northern Ireland within the Union as soon as possible. Only then will we in the House be sending to the IRA the clear message that the armed struggle has failed.

2.7 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I thank the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) for initiating the debate and express my support for the motion.

The Downing street declaration was certainly given a warmer reception than the so-called Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. I never thought that the 1985 agreement provided the basis for a peaceful settlement because it lacked the necessary grass-roots support and was essentially an agreement between two Governments. A just and lasting peace requires the support of the people as well as the support of Governments.

I was pleasantly surprised at the comparatively warm reception that the Downing street declaration received last month. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and his party for at least giving the declaration serious consideration—I recognise that that probably required a degree of political courage on their part. I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) for the courage that he has displayed in his attempts to find a peaceful solution.

Unfortunately, Sinn Fein's attitude is still unclear, but I appeal to it to abandon violence and take the opportunity to become involved in democratic discussions. I also hope that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) will think again. I can well understand that he and his party are far from satisfied with some aspects of the declaration, but it at least provides a basis for discussion. Surely, it is helpful for opponents to sit round a table to discuss their differences in an effort to end the bloodshed.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North is not alone in finding some aspects of the declaration unpalatable. I am not happy about the definition of self determination in the declaration. I cannot accept the double standards of the British Government, who grant a degree of determination to the people of the Province of Northern Ireland while denying any degree of self determination to the people of Scotland who constitute an entire nation. The British Government should admit that Britain was wrong to partition Ireland, and that the resultant creation of Northern Ireland inevitably produced a gerrymandered, unstable entity—politically, economically and militarily. Whether we like it or not, the division of Ireland is a fact and sometimes it is not easy for today's politicians to undo the

mistakes of 70 years ago. Let us learn from past mistakes, but let us look to the future now instead of merely living in the past.

There is nothing wrong—indeed, in my opinion there is much that is laudable—in having an aspiration or a vision of a united Ireland where people of different religions, cultures and traditions live together in peace and harmony with mutual respect for each other's beliefs, but it is a political problem or, dare I say, a political challenge, to turn that vision into reality.

I welcome the reference in the declaration to the right of self determination for the people of the entire island of Ireland, but I have reservations, to say the least, about the declaration's split definition of that right. I can well understand the difficulty of many Irish people in accepting the definition. It could be argued, however, that it is possible to stand by the right of self determination for the people of Ireland as a whole, while saying that it would be politically unwise to assert or exercise that right at this time without the consent of both parts of Ireland.

Politicians and parties can compromise without abadoning their principles, and it is on that basis that I appeal to all parties to enter discussions on the basis of the declaration.

The Government are needlessly getting themselves into an entrenched position on clarification of the declaration. As I said yesterday at Question Time, they cannot on the one hand say, "We believe in open government" but on the other say, "We do not believe in clarification".

There is a big difference between clarification, negotiation or renegotiation, and certain parts of the declaration are ambiguous and require genuine clarification. I appeal to the Secretary of State to think again on that point.

The declaration is not a settlement but a framework for further progress. I therefore endorse the appeal to all parties to take this opportunity of a place at the negotiating table. Time is running out. More than 3,000 people have lost their lives in the bloody conflict over the past quarter of a century and many more lost their lives in the longer conflict that lasted on for many centuries before that. Surely now is the time to try to find a peaceful and just settlement in the interests of all the people of Ireland, north and south. Whatever their differing beliefs and traditions, they are all human beings with human rights, including the right to live together in peace and harmony.

2.12 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We have heard two speeches from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland —one last night and another this morning. This morning's included a lengthy discussion of the question of amnesty, in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman repeated the formal position. I have no time to make my argument in detail, but I was not reassured by what he said. He knows that law and practice are flexible on the issue of early release, which has been used in the past. It is not encouraging that, despite being invited on a number of occasions directly to address the question of early release, the Government have failed to do so.

That is particularly significant in view of one of the misleading and mischievous statements that have been made by Garret Fitzgerald, which was repeated by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). I find it interesting to read the five pages that Garret Fitzgerald devoted in his memoirs to the meeting with Lady Thatcher in Milan, in which he alleges that an agreement was reached. A similar description of that meeting appears in Lady Thatcher's memoirs. The two discriptions are consistent—but wholly inconsistent with the view that there has been no agreement on early release.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not want there to be any misunderstanding—it never occurred to me that there were grounds for any. As the hon. Gentleman knows, a discretionary power exists to release on licence those who are serving life sentences. That will operate in precisely the same way and without any special dispensation being made by reference to the cessation of violence. As to determinate sentences, the hon. Gentleman knows that there is no similar provision.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the Secretary of State for saying that, because it is a clearer statement than we have had so far. I am glad to hear it and it has been worth while.

While we are on the topic, it might be a good idea to look at the practice in England and Wales. It might be a good idea to assimilate it with that of Northern Ireland, or—I shall not recommend one over the other—to a common standard, because the problem is common and there are prisoners on both sides of the Irish sea. There should be common treatment in that respect, too.

In his speech last night, the Secretary of State said two things that I want to touch on. On page 20 of his speech, he referred to a willingness to strengthen the law with regard to terrorism and give the police the resources that they need. We have heard statements like that before. I can remember a similar one last year shortly after the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary had publicly called for greater powers. I know that the RUC is still keen to see certain changes introduced, but they are stuck somewhere; whether in the Home Office or the Northern Ireland Office we do not know. Let us clear that logjam and get them introduced.

Again in his speech last night, the Secretary of State referred to the continuing talks process. I am glad that he referred to continuing the present process rather than referring to some new grand round-table extravaganza. I noticed that he mentioned Her Majesty's Government making proposals to give focus and direction. We welcome that. I recall that, some 14 or 15 months ago during the inter-party talks of October or November 1992, we sought such a statement of Government policy and proposals. We urged the Government to get off the fence and put their cards on the table. We have been disappointed that, during that period, the Government have not done so. For long periods last year, it was frustrating to try to understand why there were occasional hints about proposals that would give focus and direction to the talks, but nothing ever happened.

Of course, we now know the reason: for much of last year, indeed even now, the Government have been playing footsie under the table with the Provos. I understand the reasons why they started to do that, but they were naive in rushing into it in terms of their response to the February message and in their response to the Hume-Adams initiative. I hope that we will get past that. As we do, I hope that the Secretary of State will appreciate the extent to which the Government's actions on both fronts has weakened public confidence in Northern Ireland.

[Mr. Trimble]

There is still a need for the Secretary of State to address the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) put to him last December, when he asked what the Secretary of State was going to do to give our constituents renewed confidence in the integrity of Government and the direction of Government policy.

There is still a need to rebuild the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland. I do not have time to go into detail, but it is my view that the Downing street declaration —understandably, I do not regard it as a balanced document—which is a response to the Hume-Adams-Reynolds initiative, is a diversion. It has distracted energy from the right way forward; the continuation and intensification of the dialogue in which we have been engaged. I believe that that declaration, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) has said, will not receive a positive response from the Provisional IRA.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) posed certain questions to the republican movement about whether it was really interested in providing unity and consent. Of course, it is not. From its inception, the IRA has been interested only in coercion. It does not care about the views of the greater number of the people of Northern Ireland who wish to be part of the United Kingdom and who consider themselves British. It is concerned with the expulsion of those people from Northern Ireland. It is interesting that, on the rare occasions when the Provos let their guard slip on the matter, one hears references to the analogy of Algeria and the pieds noirs there. Anyone who has discussed such matters with republicans will find that once one probes a little bit, that idea is there. People who regard themselves as British will have no part in the Ireland that the IRA will have created; indeed, they will not even be on the island if it has its way.

That is the reality and we should not disguise the fact. That reality will be acted out, or there will be a propaganda overlay. All this business about clarification is no more than propaganda. It is no more than an attempt by the IRA to divert blame from itself, partly because it fears the reaction in its own areas if it is seen to turn down the offer of peace, and the possibility of peace, but also so that it can maintain its connections and the relationship that it has established with the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and with the Irish Prime Minister.

There is another consideration. The Provos have fought what they say is a long war—they have been at it for 25 years—and are quite prepared to wait for another two years when they think that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) will be in a position to give them all that they want on a plate. His statements at the Dispatch Box today will have reinforced that belief. They are quite prepared to wait for what they think will be a Labour Administration. Even if there is a Labour Government I think that they will be disappointed, but I do not think that that hope should be offered to them. The actions and statements of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North on the matter are reprehensible.

None the less, the Downing street declaration is a diversion. I hope that the Secretary of State's speech last night shows that we are getting away from it and back to the more sensible approach of trying to press forward and deal with the real issue, which is remedying the democratic deficit.

The Secretary of State said today that the people of Northern Ireland will be supported by the Government while they remain part of the United Kingdom and will have all the entitlements of citizenship. No, we do not have those entitlements. We do not have any form of useful local democracy or administration; we do not have any real say in decisions taken locally which affect us; and we do not even have any real say in this House where, in terms of the legislative procedures adopted, we are second-class Members and second-class citizens in Northern Ireland. That must be remedied.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) expound the distinctions between consent in constitutional matters, not having a veto on policy and all the rest. That was interesting. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. It is not right that a party with four Members of Parliament—a party that represents such a small fraction of the United Kingdom electorate—should have a veto on restoring accountable democracy in Northern Ireland and proper procedures in this House. I hope that as we proceed we shall not hear the phrase, "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". It may have served a purpose, but it has had its day and I do not see it serving a purpose in the future.

The hon. Member for Foyle is very fond of European comparisons. There is a lot of advantage in such comparisons and we could learn a great deal from the way in which the peoples of western Europe have resolved their problems on the basis of mutual respect and an absence of territorial claims. If we study closely the procedures of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, we can learn a great deal. Through the human dimension, developed since the Vienna conference of 1989 and reflected in the charter of Paris in 1990, a lot of work has been done to try to stipulate what should be the rights of national and ethnic minorities. We should adopt those standards. They have the advantage that they are not framed merely for our conditions but are the principles that the countries of Europe should apply. I notice that, for Finland, the CSCE talks not merely about having no territorial claims but about refraining from advancing any such claims and from hostile political propaganda.

I am told that the Taoiseach, Mr. Reynolds, made another speech last night. I did not hear it and I have not read it, but a journalist told me this morning that in it he expounded his views on national self determination in terms of international law. Our reaction is, "Good!" I am glad that the Taoiseach is paying some respect to international law. I only wish that he would adopt it and bring his constitution and Government practice wholly into accord with it.

2.23 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): This debate is timely. Today's newspapers reported that Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams said yesterday that he would not rule out the prospect of a ceasefire. That is welcome news. However, we must not judge members of Sinn Fein-IRA by their words—I judge them by their deeds. I have a permanent reminder of exactly what they stand for—a piece of shrapnel which I picked up after a housing estate

in Dungannon had been mortar-bombed only a few weeks ago. I therefore need to be far more persuaded of the commitment of the Sinn Fein-IRA to peace.

My acquaintance with them last Monday, observing the Sinn Fein-IRA meeting sponsored by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), in the Jubilee Room here in the Houses of Parliament, did not persuade me that their remarks were at all sincere. That entire press conference was another cynical attempt to divert from the real issue. The message that everyone wants to hear is a date. When will they end their violence? A serious reference to that might have given Gerry Adams's remarks yesterday more validity.

As it was, the meeting left a deeply unpleasant memory for me. It was simply, as far as I could see, a cheap propaganda ploy—delaying tactics. The national chairperson, Tom Hartley—looking more like a bank manager than a man who sponsors terrorism—with an attractive escort, Joan O'Connar, gave an unreal impression of being there to discuss everything but the hidden catalogue of human misery that they have inflicted, causing more than 3,000 deaths. Last year, 84 people were killed and many more were maimed.

Never once did those people respond to my call to end violence. It was as if my intervention had never happened. I could have been reciting the telephone directory for all the response that they gave. Never once did they apologise for the grief and unhappiness that they have caused. They were utterly detached and unmoved. It was all so remote. They could have been people living on another planet, unconnected with the trail of terrorism that they have left behind. I wonder how much they want peace. If they did want it, they are perfectly capable, in their own brutal terms, of making their more extreme followers fall into line, as was shown by the 72-hour Christmas truce. Their sheer detachment was harrowing. It was clinical and polished. They praised the Hume-Adams document, but, when asked, "When will it be published?" they said, "We will do it at a date that suits us." Their vocabulary was littered with words such as "lying", "ridiculous refusal of the British Government", "bogus accounts", accusations that the British Government "falsified versions of exchanges" and allegations of "British Government duplicity". Further words—"demilitarisation", "a withdrawal by the British"—by Mr. Hartley did not send signals of serious intent to promote any interest in ceasing violence.

The call by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield for "terminating British jurisdiction in Northern Ireland"—by 31 December 1999, as he detailed earlier this morning—did nothing to promote an illusion of a desire to end violence. It was more a case of surrendering to violence and terrorism. I found it nauseating to watch him, together with the hon. Member for Islington, North, sponsoring such a meeting. Neither of them cared a rap for the majority will of the people in Ulster.

How could those people hold a meeting in the very Parliament which the IRA have tried so hard to destroy? We were just 50 ft from the spot where Airey Neave was killed in his car coming up the car park ramp. Our walls bear tribute to colleagues here in Parliament who became victims of the IRA, such as Ian Gow and Sir Anthony Berry.

The press conference was slick and odious. As for the document that Sinn Fein produced, claiming their own version of contacts with the British Government, I can only say that those who have studied it tell me that it is full of lies, innuendoes and deceit. In these difficult times, it is essential that we are guided by our heads and not by our hearts. We must be careful where we are treading and we must be under no illusions about the nature of the people with whom we are dealing.

2.29 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Looking at the clock Madam Deputy Speaker, may I ask whether we finish this debate at 2.30 pm?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Hendron: That gives me half a minute, but thank you for calling me.

The Downing street declaration should be supported by all those who are seeking peace in Northern Ireland. We have had power-sharing assemblies, conventions and all sorts of initiatives over the years, but at this stage, the people of Northern Ireland are crying out for peace. I am aware of the hypocrisy of the Provos, but——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

A1 (M) (Service Stations)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I am grateful to have the opportunity to raise a matter of great concern to my constituents in Letchworth, Baldock, Ashwell, and especially Radwell. The objectors are led by somebody who normally says "Yes Minister"—Sir Humphrey Appleby, played by the actor Nigel Hawthorne. On this occasion, Nigel Hawthorne is saying, "No Minister" to the proposal for a motorway service area. In leading the objectors, he has said of the fight against the proposal:

"We're dealing with the big guns here and we're just the little people. It is Agincourt, if you like . . . We're trying to save a wheat field".

The purpose of the debate is to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to do two things. The first is to explain the policy of de-regulation in the planning of motorway service areas, which has made that planning application possible and made the appeal necessary, and to reassure local residents such as Mrs. Meredith-Hardy in my constituency, a lifelong Conservative party member who said:

"Local people blame the Government for legislation that the Developers (speculators) loose on all of us."

Secondly, we seek assurances in the light of recent press comment that the Department of Transport and the Government have taken no action and will not take any action that would in any way pre-judge or undermine the absolute independence of the planning process, while the decision of the Secretary of State for the Environment is awaited. Can the Minister confirm what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has informed me in writing, that it is essential that the Minister is impartial in the process and that all the arguments put forward by the objectors in my constituency, by the appellants and by the district council will be carefully considered before a final decision is made?

In considering the case, I shall set the scene. Within days of being elected, I was approached by the objectors, including Nigel Hawthorne and Mrs. Meredith-Hardy, who expressed strong objection to the proposal for a motorway services area. Certainly, at that stage, there was general agreement on the policy of deregulating motorway service areas. That was not being criticised. The site was the reason for the objection.

The site which has been put forward for the scheme is two miles from existing services—a Little Chef and a Happy Eater, with hotel accommodation—which could be developed as a motorway service area without any difficulty. The proposed site is a virgin site, on top of a hill, in open countryside, designated to be of scenic value and close to the small village of Radwell—with its lake and historic buildings—and to one of the most beautiful villages in north Hertfordshire, Ashwell, which has a high proportion of listed properties, and is known for its medieval history, for its springs and for its general beauty.

The objectors' second point was that there would be a huge increase in traffic through the villages to accommodate nearly 7,000 vehicles a day using that motorway services area. The next point was quite curious. Apparently, a water bore hole was necessary to service the new area. The extraction of excessive water could put Radwell's lake and the River Ivel at risk.

The objectors also said that there would be noise at a level that they had never experienced before. Ambient noise in such a rural setting is obviously different from that which would occur from the manoeuvring of 7,000 vehicles through a nearby 12-acre site. The objectors were also concerned about floodlighting which could mean that Radwell might no longer have a night time. They were also concerned about pollution and the loss of countryside.

I have lived in north Hertfordshire for 13 years and I know the area well. In fact, my children and I feed the ducks on Radwell lake. After listening to the objectors, and having visited the site, I was so concerned that I took the matter up with the former Minister for Roads and Traffic, my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle). He sent me a reply in which he said:

"The Department . . . continues to be consulted by local planning authorities about proposals affecting roads for which it is responsible, and the Radwell service area scheme was therefore referred by North Herts District Council for comment. The Department responded on 3 November, directing the Council to refuse planning permission on the grounds that the proposal would be incompatible with plans to improve the A1 and A1(M)."

As one might imagine, that reply was met with great excitement, joy and pleasure in Radwell and the surrounding villages and towns. It seemed that the scheme was not going to proceed. Nigel Hawthorne wrote to me saying:

"Sir Humphrey would have been extraordinarily proud of the style of writing, but I think I have managed to deduce the content."

He want on to praise the Minister at length.

Shortly after that, there was another encouraging sign when the director of planning at North Hertfordshire district council wrote to me explaining the strong objections from all quarters. He said that he would recommend the refusal of the scheme at the planning committee on 27 January 1993. However, before that recommendation could be considered by the committee, it was pre-empted when the appellants appealed to the Minister in the Department of the Environment and the objectors had to prepare for a public inquiry.

At that stage, the objectors were buoyant because they felt that they had the support of the Department of Transport, the county council, North Hertfordshire district council, every parish council and the thousands of people who had signed the petition and who had written letters of objection. However, shortly before the planning inquiry in June, the Department of Transport withdrew its objections and the county council decided not to appear.

Hopes that the matter was a formality and that it would be disposed of easily were dashed. Local residents realised that they had a fight on their hands. Throughout the period, I have made strong representations on behalf of the objectors to Ministers and to councils, as has the local Conservative councillor Mr. Andrew Young.

The inquiry took five days and the inspector is currently completing his report. On 18 January 1993, in reply to my parliamentary question, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment confirmed that the Secretary of State's decision on the planning application is due in April.

The inquiry cost local residents £35,000 in objecting to the scheme. On each day, more than 100 residents attended the inquiry, 25 on horseback. I believe they did that to highlight the rural nature of the area. At the end of the inquiry, local residents were feeling buoyant, having again expressed the objections which I have outlined.

In October 1993, the Department of Transport became somewhat more popular when it became apparent that it was reviewing its national trunk roads programme, and it was hoped that the improvement of the A1(M) might not be accomplished quite as speedily as had been thought and that that might help even more. So it was, with the objectors in quite a buoyant mood, that, on 7 January this year, *The Times* published an article, which is the immediate reason why I asked for this Adjournment debate, which stated:

"Motorists who have to endure long motorway journeys without a break will be relieved by yesterday's announcement that 24 new service areas are to be built."

Above that article was a map showing the A1(M), Radwell and Letchworth. It went on to quote the views of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the improvements that would be provided for drivers.

One can imagine how that news was received in Radwell, Baldock and Ashwell, where people felt that all the work of protest was in vain and that the public inquiry was a waste of time and money. Some residents were so annoyed and depressed that they put their homes on the market because they did not want to be near such a development.

The Department's press release does not give a ground for the comment in *The Times* that those service areas are to go ahead. Having read the press release and received answers from both relevant Ministers, it is clear to me that the point of the Department of Transport in the press release was that there was considerable enthusiasm in the private sector to accept the challenge of providing new motorway services and that many schemes have been proposed, four of which had received planning permission, not that the sites which were subject to the planning process would necessarily be chosen for that purpose. That opinion is proved by a detailed examination of the press release. It shows that three of the sites referred to on the M6 near Stone are mutually exclusive and that two of them on the M40 are the same, so it could not be the case that the Department was prejudging the issue and saying that all sites would go ahead.

Anxiety in north Hertfordshire is such that, none-the-less, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to make the position absolutely clear to people in north Hertfordshire who wish to read his comments. My constituents who are Conservative supporters and who genuinely welcome the deregulation of the planning of motorway service areas might need reassurance on the Government's policy.

There are two reasons for deregulating. First, we do not have enough motorway service areas to provide the ability to rest so that drivers are not drowsy and overstrained. Secondly, there is the risk, which has been highlighted by our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, of drivers pulling over to the hard shoulder, in desperation, to relieve themselves. If that risk is not met, there could be accidents or even disasters, particularly with children.

Although I recognise the need for motorway service areas and for the policy, the site is wrong. I am not sure whether the southern end of the A1, with its substantial provision of Little Chefs, Happy Eaters and so on, is necessarily the type of area at which the policy was aimed. My constituent Nigel Hawthorne put it in his own way and said, "No, Minister." I agree.

2.43 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising this issue in the House today and on his persistent, ever-courteous and thoroughly effective representations to me, my predecessor and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. I am grateful for the opportunity to put the record straight, and I shall now seek to do that.

We know that people are increasingly using our motorways, whether it is for freight transport, business and commerce or increasingly for leisure and pleasure. Motorway service areas are an essential part of our transport infrastructure. They make an important contribution to safety on United Kingdom motorways, a record of which we are rightly proud. Our motorways are our safest roads, and our roads are the safest in Europe.

Currently, there are 47 motorway service areas in England. Virtually all are at locations that were originally selected by my Department. Under arrangements that applied until 1992, they were provided at intervals of roughly 30 miles—about half an hour's driving time at normal motorway speeds. The Department of Transport sought the planning clearance for their development and acquired the necessary land, usually by compulsory purchase. Sites were then offered to private sector operators who were invited to bid for the right to build an MSA and operate it under a 50-year lease from the Department.

Under those arrangements therefore, the Department directly controlled the location of MSAs. It also controlled, through conditions in MSA leases, a list of specified facilities that the operator was required to provide, ranging from the number of car and lorry parking spaces to the hours during which food and drink had to be available. I emphasise that none of the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State bear any relation to, or have introduced, the question of "deregulating planning", which was the phrase used by my hon. Friend.

By the late 1980s, however, the system was becoming bogged down in a series of lengthy public inquiries provoked sometimes by environmental groups and by concerns about MSA proposals and objections to the associated compulsory purchase orders. That seriously delayed the delivery of the Department's MSA programme and it led to widespread public criticism of the fact that several motorways—notably, the M25 and the M40—had to be opened before adequate services were available. My hon. Friend will recall that, over the past few months, my Department and I have come under severe criticism for the lack of sufficient rest areas on the motorways. We always planned motorway service areas, for example, on the M40. They were denied to us because of the lengthy planning processes and the legitimate objections of people on many grounds, including environmental grounds.

As my hon. Friend recognises, there is increasing need for those service areas. He referred to the sort of incidents that can occur on our motorways. I can confirm that that happens. Indeed, only this morning I was on the M4 driving towards Reading and was interested to see a large light brown Mercedes, the number of which escapes me, with a gentleman half-way up the bank behind a shrub. That example exonerates the policy and I shall not continue with it.

We had to come to terms with the growing pressure from prospective operators of MSAs. They were confident

[Mr. Robert Key]

that they could provide for the public need more efficiently and effectively than the Department. They could also save the taxpayer a great deal of money—each of the MSAs costs about £10 million to £15 million to build. We committed ourselves in the citizens charter to seeking ways of providing more services more quickly.

During 1992, the Department undertook an extensive public consultation. We sought the views of the motoring public, as well as those of the operators and developers, on the way forward. The responses that we received demonstrated wide support for the principle of deregulation of MSAs, not the planning procedures. At the same time, it was clear that certain of the minimum facilities required under the lease were regarded as valuable and were widely appreciated. The consensus among those consulted was that any deregulated policy should incorporate safeguards to guarantee that the features were preserved.

The new policy on MSA provision, which was developed in the light of the consultation responses, was announced by my right hon. Friend in August 1992. Under the new arrangements, it is for the private sector, rather than my Department, to identify sites for new MSAs, to secure ordinary planning permission and to acquire the land.

At the same time, the minimum permissible distance between MSAs has been reduced from about 30 miles to about 15 miles. One might ask why there are any regulations at all regarding the distance. The answer is simple. The first reason is the safety of access roads and slip roads, and the second, of course, is the commercial interest of the people who are going to have to develop the land. There is a continued guarantee that fuel, free parking, lavatories and facilities for disabled people will be available for 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

The new arrangements will accelerate the provision by tackling some of the main causes of delays which were experienced under the old system. There will no longer be compulsory purchase orders for new MSAs, and less regulation of facilities should give developers greater flexibility to draw up proposals that are acceptable to local authorities and to others.

We heard some of the fears of the constituents of my hon. Friend today. I heard in Reading that local people are concerned at the proposal to develop an MSA on the M4. They were worried about the height of buildings, but that is not a matter for me. It is a planning consideration for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

As well as accelerating the provision of services on motorways where none exists, the new policy will increase customer choice. Standards of MSAs have improved substantially, and I am happy to acknowledge the achievement of their operators in that respect. I am convinced that the best way of sustaining that improvement is by increased competition. The reduction in the minimum spacing between MSAs from 30 miles to 15 miles and the greater flexibility of the new policy will give operators every incentive to provide the facilities which motorists want. My hon. Friend and his constituents would acknowledge that MSAs have come a long way from the rather drab and dour places we remember from the early days of the 1960s and 1970s.

Since August 1992, my Department has been notified of a total of 28 planning applications for new private sector MSAs. Planning permission has since been granted for five of those applications, construction is to begin shortly at two of those. Planning applications for the remaining 23 are still under consideration. Preliminary inquiries have been made to the Department for about a dozen further schemes for which planning applications have yet to be submitted. Those are encouraging results and demonstrate the firm interest that the private sector is taking in that section of the market.

I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend for the way in which he highlighted a press release from the Department of Transport. He pointed out that the release did not at any stage say that those proposals were going to be built. My hon. Friend drew attention to the first paragraph, which referred to 24 new schemes being in the pipeline, of which four had been granted planning permission.

It was the level of response from the private sector to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred in that press release. The fact that his remarks were so widely reported illustrates the public interest in the subject. Less helpful was the fact that some of those reports provoked unnecessary concens among people, including my hon. Friend and his constituents, who were potentially affected by the particular MSA proposals. I am glad to be able to put the record straight today.

I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would tell his constituent, Mrs. Meredith-Hardy, that I hope that it will be clear that private MSA proposals will be subject to planning procedures directly comparable with those that apply to schemes promoted in the past by the Department. No developer will be able to take his proposals forward unless and until he has first sought planning permission from the local planning authority which is responsible for the area. In the event of his application being refused, the promoter of an MSA—like the promoter of any other development—has the right of appeal.

My Department still needs to satisfy itself that access can be provided to a proposed MSA which is acceptable in safety and traffic management terms. We will also respond to inquiries from a developer or from planning authorities on whether a proposed development would qualify for signs from the motorway. In addition to all the normal planning procedures, we must consider two additional constraints—access and the question of signing from a motorway. So there is no question of the Department riding roughshod over the plannings procedures. I much regret that certain of the reports that I have seen gave the impression that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had somehow decided unilaterally that some 20 MSA schemes would now go ahead. Those reports are misleading.

I hope that Radwell lake will continue to entertain my hon. Friend and his family and that the ducks will continue to thrive. I know how much people in the countryside—I count myself as a country dweller—recognise and treasure such experiences.

I know that the matter has caused particular concern to some of my hon. Friend's constituents, who argued against the proposal at Radwell on the A1(M) when it was the subject of a public inquiry last year. They are understandably alarmed at any suggestion that the views

that they expressed then should be overruled before the inspector appointed by the Department of the Environment has even submitted his report.

Bernard has told me—confidentially, of course—that Sir Humphrey means to have a word with one or two of his friends when lunching at the Athenaeum next week. We do not want any misunderstandings. This may be Sir Humphrey's Agincourt. I have no intention that it should be my Waterloo, whether on horseback or not.

The Department originally objected to the Radwell scheme because it conflicted with proposed improvements to the A1. Refinement of our plans for the road later allowed that objection to be removed. The local planning authority nevertheless refused planning permission, for reasons of its own. The developer appealed against that refusal, and it was that which led to last year's public inquiry.

Let me be quite clear that the Department has not identified a specific need for an MSA at Radwell. That is not our role. Our earlier objection was based solely on technical considerations. It is because those technical points have been overcome, rather than because we wish positively to recommend Radwell as a suitable MSA site, that our objection has been withdrawn.

My hon. Friend has suggested that existing services near Radwell could adequately service the A1(M) and that a new development is therefore unnecessary. As I understand it, those existing services do not meet the minimum standards for MSAs signposted from the motorway, but it is open to the operator there to propose uprating his site to meet those requirements. Were he to do so, we would consider his site for signing, just as we have considered the current proposal. The inspector at the public inquiry will, I am sure, have been forcefully reminded of the presence of the existing services, and he will no doubt wish to take account of them when he submits his report.

If the developer of the new site is, nevertheless, successful in his appeal, we would expect to agree suitable access arrangements. Provided that the site meets the minimum standards that I described earlier, we would also expect to provide signs from the A1(M). But we have not attempted, and will not attempt, to influence whether permission is granted in the first place. That remains firmly and clearly a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will take a decision in the light of the evidence before him. I hope that my hon. Friend and his constituents will be reassured by that.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 11 January 1994

ENVIRONMENT

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department, showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Gummer: Mr. Keith Adams is my personal special adviser and Mr. James Gray is special adviser to the Ministers of State in my Department. Mr. Tom Burke provides expert advice to Ministers and senior officials on environmental affairs and Professor Peter Hall similarly provides expert advice on planning affairs.

Smoke Control Areas

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue regulations to control the sale of unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas and prohibit the sale of high-sulphur solid fuel.

Mr. Atkins: Since the proposals were presented, levels of smoke and sulphur dioxide in the United Kingdom have continued to decline. Last year, annual average concentrations were 5 per cent. lower than in 1991-92 and only one site exceeded the European Community directive limit value. The need for these regulations is therefore being reconsidered.

Transport Expenditure

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the annual expenditure on transport by county councils and passenger transport authorities since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

Net current expenditure on public transport[1]

£ thousand

	1989-90 outturn	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 outturn*	*1992-93 revised estimate*	*1993-94 budget*
Shire counties	87,943	100,769	109,215	105,394	104,842
Passenger transport authorities	313,321	350,296	381,501	405,125	408,893

[1] Includes expenditure on public transport support, concessionary fares for elderly, blind, disabled and children (excluding school travel), public airport companies. Excludes expenditure and income incurred by the PTA levy.

Water

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 6 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *13,* what consultations he has had with the water regulator and the National Rivers Authority on the use of targets for each water company in respect of the reduction of leakage from water company pipes;

(2) if he will consider giving power to the water companies through the regulator to fit water conservation devices in homes.

Mr. Atkins: We are considering these matters following consultation, including with the Director General of Water Services and the National Rivers Authority, on our paper, "Using Water Wisely".

Local Authority Legislation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many Acts resulting from Bills introduced by his Department have altered the powers of local authorities in each year since 1990;

(2) how many Acts of Parliament have resulted from Government Bills that affect the powers of local authorities for each year since 1990.

Mr. Baldry: Since 1 January 1990 those Acts of Parliament which have resulted from Government Bills and which affect local authorities in England include:

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Food Safety Act 1990
National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Act 1991
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991
Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Act 1991
Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991
Planning and Compensation Act 1991
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
New Roads and Street Works Act 1991
Road Traffic Act 1991
Further and Higher Education Act 1992
Local Government Act 1992
Local Government Finance Act 1992
Severn Bridges Act 1992
Boundary Commissions Act 1992
Education (Schools) Act 1992
Noise and Statutory Nuisance Act 1992
Education Act 1993
Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993

This list does not include consolidation Acts.

Water Quality

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the steps which have been taken to repeal the water quality directives following the European Council meeting; and what obligations will remain relevant to the United Kingdom in respect of water quality.

Mr. Atkins: We welcome the European Council's decision to make water legislation consistent with subsidiarity and up-to-date science. It is now important that the Commission and the Council should, in giving effect to this decision, ensure that the details of new and revised

directives really are consistent with subsidiarity and are confined to essential quality and health parameters. Existing directives will remain in place until the Commission has brought forward proposals, and substitute directives have been agreed by the Council after consultation with the European Parliament.

Homelessness

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are homeless in the parliamentary constituency of Cheltenham.

Sir George Young: Information is reported quarterly by local authorities in England on the number of households for whom they accept responsibility, to secure permanent accommodation, under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985.

This is not available for the Cheltenham parliamentary constituency but Cheltenham district council reported that they had accepted 39 households as homeless in the quarter ending 30 September 1993.

Anderton Boat Lift

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance he will give to the Trent and Mersey Canal Society Ltd. towards the restoration and reopening of the Anderton boat lift; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The lift is the responsibility of British Waterways which receives substantial grant-in-aid from this Department. It is for BW to determine what funds it can commit to a restoration scheme in line with its statutory responsibilities. I welcome the initiative between British Waterways, local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors to explore the potential for a joint funding and management scheme. This would enable costs to be apportioned according to benefits, particularly those accruing to local interests.

Derelict land grant may be able to assist in enhancing surrounding land, depending on the competing claims on limited resources, and what funding can be secured from other sources.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the full details of the test results collected by the National Rivers Authority on bathing beaches in England, Wales and Scotland in the 1993 bathing season.

Mr. Atkins: The customary detailed summary of results for all United Kingdom bathing waters will be placed in the Library early in the year. Full results are available from the monitoring authorities.

Regional Development Fund

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide for full additionality for European regional development fund schemes by extending the automatic cover available for European regional development fund receipts to include the matching local authority contribution; and if he will make it his policy to maintain the levels in other areas of local authority capital spending.

Mr. Baldry: The Government already provide for the full additionality of European regional development fund —ERDF—receipts.

Matching funds can come from a variety of sources including:

—Local Authorities
—City Challenge
—Derelict Land Grant
—DTI Funds for Regional Assistance
—British Rail, water companies
—voluntary bodies and Charities
—Economic Regeneration Bodies
—TECs
—private sector.

From 1 April 1994, an important source of matching funding for ERDF projects will be the single regeneration budget, which will merge 20 separate domestic public expenditure programmes.

Local authorities are required to provide matching funding from within their existing resources, as are all ERDF beneficiaries. It is important that local authorities continue not to be treated differently from other beneficiaries in this respect. They must determine their own priorities in deciding whether or not to allocate resources to ERDF programmes. They must consider all the options available to them, with or without ERDF funds, and must decide which will offer the best value for money, whilst meeting local priorities. But they do have a further active contribution to make to the effective delivery of ERDF programmes to their areas, through their membership of partnership committees.

To increase local authority financial resources in the manner requested would act as a disincentive to resources being spent judiciously and would be contrary to the Government's policy of firm control over all United Kingdom public expenditure.

Research and Development

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the spending on research and development in each of the last five years given in 1992-93 prices in his Department.

Mr. Gummer: Expenditure by my Department on research in the last five years based on 1992-93 prices in £ million is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	72·1
1989-90	77·1
1990-91	88·3
1991-92	103·5
1992-93	104·9

Squatters

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his Department's responsibilities in the matter of problems arising from squatters; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Policy on squatting is primarily the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. This Department does, however, have an interest in the problems arising from squatting in both residential and commercial property, in particular the implications for housing stock management and the effects on private property owners.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to designate squatters as being statutory homeless.

Sir George Young: Under the present homelessness legislation—part III of the Housing Act 1985—squatters could be accepted as statutorily homeless if, on application to the appropriate local authority, the authority was satisfied that they were homeless, had become homeless unintentionally, and had a priority need for accommodation, as specified in the Act.

As I said in an earlier reply to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford)—*Official Report,* 21 October 1993, column *281*—the Government propose to reform the homelessness legislation. We intend that the new legislation should continue to provide that suitable accommodation is available for vulnerable people who are genuinely homeless through no fault of their own. We will announce our proposals shortly.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held with local authorities during the last 12 months about the occupation of council housing stock by squatters; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My Department discusses housing management issues regularly with the local authority associations. These have not focussed specifically on squatting, but the associations responded to my right hon. and learned Friend's consultation paper on the proposals in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Defective Houses

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take further measures to aid financially persons who knowingly purchased defective houses under the right-to-buy scheme and who now find they cannot sell them on.

Sir George Young: No. The housing defects legislation —part XVI of the Housing Act 1985—compensates people who purchased designated defective house types from public sector landlords before it was known that they contained serious inherent structural defects, and who paid a price which did not reflect the existence of the defects. People who knowingly purchase defective houses do so at their own risk, and the purchase price should take account of the defects.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes, classified as defective under the Housing Act 1985, have been sold under the right-to-buy scheme.

Sir George Young: Local authority returns do not identify how many dwellings designated defective under part XVI of the Housing Act 1985 have been sold under the right-to-buy scheme. However, local authorities report that some 31,000 designated dwellings were sold by public sector bodies to people qualifying for assistance under the housing defects scheme.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what target he has set for take-up by pensioners of the home energy efficiency scheme over the first year of its extension to all pensioner households.

Mr. Atkins: The target for the home energy efficiency scheme in 1994-95 is to treat 440,000 homes. My Department does not set a separate target for pensioner households.

Water Charges

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the level of water charges in the north-west.

Mr. Atkins: The regulation of water charges is a matter for the Director General of Water Services. But my right hon. Friend has received representations from a number of hon. Members and members of the public about North West Water's charges.

North West Water's average household bill in 1993-94 for unmeasured water and sewerage services is £169. The equivalent average for England and Wales is £185.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he intends to use to judge whether or not the option of high for low-level waste substitution of radioactive reprocessing wastes will produce an environmental detriment to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee has been asked to identify the environmental implications resulting from substitution and to advise in what circumstances these may be significant.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the annual increase in global carbon dioxide emissions which will result from the additional production resulting from the latest round in the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Atkins: The intergovernmental panel on climate change will be evaluating projections of world greenhouse gas emissions, including the impact of the GATT, for its second assessment report to be published in 1995. The implications are not solely for increased emissions. Increased trade and prosperity offer the opportunity for investment in more efficient production and use of energy generally in both developed and developing countries. The obligations for developed countries under the Framework Convention on Climate Change to take measures aimed at returning greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2000, and for all parties to the convention to review the adequacy of provisions by the end of the decade, remain.

Departmental Representations

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 December regarding representations to his Department, in what format records relating to such representations are kept.

Mr. Baldry: Since 1991 we have received a large number of representations of various types about the review of local government structure. Those received in response to departmental consultation exercises are retained separately, as are those about individual reviews in progress. Correspondence dealing with particular local

government functions is also kept together. Formal representations to the Secretary of State on the Local Government Commission's final reports are of course recorded with particular care. Other representations are generally retained according to their origin.

Nuclear Fuel Storage

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the matters raised in and recommendations of the report of July, presented by the European Parliament's Environment Committee on the environmental and public health aspects of the storage, transport and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel (A3-0220/93) a copy of which was sent to Her Majesty's Government by the President of the Parliament.

Mr. Atkins: The conclusions of the report have been noted.

Council Tax

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his best estimate of the percentage take-up of the single person's discount for the council tax by all pensioner households which would be eligible.

Mr. Baldry: I have no information about the take-up rate for discounts.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against council tax valuations from York residents *(a)* have been heard since April and *(b)* are currently outstanding.

Mr. Baldry: As at 31 December 1993, of the 1,425 proposals to alter the valuation list received in the area of York district council, two had been heard by the valuation tribunal as appeals and 958 were outstanding. A total of 465 had therefore been settled by discussion between the listing officer and the taxpayer, and we expect most proposals to be resolved in this way.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to publicise the extension to all pensioners of the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Atkins: The Energy Action Grants Agency—EAGA—is responsible for administering the home energy efficiency scheme. EAGA supply HEES leaflets free of charge to local authorities, Housing benefit offices, housing associations, citizens advice bureaux, the Benefits Agency, job centres, Age Concern and other organisations which have contact with the HEES client group. EAGA also encourages installers to promote HEES locally by means of advertising, press publicity and distribution of its own leaflets.

Negative Equity

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of households with negative equity in each region in each year since 1987.

Sir George Young: Estimates of the number of households with negative equity are not available for all regions and all years since 1987. Estimates made for the third quarter of 1993, are as follows:

	Number
Greater London	140,000
South East excluding London	340,000
South West and East Anglia	160,000
East Midlands and West Midlands	100,000
Yorkshire and Humberside, North West, North	60,000
England	800,000

Changes in the value of houses between the quarter in which they were purchased and the third quarter of 1993 are estimated from the DoE mix-adjusted index of prices of second hand dwellings. Mortgage debt is as at the time of purchase, as there is no direct information about subsequent changes. Ratios of mortgage advances to price, and the distribution of purchases between regions as derived from the building societies mortgage survey are assumed to have applied to house purchase loans by other lenders as well, in the absence of specific information about them.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in respect of how many boards, authorities, committees and other public bodies he is responsible, in whole or in part, for appointments; what is the total number of such appointments; and what is the total public spending by such boards, authorities, committees and other public bodies.

Mr. Gummer: Information about the nationalised industries and non-departmental public bodies for which I am responsible is contained in "Public Bodies 1993". A copy is available in the House of Commons Library and shows the number of bodies, their gross expenditure and the number of appointments to each body.

"Public Bodies" includes the Commons Commissioners and valuation tribunals, for which I am responsible but to which appointments are made by the Lord Chancellor and local authorities respectively.

I also appoint one-third of the members of the seven national park authorities in England and nine of the 35 members of the Broads Authority. Departmental support for these bodies in 1992-93 was £16·4 million.

No central record is maintained of departmental committees and boards not listed in "Public Bodies".

Coventry Cyrenians and Norton House

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consider the provision of emergency help to Coventry Cyrenians and Norton House in Coventry;

(2) what long-term plans he has to provide increases in grants to Coventry Cyrenians and Norton House;

(3) what representations he has received from Coventry Cyrenians and Norton House about the effect of recent cuts in grants.

Sir George Young: My Department has received no request for emergency help from the Coventry day centre —Norton House—or from Coventry Cyrenians; nor has either organisation made formal representations about the level of grant it is receiving in 1993-94 under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 as revenue funding for homelessness

projects. Coventry day centre has sought to vary the terms of its current grant agreement, and we will consider that request when we have received further information.

I will be considering shortly, on their merits, the applications which both organisations have made for grant under section 73 in 1994-95. Any future applications will be treated similarly.

Quangos

147. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Baldry: Such information is not available centrally.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Baldry: The following members of the House of Lords currently serving on the boards of executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department. Information on previous appointments is not available centrally.

Name of body	*Postholder*	*Position*	*Annual salary (£)*	*First appointed to board*	*Present appointment*	
					From	*To*
Commission for the New Towns	Lord Finsberg	Deputy Chairman	9,790	1 September 1992	1 September 1992	31 August 1996
	Lord Bellwin	Member	5,310	1 April 1985	1 April 1993	31 March 1995
Countryside Commission	Lord Denham	Member	5,050	1 August 1993	1 August 1993	30 June 1996
English Nature	Earl of Cranbrook	Chairman	35,150	5 November 1990	5 November 1990	31 March 1994
	Earl Peel	Member	6,310	5 November 1990	1 April 1993	31 March 1996
Housing Action Trust North Hull	Lord Bellwin	Chairman	25,315	20 July 1993	20 July 1993	19 July 1995
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	Lord Selborne	Chairman	23,435	4 September 1991	4 September 1991	31 March 94
National Rivers Authority	Lord Crickhowell	Chairman	52,945	10 July 1989	10 July 1989	30 June 1994
	Lord Gregson	Member	8,090	1 July 1991	1 November 1992	31 October 1995
Rural Development Commission	Lord Shuttleworth	Chairman	31,360	1 May 1990	1 May 1990	30 April 1994
Urban Development Corporation Leeds	Baroness Lockwood	Member	5,030	30 June 1988	30 June 1991	29 June 1994
Urban Development Corporation London Docklands	Lord Cocks	Deputy Chairman	23,175	1 November 1988	2 March 1992	1 March 1995
Urban Development Corporation Teesside	Lord Dormand	Deputy Chairman	8,590	22 June 1987	22 June 1993	21 June 1995
	Baroness Eccles	Member	5,030	22 June 1987	22 June 1993	21 June 1995
Urban Regeneration Agency	Lord Walker	Chairman	[1]—	10 November 1993	10 November 1993	9 November 1996

[1] Salary declined.

176. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Baldry: Such information is not available centrally.

Nuclear Issues

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many meetings he or Ministers or officials of his Department had with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs or Ministers or officials of his Department in regard to nuclear proliferation or nuclear security issues since 16 November 1992;

(2) how many meetings he held with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food between 21 May and 28 June on the reports submitted by the pollution and agriculture inspectorate on THORP—the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Atkins: Ministerial colleagues and officials have had a number of meetings with Ministers and officials from other Government Departments on issues relating to the revised draft authorisations for the disposal of radioactive waste from the Sellafield site.

Community Charge

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of people with outstanding community charge liability; and what is the average sum involved.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not available.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of his decision on the application by British Nuclear Fuels for authorisations to discharge radioactive wastes from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield as issued on 15 December were published; at what cost; and to which organisation and individuals they were circulated.

Mr. Atkins: Copies of the decision document were placed in the House Libraries and the Vote Office and sent to all those who were consulted, at no charge.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he took of the concerns raised by the group of United States Congress members, Japanese Diet members and hon. and right hon. Members, over the proliferation risk of THORP, before deciding on support for THORP at Sellafield.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food took into account all responses to the consultation before reaching their decisions.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of consultation with other departments of Her Majesty's Government seeking interdepartmental advice on THORP as part of the review of the submissions to the THORP consultation process referred to at paragraph 19 of his decision document on THORP of 15 December.

Mr. Atkins: These costs have not been separately identified.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the application of article 14 of the 1978 tripartite UK-Euratom-IAEA Safeguards Agreement to the safeguards for the thermal oxide reprocessing plant set out in paragraphs 142-43 of the decision document on THORP.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Article 14 of the 1978 tripartite UK-Euratom-IAEA safeguards agreement describes provisions for the exclusion of nuclear material from safeguards by the United Kingdom on the grounds of national security and applies to safeguarded material at all United Kingdom facilities subject to the agreement. The thermal oxide reprocessing plant—THORP—at Sellafield will be used for the reprocessing of civil nuclear material only.

Wildlife and Countryside (Management Agreements)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many management agreements have been entered into under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in England where payments have been in each band of £10,000 up to £60,000 or £60,000 and over; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Fifteen management agreements involving payments of between £10,000 and £60,000 and one involving payments of over £60,000 were made in England by English Nature in the financial year 1992-93. Figures for the years 1986-87 to 1991-92 have been given to the House by English Nature and its predecessor the Nature Conservancy Council in annual reports to Parliament which are available in the Library of the House.

169. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on management agreements in England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for sites of special scientific interest in each year since the Act came into force; if for each year he will give the number of agreements, the hectarages involved, and what the threats of damage were; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Details of annual expenditure on management agreements in England and the hectarage involved are given by English Nature and its predecessor the Nature Conservancy Council in annual reports to Parliament which are available in the Library of the House. Details of the threats in each individual case could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Reprocessing (Discharges)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the National Radioactive Protection Board regarding the comparative exposure levels to carbon 14 arising from the operation of nuclear reprocessing in the United Kingdom against the levels of discharges abroad.

Mr. Atkins: Copies of the National Radiological Protection Board's letter of 25 November about Sellafield collective dose assessments are in the House Library.

Hedgerows and Ponds

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the remit, the name of the organisation conducting the work, the publication date and the cost of the survey he has commissioned into hedgerows and ponds in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The current hedgerow survey aims to assess the type and amount of changes to hedgerows and ponds which occurred between 1984, 1990 and 1993 in England and Wales. The work is being undertaken by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and will be completed by 31 March 1994. The results will be published as soon as possible thereafter. The Department's maximum total liability for the work is £87,988.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Baldry: I announced our legislative proposals on 31 March 1993 at column 291. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, introduced on 17 December, includes provisions to implement those proposals.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will designate Wychavon district council under the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Wychavon district council and Hereford and Worcester county council have submitted to my Department a joint application for the designation of Wychavon under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The application is now being considered, and I will write to my hon. Friend when I have made a decision.

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to write the letter to the hon. Member for Tooting mentioned in his answer of 5 November, *Official Report,* column *487,* on HCFCs.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside wrote to the hon. Member for Tooting on 29 November 1993.

Asylum and Immigration (Housing)

159. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the code of guidance for local authorities on the implementation of the housing provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Sir George Young: Following wide consultation on a draft version, I hope to issue to local authorities in the next few weeks guidance on the housing provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. The guidance will take the form of a supplement to the current, 3rd, 1991, edition of the homelessness code of guidance for local authorities.

Rents

163. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures broken down by rent registration area showing the number of private sector cases referred to rent officers, and the number of cases where rents were reduced as a result, for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1992-93 and the latest available date for the current year.

Sir George Young: Information from January 1990, on housing benefit referrals to rent officers classified by registration area, can be found in table 1.3 of the publication "Rent Officer Statistics". The latest figures available are for the June quarter of 1993. No comparable data is available for the period April to December 1989.

Copies of this quarterly publication are in the Library.

SSSIs

162. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many sites of special scientific interest in England have been de-notified in each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many sites of scientific interest in England have been damaged or destroyed in each year since 1982; whether each of these sites *(a)* was lost completely, *(b)* was partially lost, *(c)* suffered long-term damage or *(d)* suffered short-term damage; whether the damage or destruction in each case was due to (i) agriculture, (ii) forestry, (iii) poor management, (iv) pollution, (v) third-party activities, (vi) developments controlled through the planning system, (vii) road building or (viii) other activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is contained in the annual reports of English Nature and of the former Nature Conservancy Council, copies of which are in the Library.

Grandstands

170. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to ensure the checking by qualified engineers of temporary grandstand structures; and whether existing technical guidance on the design of such structures is being taken fully into account.

Mr. Baldry: The Government recognise the importance of checking temporary grandstand structures by qualified engineers. The Building Regulations Advisory Committee has considered this recently, and as a result my officials are discussing with the Institution of Structural Engineers and other bodies in what ways the existing technical guidance needs to be strengthened.

National Parks

172. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions when his powers of compulsory purchase of land under section 17 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 have been used in England in each year since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Secretary of State has confirmed one compulsory purchase order over land within Somerset. However, following further discussions with the landowner the compulsory purchase order was not implemented.

Crossrail (Compensation)

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the issues examined earlier in respect of the statutory compensation code referred to by the Minister for Transport in London in the Second Reading debate on the Crossrail Bill on 8 June 1993, *Official Report,* column 219; and if he will make a statement concerning the details of the extent and character of the facts and evidence that were taken into account in deciding that the provisions strike a fair balance between the interests of landowners and the community as a whole.

Mr. Baldry: The main compensation concerns raised in relation to the Crossrail project have been, firstly, that owners of high value commercial property which may need to be compulsorily acquired should have the protection of the statutory blight code and, secondly, that London Regional Transport should be statutorily required to acquire property which stands to be seriously affected by construction work.

The provisions of the compensation code reflect a judgment as to what constitutes a sensible balance between, on the one hand, the interests of those whose land is required for or affected by public development and, on the other, the prudent use of public funds. We have carefully examined the representations made to my Department by the Crossrail compensation campaign. But the present Government, like their predecessors, are not persuaded of the case for bringing high value commercial property within the scope of the statutory blight code or for placing bodies responsible for public development under an obligation to acquire property for which they have no use. Commercial interests in London will ultimately derive substantial benefits from major infrastructure projects such as Crossrail

"London: Making the Best Better"

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many replies have been received to the document "London: Making the Best Better"; and how many were from addresses *(a)* in inner London, *(b)* outer London and *(c)* outside London.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* Nearly 9,000 completed questionnaires have been received so far. Information about the location of respondents is still being analysed.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The number of press notices which have been issued by my Department are as follows:

	Number
1979	601
1980	552
1981	510
1982	520
1983	606
1984	592
1985	642
1986	703
1987	552
1988	737
1989	736
1990	739
1991	819
1992	865
1993	[1]866

[1] To date.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many powers were conferred upon the holder of his post by *(a)* the Local Government Act 1988, *(b)* the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1990, *(c)* the Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991, *(d)* the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and *(e)* the Land and Urban Development Act 1992.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Regional Regeneration Budget

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate each of the existing Government programmes for Greater London which he is expecting to incorporate in the planned unified regional regeneration budget, together with the sums he intends to allocate to each programme together with the total.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* From 1 April 1994, the single regeneration budget will bring together 20 existing Government programmes to provide flexible support for local initiatives to promote regeneration and economic development in England. The Government programmes transferring to the budget are:

From the Department of the Environment:
- Estate Action
- Housing Action Trusts
- City Challenge/Urban Programme
- Urban Regeneration Agency
- Urban Development Corporations
- Inner City Task Forces
- City Action Teams

From the Employment Department
- Programme Development Fund
- Education Business Partnerships
- Teacher Placement Service
- Compacts/Inner City Compacts
- Business Start-Up Scheme
- Local Initiative Fund
- TEC Challenge

From the Home Office
- Safer Cities
- Section II Grants (part)
- Ethnic Minority Grant
- Ethnic Minority Business Grant

From the Department of Trade and Industry
- Regional Enterprise Grants
- (plus English Estates, to be subsumed into English Partnerships)

From the Department for Education
- Grants for Education Support and Training (part)

Resources totalling over £1·4 billion are being made available under the single regeneration budget in 1994-95: a regional breakdown is not currently available. However a regional breakdown of resources for 1993-94 under my Department's targeted programmes was provided in my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 10 December at columns *384-86.*

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, of the Property Services Agency—and its successors—the pollution inspectorate, the National Rivers Authority, the Countryside Commission, the Housing Corporation, the Audit Commission, the Rural Development Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, and of other inspectorates, agencies and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The regional and area offices of the Department of the Environment and of the agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which I have responsibility are as listed.

1. *Regional Offices of the Department of the Environment*

Northern (Newcastle Upon Tyne), Yorkshire and Humberside (Leeds), North West (Manchester), West Midlands (Birmingham), East Midlands (Nottingham), Eastern (Bedford), South West (Bristol), South East (London), Merseyside Task Force (Liverpool), London.

2. *Property Services Agency*

Following the sale in 1993 of PSA's Building Management businesses, PSA Services now has headquarters in Central London, Croydon and Hastings, together with smaller outstationed offices in Croydon, Bristol, Cambridge, Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh.

3. *HMIP*

Anglian (Bedford, Lincoln) Midlands (Sutton Coldfield) North East (Leeds, Sheffield, Thornaby) North West (Lancaster, Runcorn) Southern (Fleet, East Grinstead) South West (Bristol) Wales (Cardiff).

4. Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and other organisations sponsored by the Secretary of State for the Environment, as at December 1993.

Executive Agencies

Building Research Establishment: *Garston,* Borehamwood, Cardington, East Kilbride.
The Planning Inspectorate: *Bristol,* Cardiff.
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre: London.
The Buying Agency: Liverpool.
Security Facilities Executive: *London,* Burtonwood, Cardiff.
Ordnance Survey: *Southampton,* and 120 field offices throughout Great Britain.

Executive NDPBs

Audit Commission: London, Bristol, Chorley, Exeter, Gateshead, Leeds, Redhill, Solihull, Stevenage, Winchester, Cardiff (and other local offices in England and Wales)
British Board of Agrément: Garston
Commission for the New Towns: *London,* Basildon, Milton Keynes, Telford, Warrington
Countryside Commission: *Cheltenham,* Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne
English Nature: *Peterborough,* Ashford, Newbury, Newcastle upon Tyne, Shrewsbury, Taunton, Windermere
English Partnerships: London
Housing Action Trusts: Birmingham (Castle Vale), Hull, Liverpool, London (Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest)
Housing Corporation: *London,* Croydon, Exeter, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Wolverhampton
Joint Nature Conservation Committee: Peterborough
Letchworth Garden City Corporation: Letchworth

Local Government Commission: London
London Pensions Fund Authority: London
London Residuary Body: London
National Rivers Authority: *Bristol*, Birmingham, Bridgewater, Exeter, Leeds, London, Newcastle upon Tyne, Peterborough, Reading, Solihull, Warrington, Worthing, Cardiff, plus 89 district offices, 121 depots and 27 fish farms and laboratories
Rural Development Commission: *Salisbury*, London, Bedford, Belper, Bingham, Bury St Edmonds, Darlington, Dorchester, Exeter, Goole, Lewes, Maidstone, Malvern, Moreton-in-Marsh, Morpeth, Nantwich, Newport (Isle of Wight), Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Penrith, Preston, Skelton, Sleaford, Stoneleigh Park, Taunton, Telford, Truro, Winchester
United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board: London
Urban Development Corporations: Birmingham (Black Country and Heartlands), Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, London (Docklands), Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Plymouth, Sheffield, Stockton-On-Tees

Advisory NDPBs
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council: Birmingham
Local Government Staff Commission: London
Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution: London

Tribunals
Commons Commission: London
Rent Assessment Panels: Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Ipswich, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Plymouth, Southampton, Watford, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow
Valuation Tribunals: Aylesbury, Birmingham, Bolton, Botley, Bridlington, Cheltenham, Chester, Chesterfield, Chichester, Chorlton-Cum-Hardy, Croydon, Darlington, Doncaster, Dudley, Eastbourne, Harrow, Hertford, Horncastle, Hounslow, Ilford, Ipswich, Leamington Spa, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Maidstone, Middlesbrough, North Shields, Norwich, Nottingham, Peterborough, Plymouth, Preston, Southampton, Stafford, Whitehaven, Winchester, Witham, Woking, Wokingham, Worcester, Yeovil. (There are also Tribunal offices in Cardiff, Carmarthen, Colwyn Bay and Newport.)

Other Bodies
British Waterways Board (Nationalised Industry): *Watford*, Bilston, Bradford, Bromsgrove, Burton-on-Trent, Castleford, Devizes, Ellesmere, Enfield, Gloucester, Hemel Hempstead, Lancaster, Leeds, London (Paddington), Loughborough, Manchester, Northwich, Nottingham, Nuneaton, Rugby, Stafford, Tamworth, Tring, Warwick, Wigan, York, Abergavenny, Argyll, Falkirk, Glasgow, Inverness.
Commission for Local Administration: *London*, Coventry, York.
Office of Water Services (OFWAT): *Birmingham*, Bristol, Cambridge, Exeter, Leeds, London, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cardiff.
Notes:
1. For Agencies and NDPBs, where only one office is listed this is the headquarters; every Housing Action Trust and Urban Development Corporation has one office. For organisations with more than one office, headquarters offices are shown in *italics*.
2. Where an organisation operates in a very large number of locations, the main ones have been listed and numbers given for the rest.
3. Offices in Wales and Scotland are shown for organisations operating throughout Great Britain.
4. Other advisory NDPBs operate from the Department's offices in London.

Communication Masts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make the erection of communication masts subject to the normal local authority planning procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* I have no plans to change the selective planning controls over the erection of telecommunication masts which were introduced in January 1993.

The erection of masts up to 15 m in height has a general planning permission, under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. But if a local planning authority considers that a proposed mast would threaten amenity, it may determine that prior approval is required for its siting and appearance. The mast may not then be erected without that approval. A planning application is required for masts above 15 m, and in protected areas such as conservation areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

I am satisfied that these powers strike a reasonable balance between the need to protect amenity and the needs of the telecommunications industry.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Children's Homes

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to exempt residential establishments which care for children with multiple handicaps who require a very warm atmosphere and which are labour intensive *(a)* from VAT on fuel and *(b)* from bearing the cost of statutory sick pay.

Sir John Cope: VAT is designed as a broad-based tax on general consumer expenditure. In line with this principle the changes in the taxation of fuel and power will apply across the board to all consumers. Special treatment or particular sectors would produce inconsistencies. The revenue and environmental objectives of the changes would be put at risk. It is far better to provide extra financial help to those who need it via the benefit system, and this is what the Government have done.

Subject to parliamentary approval, the Statutory Sick Pay Bill 1993 will end the reimbursement of 80 per cent. of employers' SSP costs from April 1994. At the same time, employers' national insurance contributions will be reduced to ensure that employers as a whole are more than compensated for their additional SSP costs. Small employers will receive further help in the form of full reimbursement of any SSP paid after four weeks' sick absence.

Grace and Favour Accommodation

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis and how frequently *(a)* grace and favour accommodation and *(b)* accommodation for members of the royal family no longer on the civil list at the occupied royal palaces is assessed for taxable value; when the last assessment was; what is the gross value of these assessments; and on how many of each category tax is actually paid.

Mr. Dorrell: The same income tax rules apply to grace and favour accommodation as to other living accommodation. Accommodation which is taxable is assessed each year along with other income. The information requested by the hon. Member about the number and value of assessments on grace and favour accommodation is not held centrally and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

As regards the tax affairs of certain members of the royal family, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 16 December 1993 at column *844*.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Nelson: Since 1979 the following members of the House of Lords have held appointments on quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations for which I have responsibility:

(a) Securities and Investments Board (SIB):
Lord Runciman: non-executive director; duration of appointment four years from 1986; salary £8,000 pa in 1986 to £10,500 in 1989. Deputy chairman; duration of appointment four years from 1990; salary £32,500 pa.
Lord Stewartby: non-executive director; duration of appointment two years from 1993; salary £13,500 pa.
Lord Alexander of Weedon: Deputy chairman; duration of appointment three years from 1994; salary £32,500 pa.
(b) Financial Services Tribunal (FST):
Lord Grantchester: chairman; duration of appointment three years from 1988 to 1991; paid a daily fee for work done.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Nelson: Since 1979 no former British representative members in the European Parliament have held appointments on quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations for which I have responsibility.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the reduction in the sterling exchange rate since *(a)* August 1992 and *(b)* February 1993 in terms of 1990 weights for United Kingdom imports plus United Kingdom exports of manufacturers; and what are the corresponding figures for the ecu and non-ecu currencies;

(2) if the country weights used in the Bank of England index covers total United Kingdom imports as well as United Kingdom exports;

(3) what is the reduction in the rate of exchange between sterling and non-ecu currencies since *(a)* August 1992 and *(b)* February 1993; and if he will publish a table showing the rate of exchange for sterling against non-ecu currencies for each year since 1970;

(4) what was the composition of the Bank of England index for the pound sterling, together with the weights attached to each currency, in 1975 and 1985; and what was the equivalent for 1990 in each case.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the sterling exchange rate on the dates requested and corresponding figures for separate EC and non-EC currencies can be found in the monthly CSO "Financial Statistics" publication and in the monthly OECD "Main Economic Indicators" publication. A single exchange rate index against non-EC currencies is not available. Sterling exchange rates in terms of 1990 weights for United Kingdom imports and exports could be constructed from data in the CSO "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", but only at disproportionate cost. A table of rates of exchange of sterling against separate non-EC currencies for each year since 1970 could be reproduced only at disproportionate cost.

From 2 February 1981 to 2 January 1989 the weights of the Bank of England sterling exchange rate index were based on average trade flows at 1977, with a base year of 1975. From 3 January 1989 to the present day, weights have been based on disaggregated trade flows at 1980 with a base year of 1985. The weighted composition and methodological construction of the sterling exchange rate index at the dates requested are available in the Treasury "Economic Progress Report" for March 1977 and the Bank of England "Quarterly Bulletins" for March 1981 and November 1988.

Sovereign Immunity

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *842*, in which OECD states sovereign immunity arrangements in respect of repayment of taxes upon business are more severe than in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The arrangements which most OECD countries adopt in this area are not statutory and comprehensive information about their practice is not available. An exception is the United States of America which, under section 892 of the IRS code, provides a statutory exemption for the investment income of foreign Governments. Although details are not available, I understand that a number of other OECD countries adopt a similar approach in practice.

Unified Budget

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the impact of the date of the unified budget on retail sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I have received a number of letters on this subject. The Government recognise the importance of pre-Christmas consumer expenditure to businesses, especially retailers, and will continue to take this factor into account in deciding the most appropriate dates for future Budgets.

Fears that retail sales would suffer this year in the run-up to the Budget in November have, however, proved groundless. Retail sales have been on a strong upward trend for over a year, and stand at record levels. In the three months to November—the three months before the Budget—they were 3·6 per cent. up on the equivalent period in 1992.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the losses in customs and excise duties arising from the operation of the European single market and cross-channel shopping; and how this has changed from previous estimates.

Sir John Cope: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 10 December at column *403*. The latest estimate of the total revenue loss—£175 million—compares with an estimate of £250 million published in March 1992.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total net payment to the EC since 1 January 1973.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom's total net contribution to the European Communities' budget from 1973 to 1993 is £20 billion.

Barlow Clowes Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list the names and addresses of the parties he has brought legal proceedings against in connection with the affairs of the collapsed Barlow Clowes Group.

Mr. Nelson: In the course of proceedings against third parties to reduce the cost to the taxpayer of its *ex gratia* payments scheme for Barlow Clowes investors, the Government have issued over 500 writs. The details of these writs could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Customs and Excise, Gatwick

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many passengers arriving at Gatwick in charter or scheduled flights from the Caribbean on 21 December 1993 were strip searched; what sex the passengers were who were strip searched; what illegal substances were discovered; how many passengers objected to or refused to be strip searched; and under what powers passengers are strip searched.

(2) what illegal substances were found by Customs and Excise officers on passengers from Jamaica who arrived on charter or scheduled flights from the Caribbean arriving at Gatwick on 21 December 1993; if he will give details of the circumstances; and how many passengers were charged with any related offences;

(3) how many Customs and Excise officers were on duty during the day at Gatwick South Terminal on 7 December 1993: 14 December 1993; 21 December 1993: 28 December 1993 and 4 January 1994.

Sir John Cope: On 21 December 1993 a total of three passengers—two males and one female—arriving at Gatwick on flights from the Caribbean were subject to strip search by Customs. No objections were raised and no passenger refused to be strip searched. No illegal substances were found on the passengers searched. In the search of passengers, Customs act within the provisions of section 164 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

No illegal substances were found by Customs on any passenger arriving from Jamaica who arrived on charter or scheduled flights from the Caribbean arriving at Gatwick on 21 December 1993. Consequently no passengers were charged with any related offences.

The only staff based specifically at Gatwick south terminal are those who deal with demand-led activities such as duty collection, VAT retail export schemes, custody officers and so on. The numbers of these for the dates in question are as follows:

	Staff
7 December 1993	15
14 December 1993	15
21 December 1993	16
28 December 1993	21
4 January 1994	14

For anti-smuggling purposes, including intelligence and investigation, Customs staff are not based at any particular terminal at Gatwick but are required to respond to the perceived risk at any given time. The total number of these staff on duty at Gatwick on the days listed was as follows:

	Anti-Smuggling	*Intell. and Invest.*
7 December 1993	75	23
14 December 1993	67	25
21 December 1993	55	22
28 December 1993	66	17
4 January 1994	57	17

Stamp Duty Reserve Tax

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received on the issue of the imposition of stamp duty reserve tax on American depositary receipts issued on behalf of United Kingdom companies; and from whom.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* I have received a few representations on this matter.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made about the impact of stamp duty reserve tax on rights and scrip issues arising from American depositary receipts issued on behalf of United Kingdom companies on inward investment into the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will outline the Government's policy on the taxation of rights offers and scrip issues taken up by American shareholders of American depositary receipts issued on behalf of United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* Higher rate stamp duty reserve tax applies to all new shares going into depositary receipt form, including rights and scrip issues. This reflects the fact that stamp duty reserve is not charged on transactions in the depositary receipts themselves. These arrangements provide a fair balance between investment in depositary receipt form and investment through direct shareholdings.

Civil Servants

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the regional distribution of the civil service has changed since the Government's current relocation policy was introduced in March 1988; and what plans he has for monitoring and reporting the relocation of civil servants.

Mr. Dorrell: Under the Government's delegated relocation policy it is for departments and agencies to review the location of their work regularly and systematically with the intention of locating where best value for money is offered.

The annual publication "Civil Service Statistics" records the regional distribution of civil servants by Department. The 1993 edition shows that between 1 April 1988 and 1 April 1993, influenced by relocation and location decisions, the number of non-industrial civil servants in London and the south-east reduced by nearly 7,000 while the numbers outside the south-east increased by over 4,600. Departments and agencies have also moved civil servants between regions outside the south-east.

The Government intend to continue monitoring the location of civil servants and publishing the results in "Civil Service Statistics", thereby making evident the changing regional distribution of the civil service. This monitoring will continue, but central monitoring of decisions to relocate civil service posts will be ended.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Exhibitions

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Voluntary Service Overseas, to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 21 February to Friday 25 February.

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the "BBC Marshall Plan of the Mind" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 28 February to Friday 4 March.

Data and Video Network

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee what consideration has been given to allowing access via the parliamentary data and video network to Government computer data bases which are accessible by the public; and if he will list those data bases which have been considered.

Mr. Waller: The Central Office of Information press data base is the only Government computer data base accessible by the public which is at present available as part of the parliamentary data and video network pilot experiment. It contains the text of press notices issued by some Government Departments, and is available via the POLIS service.

The Library of the House already subscribes to various data bases and is considering the possibility of providing the United Kingdom official publications, census and other data bases, available on CD-ROM, over the network. The Information Committe hopes to publish its report on the parliamentary data and video network early in 1994. Any decisions involving increased funding for the PDVN will need to await that report and its consideration by the House.

Stationery

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what was the total amount of stationery issued to each hon. Member during the year 1992-93 in terms of *(a)* sheets of paper, *(b)* franked envelopes and *(c)* unfranked envelopes.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: During the period from 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993 7,279,870 sheets of paper; 4,807,376 post paid envelopes and cards; and 1,080,735 unfranked envelopes were issued to Members.

Visitors

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will carry out a survey of the number of visitors in the public gallery at 3 pm, 5 pm, 7 pm, 9 pm and 11 pm on Monday 17 January, Tuesday 18 January, Wednesday 19 January, Thursday 20 January and at 11 am on Friday 21 January 1994 or other suitable dates; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Serjeant at Arms has undertaken to conduct a survey of the kind suggested; and will write to the hon. Member in due course.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has one special adviser, Mr. Peter Barnes. His duties vary.

Family Benefits

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the number of United Kingdom families with children and *(b)* the numbers of United Kingdom children, dependent on family income supplement or family credit in 1979, 1989 and 1992.

Mr. Burt: The information provided is for Great Britain only:

	1979 (000's)	*1989 (000's)*	*1992 (000's)*
Number of families with dependent children	[1]7,100	[2]7,100	[3]6,900
Number of dependent children	[1]13,500	[3]12,900	[3]12,500
Number of families receiving Family Income Supplement or Family Credit	[4]76	[5]313	[6]656
Number of dependent children in families receiving Family Income Supplement or Family Credit	—	[5]435	[6]903

Notes:
Information about the number of children in families receiving Family Income Supplement in July 1979 is not available.
Sources:
[1] Based on Child Benefit statistics.
[2] 1989 Labour Force Survey.
[3] Based on Child Benefit statistics.
[4] Social Security Statistics: information for 31 July 1979.
[5] Five per cent. sample of Family Credit recipients at 31 July 1989.
[6] Five per cent. sample of Family Credit recipients at 31 July 1992.

Social Security statistics for Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Entertainment

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will itemise under heads of expenditure how the budget for entertainment within his Department was expended in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Hague: The Department does not have a budget for entertainment. Any such expenditure is met from within the budget for hospitality. I refer the hon. Member to answers I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 20 October 1993, at column *247*, 23 November 1993, at columns *34-35*, and 30 November 1993, at column *450*.

Benefits

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he will take to ensure that those claimants for the new incapacity benefit who suffer from diseases with cyclical patterns such as ME are not disadvantaged by the objective medical test for the benefit.

Mr. Scott: Claimants with such conditions will not be disadvantaged. Doctors from the Benefits Agency medical services, who will apply the new more objective medical test, will be required to consider the effect of conditions on ability to work over a period of time not merely at the point when they conduct the medical examination or when the claimant completes the questionnaire.

Family Credit

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of lone parents on family credit receive *(a)* the maximum applicable level of family credit, *(b)* within £10 of the maximum applicable level of family credit and *(c)* within £20 of the maximum applicable level of family credit;

(2) what percentage of families on family credit receive *(a)* the maximum applicable level of family credit, *(b)* within £10 of the maximum applicable level of family credit and *(c)* within £20 of the maximum applicable level of family credit.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

	Lone parents percentage	*All cases percentage*
Families receiving maximum family credit	28	24
Families receiving within £10 of the maximum family credit	43	35
Families receiving within £20 of the maximum family credit	58	47

Source: Five per cent. sample of family credit recipients at 30 April 1993.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Hague: The available information covering appointments or reappointments since 1979 is as follows. All are non salaried positions.

The information requested is not readily available for the independent tribunal service and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Former Member and Title of Post	*Duration of Appointment*
Mr. Dick Douglas Member of Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	1987-1990
Sir Paul Hawkins Member of Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	1976-1987
Sir David Price Member of Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	1987-1992
Mr. Alec Woodall Member of Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	1975-1987
Mr. Martin Flannery Trustee of Far Eastern (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund	1987-1988
Mr. James Tinn Trustee of Far Eastern (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund	1979-1986

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Hague: The available information covering appointments or reappointments since 1979 is as follows. The information requested is not readily available for the independent tribunal service and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Member	*Title of post*	*Duration of appointment*	*Annual salary payable*
Lord Mackie	Member of Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	1988-date	nil
Lord Mayhew	Member of Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	1982-1987	nil
Lord Gridley	Trustee of Far Eastern (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund	1973-date	nil
Baroness Vickers	Trustee of Far Eastern (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund	1962-1991	nil
Lord Brimelow	Chairman of Occupational Pensions Board	1978-1982	£5,900-£11,100
Baroness Turner of Camden	Member of Occupational Pensions Board	1974-1993	nil

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Hague: Details of appointments to the independent tribunal service could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. There are none in the other remaining organisations.

Income Support

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of persons without accommodation claiming income support in the area covered by the DSS office in Northfield, Birmingham.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* the adult male population of working age, *(b)* the adult female population of working age and *(c)* the total population of working age receives (i) invalidity benefit, (ii) sickness benefit and (iii) industrial injuries benefit; and if he will provide a breakdown for each standard United Kingdom region.

Mr. Scott: The information for Great Britain is in the tables. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is responsible for Social Security statistics in Northern Ireland.

Table 1

Sickness Benefit recipients as a percentage of the adult working population

Region[3]	[1]*Estimated total working population*	[2]*Total recipients*	*Percentage of population*	[1]*Estimated male working population*	[2]*Male recipients age 16–64*	*Percentage of population*	[1]*Estimated female working population*	[2]*Female recipients age 16–59*	*Percentage of population*
Great Britain[4]	34,576,000	138,000	0·40	18,117,000	104,000	0·57	16,459,000	34,000	0·21
England	29,678,000	108,000	0·36	15,566,000	84,000	0·54	14,112,000	25,000	0·18
Northern	1,884,000	13,000	0·67	987,000	10,000	0·97	897,000	3,000	0·33
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,056,000	14,000	0·46	1,609,000	12,000	0·76	1,447,000	2,000	0·13
East Midlands	2,492,000	6,000	0·25	1,312,000	5,000	0·34	1,180,000	2,000	0·14
East Anglia	1,265,000	3,000	0·26	669,000	3,000	0·37	596,000	1,000	0·13
South East	11,053,000	26,000	0·23	5,770,000	19,000	0·33	5,284,000	7,000	0·13
South Western	2,823,000	8,000	0·29	1,487,000	7,000	0·45	1,336,000	1,000	0·11
West Midlands	3,228,000	13,000	0·41	1,705,000	10,000	0·59	1,523,000	3,000	0·22
North Western	3,877,000	25,000	0·64	2,027,000	19,000	0·95	1,849,000	5,000	0·30
Scotland	3,174,000	17,000	0·53	1,646,000	11,000	0·66	1,527,000	6,000	0·39
Wales	1,724,000	12,000	0·72	904,000	9,000	1·03	820,000	3,000	0·38

[1] The estimated resident working population at mid-1992, male 16–64, female 16–59 rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.
[2] The number of Sickness Benefit recipients on 4 April 1992 of working age.
Source: 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.
[3] Standard Statistical Region.
[4] The Great Britain recipient figures include a number of overseas cases.

Table 2

Invalidity Benefit recipients as a percentage of the adult working population

Region[3]	[1]*Estimated total working population*	[2]*Total recipients*	*Percentage of population*	[1]*Estimated male working population*	[2]*Male recipients age 16–64*	*Percentage of population*	[1]*Estimated female working population*	[2]*Female recipients age 16–59*	*Percentage of population*
Great Britain[4]	34,576,000	1,175,000	3·40	18,117,000	845,000	4·66	16,459,000	330,000	2·00
England	29,678,000	874,000	2·94	15,566,000	641,000	4·12	14,112,000	232,000	1·65
Northern	1,884,000	107,000	5·65	987,000	81,000	8·19	897,000	26,000	2·86
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,056,000	112,000	3·67	1,609,000	86,000	5·36	1,447,000	26,000	1·80
East Midlands	2,492,000	67,000	2·70	1,312,000	52,000	3·93	1,180,000	16,000	1·33
East Anglia	1,265,000	25,000	1·94	669,000	18,000	2·75	596,000	6,000	1·04
South East	11,053,000	203,000	1·84	5,770,000	138,000	2·40	5,284,000	65,000	1·24
South Western	2,823,000	60,000	2·11	1,487,000	46,000	3·11	1,336,000	13,000	1·00
West Midlands	3,228,000	99,000	3·05	1,705,000	74,000	4·35	1,523,000	24,000	1·60
North Western	3,877,000	201,000	5·20	2,027,000	146,000	7·19	1,849,000	56,000	3·01
Scotland	3,174,000	169,000	5·32	1,646,000	111,000	6·74	1,527,000	58,000	3·79
Wales	1,724,000	125,000	7·26	904,000	87,000	9·65	820,000	38,000	4·63

[1] The estimated resident working population at mid-1992, male 16–64, female 16–59 rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.
[2] The number of Invalidity Benefit recipients on 4 April 1992 of working age.
Source: 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.
[3] Standard Statistical Region.
[4] The Great Britain recipient figures include a number of overseas cases.

Table 3

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit Pensions as a percentage of the adult working population

Region[3][1]	*[1]Estimated total working population*	*[2]Total pensions*	*Percentage of population*	*[1]Estimated male working population*	*[2]Male pensions age 16–64*	*Percentage of population*	*[1]Estimated female working population*	*[2]Female pensions age 16–59*	*Percentage of population*
Great Britain[4]	34,596,000	124,000	0·36	18,117,000	109,000	0·60	16,459,000	15,000	0·09
England	29,678,000	101,000	0·34	15,566,000	88,000	0·57	14,112,000	13,000	0·09
Northern	1,884,000	14,000	0·73	987,000	12,000	1·25	897,000	1,000	0·16
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,056,000	11,000	0·37	1,609,000	10,000	0·65	1,447,000	1,000	0·06
East Midlands	2,492,000	10,000	0·40	1,312,000	9,000	0·68	1,180,000	1,000	0·08
East Anglia	1,265,000	4,000	0·29	669,000	3,000	0·45	596,000	1,000	0·11
South East	11,053,000	23,000	0·21	5,770,000	20,000	0·34	5,284,000	4,000	0·07
South Western	2,823,000	8,000	0·27	1,487,000	7,000	0·45	1,336,000	1,000	0·07
West Midlands	3,228,000	14,000	0·42	1,705,000	12,000	0·69	1,523,000	2,000	0·13
North Western	3,877,000	18,000	0·47	2,027,000	16,000	0·76	1,849,000	3,000	0·14
Scotland	3,174,000	12,000	0·37	1,646,000	11,000	0·66	1,527,000	1,000	0·06
Wales	1,724,000	9,000	0·53	904,000	8,000	0·89	820,000	1,000	0·12

[1] The estimated resident working population at mid-1992, male 16–64, female 16–59 rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.
[2] The number of Industrial Injuries Disablement pensions in payment at 4 April 1992 to people of working age. (A person can be in receipt of more than one Disablement pension).
Source: 10 per cent. sample of assessments in Great Britain with an allowance for late returns, rounded to the nearest thousand.
[3] Standard Statistical Region.
[4] The Great Britain Pensions include a number of overseas cases.

Housing Benefit

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish the figures showing the total amount of housing benefit subsidy in the private sector broken down into *(a)* DOE and *(b)* local authority where the rent was above the level agreed by the rent assessment officers and where the tenants were (i) elderly, (ii) adults with special handicaps and (iii) families with dependent children, for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1992-93 and the latest available date for the current year;

(2) what amount of housing subsidy is produced by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local authorities to private landlords, where the rent is above the level agreed by the rent assessment officers, where the tenants are (i) elderly, (ii) disabled, (iii) adults with special handicaps and (iv) families with dependent children for the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1992-93.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

Rent Allowances paid in Great Britain to vulnerable groups exceeding the Rent Officer's determination of a Reasonable Market Rent (RMR).

Year	*Total expenditure exceeding RMR*	*DSS Subsidy*	*Local Authority Expenditure*
	£	£	£
1989-90	5,339,306	2,669,672	2,669,634
1990-91	21,030,787	10,515,424	10,515,363
1991-92	26,119,913	13,060,020	13,059,893
1992-93	26,971,288	13,485,705	13,485,583
1993-94	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Housing Benefit final subsidy claim forms.
Notes:
1. No benefit subsidy in respect of rent allowances is paid by the Department of the Environment.
2. Vulnerable groups include the elderly, sick and disabled people and families with dependent children.
3. The figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Social Fund

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria are used for determining the maximum deduction from income support to repay a loan from the social fund; what is the minimum level of benefit left payable; what changes he is considering to the criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In determining the rate at which social fund loans are repaid the applicant's commitments are taken into account. The normal repayment rate is 15 per cent. of the applicant's Income Support applicable amount, less housing costs. Where the applicant has existing commitments the rate may be set at 10 per cent., 5 per cent. or lower. In exceptional circumstances, with the applicant's agreement, the repayment rate may be set at 25 per cent., leaving a minimum 75 per cent. of the applicable amount, but only if it is clear that the applicant can afford to repay at this rate. All aspects of the social fund are closely monitored, including repayment rates for loans.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the publications and television channels in which his Department advertised the introduction of disability living allowance in April 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Advertising the introduction of disability living allowance—DLA—in the publications and on the television stations shown in the table, was one part of a successful, multi-stranded publicity campaign which was targeted at disabled people, carers, advisers and health professionals. By the end of November 1993 over one million claims to DLA had been processed and over a half a million awards of benefit made.

Publications

Daily Mail
Daily Express
Daily Telegraph
Daily Record
Daily Mirror
Daily Star

Guardian Times
Guardian
Independent on Sunday
Independent
Mail on Sunday
News of the World
Observer
Star
Sun
Sunday Express
Sunday People
Sunday Mirror
Sunday Times
Sunday Telegraph
Times
Today
TV Times
Amspar
Disability Arts Mag
Disability News (London)
Disability Now
Disabled
Disabled Driver
Phab
Amar Deep
Asian Times
Black Briton
Cineblitz
Daily Jang
Eastern Eye
Garavi Gujarat
India Times
Punjabi Times
Sing Tao
Surma Bengali
The Voice
Care Weekly
Caring Times
Community Care
General Practitioner
Health Visitor
Health Service Journal
Hospital Doctor
New Statesman and Society
Nursing Standards
Nursing Times
Social Work Today
Therapy Weekly
Chat
Me
My Weekly
Take a Break
Woman
Woman's Own
Woman's Weekly
Woman's Realm

Television stations

Anglia
BBC Select
Border
C4 Network except Ulster
Central
Grampian
Granada
HTV
Lifestyle
LWT
STV
Thames
TSW
TVS
Tyne Tees
Yorkshire
TVAM included in areas

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is issued in respect of the social fund to ensure that similar priority levels are applied to applications throughout the financial year; what changes to the guidance he is considering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Guidance on the management of the social fund is contained in the "Social Fund Officer's Guide", a copy of which is in the Library.

All aspects of the social fund are closely monitored, including the guidance issued to social fund officers.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the normal maximum repayment period for a loan from the social fund; what changes to that period he is considering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The normal maximum repayment period for a social fund loan is 78 weeks although this can be extended to 104 weeks. All aspects of the social fund are closely monitored, including repayment periods for loans.

Pensioners Incomes

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples had incomes below one half of average household income each year since 1979.

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his reply, 6 December 1993, c. 111]:* The available information is published in tables F1 (BHC) and F1 (AHC) of "Households Below Average Income 1979-1988/89" and "Households Below Average Income 1979-1990/91", copies of which are in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many holdings in each county of Northern Ireland have taken up the arable area payments scheme.

Mr. Ancram: The number of holdings which have taken up the arable area payments scheme are:

	Number
Antrim	683
Armagh	256
Down	1,109
Fermanagh	2
Londonderry	700
Tyrone	344

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many landowners in Northern Ireland are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme *(a)* in each band of £25,000 up to £500,000 and *(b)* over £500,000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In Northern Ireland, 3,090 landowners are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme of up to £24,999, and four landowners payments between £25,000 and £49,999. No landowners are receiving payments higher than these amounts.

Agri-environmental Funding

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much will be spent in Northern Ireland in each year from 1993-94 to 1995-96 on *(a)*

environmentally sensitive areas, identifying the amount allocated for the new access option, *(b)* new nitrate sensitive areas, *(c)* the moorland scheme, *(d)* the new habitat scheme, *(e)* the new countryside access scheme, *(f)* the organic aid scheme and *(g)* the total amount of money being spent on the agri-environment scheme in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Planned expenditure in Northern Ireland for each of the schemes under the agri-environment programme is set out in the table.

	1993-94 *'000*	*1994-95* *'000*	*1995-96* *'000*
ESA Scheme	—	2,700	4,000
Moorland Scheme	—	—	90
Habitat Creation Scheme	—	—	100
Organic Aid Scheme	—	60	60
TOTAL	—	2,760	4,250

The NI programme, which is still subject to EC approval, does not have provisions for nitrate sensitive areas, countryside access or access in environmentally sensitive areas—ESAs.

Crops

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many holdings there are in each county of Northern Ireland in 1992 and 1993 growing *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Ancram: No sugar beet is grown in Northern Ireland. Information on the numbers of growers of linseed, horticultural crops and oilseeds is not available for any year prior to 1993. Where rules on disclosure permit, the information requested is as follows:

1992 Holdings growing

County	*Cereals*	*Potatoes*
Antrim	1,265	655
Armagh	407	207
Down	1,966	709
Fermanagh	11	77
Londonderry	1,135	549
Tyrone	550	431
Northern Ireland	5,334	2,628

1993 Holdings growing

County	*Cereals*	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Horticultural crops*	*Oilseeds*
Antrim	1,216	523	[1]—	80	[1]—
Armagh	394	170	[1]—	498	6
Down	1,853	591	[1]—	174	38
Fermanagh	6	44	[1]—	30	[1]—
Londonderry	1,090	431	[1]—	39	11
Tyrone	519	316	[1]—	105	[1]—
Northern Ireland	5,078	2,075	13	926	64

[1] Information cannot be released because of the small number of growers.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of hectares taken up in each county of Northern Ireland in 1992 and 1993 by *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Ancram: No sugar beet is grown in Northern Ireland and information on the area of linseed is not available for any year prior to 1993. Where rules on disclosure permit, the information requested is as follows:

Hectares

County	*Cereals*	*Potatoes*	*Horticultural crops*	*Oilseeds*
1992				
Antrim	9,618	3,156	227	52
Armagh	3,281	436	1,941	69
Down	18,822	3,369	954	616
Fermanagh	98	18	92	7
Londonderry	10,846	2,920	165	274
Tyrone	3,965	851	198	45
Northern Ireland	46,630	10,750	3,577	1,063

Hectares

County	*Cereals*	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Horticultural crops*	*Oilseeds*
1993					
Antrim	9,685	2,550	[1]—	173	[1]—
Armagh	3,354	368	[1]—	1,846	72
Down	18,912	2,915	[1]—	931	397
Fermanagh	17	13	[1]—	94	[1]—
Londonderry	11,099	2,344	[1]—	153	157
Tyrone	4,022	698	[1]—	138	[1]—
Northern Ireland	47,089	8,888	128	3,335	689

[1] Information cannot be released because of the small number of growers.

Training

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is his policy in respect of independent companies tendering for public contracts in competition with the existing training centres to manage training, education and enterprise programmes;

(2) what is his policy in respect of independent companies entering into partnership with the existing training centres to manage training, education and enterprise programmes.

Mr. Tim Smith: Responsibility of the the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Andrew Hunter, dated 5 January 1994.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your questions about policy in respect of independent companies tendering for public contracts in competition, or entering into partnership, with existing Training Centres.

The Training and Employment Agency currently has sufficient contracted capacity to manage and deliver its training programmes. Independent companies and other organisations do operate in competition with Training Centres. There is no bar on such organisatiions entering into parternship with Training Centres for those purposes.

I hope that you find this helpful.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Sir John Wheeler: None.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Sir John Wheeler: The following is the information:

Name	*Title of post*	*Salary (£)*	*Duration of appointment*
Duke of Abercorn	Chairman, Laganside Corporation	21,065	1989-95
Lord Lowry	Ex-Officio Chairman, Statute Law Committee	None	1979-88
Lord O'Neill	Chairman, Northern Ireland Museums Advisory Committee	None	1989-93
	Chairman, Northern Ireland Museums Council	None	1993-97
	Trustee, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum including	None	1969-90
	Vice-Chairman of Board of Trustees		1987-90
	Northern Ireland Member of Museums and Galleries Commission	None	1987-96
The Viscount Brookeborough DL	Member, Green Park Hospital Trust	5,000	1992-96
Lord Plant[1]	Chairman of SACHR	Nominal	1976-80
Lord Blease[1]	Member of SACHR	None	1977-79
	Member of Rathgael and Whiteabbey Schools Management Board	None	1989-92

[1] Life Peerage conferred during 1978.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Sir John Wheeler: John Carson, CBE, a former MP, was a member of Laganside Corporation from June 1989 to June 1992. His salary at the end of his term was £6,820.

James Frederick Nicholson MEP was a member of the Southern health and social services board from July 1979 to June 1985. No salary was paid. He was an MP from June 1983 to June 1985.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Russia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Russian election and referendum.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The elections and referendum have given Russia her first post-Soviet democratic Parliament and a constitution which guarantees democratic institutions and individual human rights. This is an historic advance. No single party won an overall majority in the new Parliament. The democrats and reformers have won about one third of the seats. The extreme nationalists did unexpectedly well, but we should keep this in proportion; they have 64 seats out of the 450 in the lower House, the Duma. President Yeltsin has said that Russia will continue on the path of reform and Britain will continue to support that progress.

British observers, including several hon. Members of this House, concluded that the election procedures, although complex, were adequate to ensure a fair poll and reflected the views of the Russian people. Copies of their report have been placed in the Library of the House.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he will be giving to the liquidators of BCCI when they visit Abu Dhabi to discuss BCCI.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No request for assistance during their visit to Abu Dhabi has been received from the liquidators of BCCI.

Consulate, Dusseldorf

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the civil service grade of Mr. Bullen who works at the consulate in Dusseldorf; and what training he and other members of staff have received in dealing with members of the public.

Mr. Goodlad: Mr. Bullock—not Bullen—is a locally engaged visa clerk. He received all necessary training in the consulate general in Dusseldorf to enable him to deal with members of the public. Other members of staff at the consulate general have received the training necessary to undertake their particular duties.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visitors' applications have been made in Dusseldorf for each year since 1983; and how many refusals have been made for visitors' visas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Separate statistics are not available for the number of "visit" applications and visitor refusals made at the British consulate general, Dusseldorf since 1983.

The following figures are available for non-settlement applications—including visitors, students, and working holidaymakers.

Year	*Received*	*Refused*
1992	19,529	461
1991	18,327	287
1990	17,327	282
1989	12,067	147
1988 / 1983	no figures are available	

Ex-Soviet Nuclear Plants

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the take-up of technical assistance in the Commonwealth independent states for making safe nuclear power plants in the states of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 6 December 1993, at column *74*.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Foreign Affairs Council of 20 and 21 December, indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 and 21 December.

The Council agreed negotiating mandates for new partnership agreements between the European Union and Tunisia and Israel.

There was a brief discussion on follow-up to the European Council on 10 and 11 December. The presidency noted that follow-up work would fall to the Greek and German presidencies and the Commission. The Commission called for an early decision on interest-rate subsidies for small and medium-sized enterprises, in the light of the European Council conclusions calling for a conclusion by the end of the year.

There was a brief discussion of the outcome of the Uruguay round negotiations: the Commission confirmed that it would seek to improve EC access to third country markets before market access schedules are finalised on 15 February. The Council also agreed on the need for an early discussion of trade policy towards central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

There were ministerial negotiating sessions with the four applicants for Community membership. Excellent progress was made. A large number of negotiating chapters have now been closed, including the difficult environmental standards chapters and all of the Maastricht chapters except economic and monetary union.

On the former Yugoslavia, Ministers prepared for their meeting with the parties on 22 December. The Council subsequently discussed the Union's joint action on the delivery of humanitarian aid to Bosnia. They agreed to make 48 mecu—£39 million—available for urgent needs, notably in the energy sector, of which the financing would be split 50:50 between the Community and member states.

Ministers agreed to invite the President of the Commission to propose a middle-ranking Commission official to act as the Cyprus observer for the Union. His terms of reference will be

"in the light of the Council's review in January 1995 of the question of Cyprus' accession to the European Union, to report periodically to the Council on the implications of political developments in Cyprus for the requirements of the acquis of the Union, including progress in the UN Secretary-General's good offices mission for Cyprus."

The Council discussed the Commission's proposals for new free trade agreements with the Baltic states.

The Council approved unanimously a joint action, covering the first phase of the initiative for a pact on stability in Europe. This involves a conference to launch the initiative to be held in April 1994 in Paris.

The presidency reported on progress made so far in agreeing negotiating directives for the Community in the mid-term review of the Lomé convention. Negotiations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries will begin in 1994.

The Council discussed outstanding nominations to the Committee of the Regions. The Portuguese—Portugal is the only country yet to make nominations—said that they would aim to do so before 15 January, the date agreed by the last special European Council as the deadline for the first meeting of the Committee.

The Council adopted a decision to put into effect from 1 January 1994 the code of conduct it had agreed on 6 December on public access to documents held by the Council. The Netherlands and Denmark voted against.

The Council briefly reviewed progress towards agreeing a regulation on a common export regime for dual use goods.

The Council voted to remove tariff concessions from the Austrian subsidiaries of GM and Grundig, both of

which had received illegal state aid. Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg voted against. The decision on Grundig was subsequently suspended following full repayment of the state aid.

The Council discussed the proposed budget discipline decision without reaching agreement.

The EC/India co-operation agreement was signed by the Commission, the presidency and the Indian Commerce Minister in the margins of the Council.

Dealings with Companies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what dealings he or any member of his Department has had, whether for export promotion or for any other purpose with *(a)* ATE International Ltd., *(b)* Admincheck Ltd., *(c)* Advance Electronics Development Ltd., *(d)* Arctic Centre ICE Ltd., *(e)* Atlas Equipment Co. Ltd., *(f)* Atlas Air Conditioning Co. Ltd., *(g)* Dominion International, *(h)* Endshire Export Marketing, *(i)* Falcon Systems, *(j)* Geodesigns, *(k)* Investacast Precision Castings Ltd., *(l)* Meed International Ltd., and *(m)* Rajbrook Ltd.; and if he will give the purpose of his dealings with each of these companies.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Lomé Convention

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of agreement in the latest round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade for the future of the Lomé convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The mid-term review of the fourth Lomé convention is under way. This will involve negotiations between the EC and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific—ACP—states on possible changes to the convention to reflect developments since it was agreed in 1989. These negotations must be concluded by March 1995. The convention itself will expire on 1 March 2000.

The mid-term review takes place in the context of the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round. However, the Final Act agreed on 15 December does not affect the status of the convention.

Sudan

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in the last three months regarding the persecution of Christians in the Sudan; and what action he is taking to promote an end to the conflict in Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We receive many representations, both from the Churches themselves and from interested human rights organisations. We have welcomed the initiative of the Kenyan, Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean Presidents to try to encourage dialogue between the Government of Sudan and the factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. With other European Union member states, we are encouraging the parties to respond positively to mediation efforts.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to ensure that the operation of THORP does not contribute towards the international proliferation of materials useful for the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy of non-proliferation aspects of reprocessing at THORP is set out in the statement of Government policy on reprocessing and operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield: a copy of this statement is in the Library of the House. The statement makes it clear that we consider that any potential proliferation risks associated with the operation of THORP are satisfactorily met by the existing arrangements to prevent theft, sabotage and diversion.

EC Voting

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out for each member state of the European Community *(a)* its estimated population, *(b)* the number of votes allocated to its respective ministers in the Council of Ministers when voting on the basis of a qualified and weighted majority, *(c)* the approximate population represented by each vote, *(d)* that population expressed as a percentage of that member state's population and *(e)* the population per vote expressed as a percentage of the total approximate population of all member states of the European Community, together with the respective totals and the requisite number of votes and assenting member states required for assent.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Member state	*Estimated population (millions)*	*Number of votes in council*	*Approximate population per vote (thousands)*
Belgium	10·1	5	2,020
Denmark	5·2	3	1,733
Germany	80·6	10	8,060
Greece	10·3	5	2,060
Spain	39·1	8	4,888
France	57·5	10	5,750
Ireland	3·6	3	1,200
Italy	56·9	10	5,690
Luxembourg	0·4	2	200
Netherlands	15·2	5	3,040
Portugal	9·9	5	1,980
United Kingdom	58·0	10	5,800
	336·7	76	—

Member state	*Approximate per cent. of member state population Per vote*	*Approximate per cent. of total EC population Per vote*
Belgium	20	0·60
Denmark	33	0·51
Germany	10	2·39
Greece	20	0·61
Spain	12·5	1·45
France	10	1·71
Ireland	33	0·36
Italy	10	1·69
Luxembourg	50	0·06
Netherlands	20	0·90

Member state	Approximate per cent. of member state population Per vote	Approximate per cent. of total EC population Per vote
Portugal	20	0·59
United Kingdom	10	1·72

The number of votes which constitutes a qualified majority is 54. There are numerous combinations of member states whose total number of votes in Council reaches or exceeds this figure.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Goodlad: There are currently 14 members of the House of Lords. No salaries are paid.

The British Council
Lord Chorley: board member. Three-year renewable appointment.
Lord Wilson of Tillyorn: board member. Five-year renewable appointment.

Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission
Lord Desai: board member. Three-year appointment renewable.

The Great Britain-China Centre
Lord Callaghan: vice-president. Indefinite appointment.
Lord Holme: board member. Indefinite appointment.
Lord Howe: president. Indefinite appointment.
Lord Maclehose: vice president. Indefinite appointment.

British Association for Central and Eastern Europe
Baroness Blackstone: board member. One-year appointment.

The Britain-Russia Centre
Lord Bottomley: board member. Indefinite appointment.
Lord Dormand: board member. Indefinite appointment.
Lord Runcie: vice-president. Indefinite appointment.
Viscount Whitelaw: president. Indefinite appointment.

Commonwealth Institute
Baroness Flather: governor. Four-year appointment.

Commonwealth of Learning
Lord Briggs: chairman.

To answer the question in full would incur disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Goodlad: There are currently six former MPs. No salaries are paid. All appointments are for an indefinite period.

The British Russia Centre
Mr. Peter Blaker: board member
Sir David Crouch: board member
Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker: board member
Sir Fitzroy Maclean: board member
Sir John Osborn: board member
Sir Kenneth Warren: board member

To answer the question in full would incur disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Goodlad: There are currently no former MEPs. To answer the question in full would incur disproportionate cost.

Foreign and Security Policy Unit

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date the Foreign and Commonwealth Office established its common foreign and security policy unit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With effect from 16 March 1992 the existing European political co-operation unit, which had been part of the EC presidency department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, became the common foreign and security policy unit.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on an application to enter the United Kingdom made to the high commissioner in Islamabad on behalf of Israr Ahmed, who was born on 30 May 1989, REF-IMM/CO 442.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the correspondence unit migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to let the hon. Member have a substantive reply in due course.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the high commission in Islamabad will take a decision on applications to grant British citizenship to Mr. Wajid Aziz, born on 15 January 1981 and Miss Majida Aziz, born on 15 January 1984, reference CON/4534; when these applicants were interviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British high commission in Islamabad refused on 3 August 1993 the passport applications submitted on behalf of Mr. Wajid Aziz and Miss Majida Aziz. The children's alleged father, Mr. Abdul Aziz, was interviewed that day but the interviewing officer was not satisfied that the children were related, as claimed. The reasons were explained to Mr. Aziz at the time and the passport fees refunded.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on an application by Nasreen Akhtar, REF: IMM/B6820 to enter the United Kingdom made to the high commissioner in Islamabad; whether the high commissioner has received the result of a comparative DNA test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the correspondence unit migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to let the hon. Member have a substantive reply in due course.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is going to be taken by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad on an application to visit the United Kingdom by Mrs. Tasawar Fatima; when the post agreed to undertake to reconsider the application following representations by the hon. Member for Bradford, West; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In October 1993 the high commission in Islamabad took the decision to maintain the refusal of entry clearance to Mrs. Tasawar Fatima. I am sorry that the hon. Member was not so informed at the time.

German Constitutional Court Judgment

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that the English translation of the judgment of the German constitutional court of 12 October 1993 is made available to the general public as soon as possible and placed in the Library.

Mr. Goodlad: A translation was placed in the Library of the House on 3 December 1993. It will be published in the International Law Reports later this year.

European Union Funding

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the powers he has under English and Community law to prevent the European Union providing financial resources within the United Kingdom to British organisations for a purpose which is avowedly political within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Within the United Kingdom, organisations which are duly constituted and have lawful objectives are entitled to seek funding from any source. There are no powers under domestic or Community law to prevent funds being disbursed on behalf of the European Union in accordance with Community law.

EC Visitors' Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received to date from the representatives of any country concerning their nationals being required, from 1996, to obtain visas to visit the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have received no representations to date about the proposed European Union common visa list. The Commission's proposals have not yet been formally communicated to the member states by the Council secretariat. When they are, they will be made available to Parliament in accordance with normal scrutiny arrangements.

Jamaica

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens wishing to visit Jamaica during 1993 were *(a)* refused entry, *(b)* detained and *(c)* deported; how many such persons were able to appeal against refusal to grant entry; how many appeals were (i) upheld and (ii) rejected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am aware of no cases of British citizens visiting Jamaica who were refused entry, detained or deported in 1993. I am informed that Jamaican immigration legislation makes no provision for appeal against refusal of entry.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is issued to Jamaican citizens wishing to visit the United Kingdom as to whether they should apply for pre-entry visas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Jamaican citizens seeking to visit the United Kingdom are advised by both the Jamaican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the British high commission in Kingston that prior entry clearance is advisable, but not mandatory.

Prospective visitors contacting the high commission, whether or not they apply for prior entry clearance, are advised as to the documentation required. Information leaflets are freely available and telephone enquiries, personal callers and correspondence are dealt with by trained entry clearance staff at the British high commission. Local airlines and travel agents are also conversant with requirements.

EU Agricultural Harmonisation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EU Foreign Affairs Ministers Council meeting of 21 December 1993 in regard to enlargement of the European Communities; and what outstanding matters remain on health, environment, and agricultural harmonisation between the European Union and European Economic Area.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Excellent progress was made at the negotiating sessions with Sweden, Finland, Norway and Austria at the 21 December Foreign Affairs Council. A large number of negotiating chapters were closed.

The European economic area—EEA—came into force on 1 January. On health, the EEA extends EC legislation to the participating European Free Trade Association — EFTA—states—Norway, Sweden, Austria, Finland and Iceland—so that EEA nationals are entitled to reciprocal health care benefits in all EEA member states. On the environment, the agreement provides for increased co-operation between EEA states but does not include the harmonisation of environmental legislation. On agriculture, the EEA does not require the participating EFTA states to bring their support arrangements into line with the common agricultural policy, but they have agreed to adopt much of the EU's regulatory legislation in the veterinary, phytosanitary and other areas. Except where transitional periods are agreed, or derogations granted, the four members of EFTA currently negotiating to join the EU will have to adopt the entire body of Community legislation in these areas on their accession.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry Commission

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what land in Lancashire and the north-west the Forestry Commission proposes to sell under the current disposal programme.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission has no forest land on the market at present in Lancashire and the north-west.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, by location, the annual fuel heating bills for each of her Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Jack: Office heating is not distinguished separately in the fuel bills for the 260 or so sites occupied by the Ministry and its executive agencies. It would be disproportionately expensive to calculate such costs, but readily available global figures for all types of energy are as follows:

	£
1990-91	3,376,336
1991-92	3,755,951
1992-93	4,035,098

This represents a six per cent increase in real terms when adjusted for inflation and the floor area occupied. The increase is due to operational requirements, particularly in the Ministry's laboratories, and the introduction of information technology equipment to most offices over the past three years. We are, however, stepping up our energy efficiency measures with a view to achieving reductions in consumption by 1995-96.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in her Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Care is taken to ensure that the special adviser does not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. She is not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in her Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My special adviser is Dr. Elizabeth Cottrell. She advises me on all policy issues.

Milk Industry

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent Britain's demand for milk and milk products is satisfied by domestic production; what are the main sources of imported milk products; to what extent the gap is affected by the extent of the Milk Marketing Board's promotion of the use of home-produced milk; and what effect she expects the Milk Marque to have on the shortfall between domestic production and demand.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom produces sufficient milk to meet its needs for liquid consumption and for protein products like skimmed milk powder. It is, however, only 85 per cent. self-sufficient in butterfat, so production is insufficient to meet the demand for cheese and butter. Imports of milk products into the United Kingdom come mainly from other EC countries. In 1992, 92 per cent. of our cheese imports, 231,693 tonnes, came from the EC, with the remainder imported mainly from New Zealand, 7,964 tonnes, Canada, 4,068 tonnes, and Australia, 2,500 tonnes. In the same year, 97 per cent. of our imports of yoghurt, buttermilk and whey originated in the Community. For butter, the position is rather different since a large proportion, 41 per cent., of our imports comes from New Zealand under a preferential access agreement which was concluded at the time of our accession to the EC. The remaining 59 per cent. of our butter imports come from the Community.

The level of the United Kingdom's self-sufficiency in milk has less to do with the promotional activities of the milk marketing boards than with the total amount of milk quota available to our producers. Our national production quota is insufficient to meet the total domestic demand for milk and milk products; the introduction of new milk marketing arrangements next year will not alter this position.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of whether the national interest and that of milk producers would be better served by the bulk of our milk being handled by processors who have a proven track record in the development of new products instead of by Milk Marque, the successor of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales will have to have regard to all the circumstances when deciding whether to approve the Milk Marketing Board's reorganisation scheme. One of the main purposes of ending the milk marketing scheme is to allow producers to decide to whom and on what terms to sell their milk. I look forward to when they will be free to do so.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's working definition of the term "marketing"; and what connection Milk Marque will have with marketing.

Mr. Jack: Milk Marque's objects are set out in its constitution. They include

"the activities of marketing and preparation for market of milk produced by its Members on land occupied by them and used for agriculture".

It is for Milk Marque to decide how to pursue this object.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her policy on the concept of an interdependent partnership between milk producers and an established milk processor with a vested interest in generating demand for new milk products and satisfying it from British farms.

Mr. Jack: The Government welcome the establishment of new partnerships between producers and processors which are in accordance with our objectives of establishing a competitive market in raw milk.

Diseased Cattle

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will take urgent action to institute a system of full compensation at market price of cattle bought under the animal health regime of other EC countries which were found to have been diseased at the time of purchase.

Mr. Soames: The Department has no plans to extend the current compensation arrangements for cattle.

Fur Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the regulations concerning Arctic foxes kept on fur farms.

Mr. Soames: There is no legislation relating specifically to the keeping of Arctic foxes.

EC Surplus Foods

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the butter and beef EC surplus foods that have been distributed in each London borough in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Figures for the amounts of food distributed annually since 1988-89 in each London borough are not available.

Maize

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate she has as to the acreage of maize crops planted with EC subsidy, not harvested because there is allegedly no market; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The most recent Commission estimate is that some 3,635,000 hectares of maize were harvested in the Community in 1993. There is no information about the area of maize which has not been harvested, the reasons why it was not harvested or whether any area-based payments were made on such crops. Crops do not have to be harvested to qualify for such payments but they do have to be sown in line with locally recognised standards and maintained until at least the beginning of flowering in normal growth conditions.

Milk

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reasons underlay the change in instructions to the Milk Marketing Board concerning the butterfat base of transferred milk quota.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry's supplementary note on the butterfat base of converted milk quota reflects guidance issued in November by the European Commission which clarifies the application of the provisions in the EC regulations. We are bound by the EC regulations and have no discretion as regards their implementation.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the new rules regarding butterfat base will come into operation; and if they apply to applications already received by the Milk Marketing Board for which the market price has been agreed.

Mr. Jack: The Commission's clarification of the rules concerning the calculation of the butterfat base of direct sales quota converted into wholesale quota applies to all applications to convert quota since the beginning of the current quota year on 1 April 1993.

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the effect of article 7 of Commission regulation 1546/86 on the allocation of milk quota to landlords who are not operating a holding.

Mr. Jack: Article 7 of Commission regulation (EEC) No. 1546/88, which was repealed in 1993 and replaced by Council regulation (EEC) No. 3950/92 and Commission regulation (EEC) No. 536/93, deals with the transfer of milk quota. Where an entire holding is transferred, the corresponding quota is transferred in full to the producer who takes over the holding. Where part or parts of a holding are transferred, the corresponding quota is distributed among the producers operating the holding in proportion to the areas used for milk production. Where the transfer takes place as a result of the termination of a tenancy, the producer taking over the holding might be the landlord. A holding is defined as all the production units operated by the producer within a member state of the Community.

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the allocation of milk quota to landlords who are not operating a holding.

Mr. Jack: Milk quota is allocated to producers for use on land occupied by them. Landlords may hold quota only if they are in occupation of a holding.

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under which article of the Dairy Produce Quota Regulations 1989 he instructs the president of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to appoint an arbitrator to act between a landlord, transferer and transferee.

Mr. Jack: The Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1989 now superseded by the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1993, required that where there was a transfer of part of a holding the apportionment of quota relating to that holding had to be notified to the Minister within two months. The transferer and transferee were also required to sign a statement agreeing on the apportionment of milk quota according to the areas used for milk production, and the transferer had to supply a consent or sole interest notice in respect of the entirety of the holding. Where these requirements were not fulfilled, the apportionment had to be determined by arbitration. Paragraph 1(3) of schedule 4 provided for the Minister to apply to the president of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors for the appointment of an arbitrator, if within two months of the transfer, no arbitrator had been appointed by the parties.

The parties to an arbitration would usually be the transferer and transferee. Landlords have an interest in any

quota apportionment in respect of a holding owned wholly or partly by them because of the clear link established in the EC regulations between quota and land. If a landlord with an interest in the holding does not sign the consent notice then this would require the apportionment to be decided by arbitration.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration has been given to the position of producers who have high butterfat producing breeds of cows in respect of the changes in the rules about the butterfat base of milk.

Mr. Jack: The EC regulations on the butterfat base for milk do not specifically provide for producers who have high butterfat producing breeds of cows, except where the producer's entire wholesale quota has been allocated from the national reserve and where production commenced after 1 April 1992. Producers in this position are required to provide proof each year that they maintain within their herd breeds of animals which justify a higher than average butterfat base.

Neptune Flood Warning System

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will place in the Library a map of the marker buoys located offshore which are financed by her Department as part of the Neptune flood warning system.

Mr. Jack: I am placing in the Library a map showing the locations of the tide gauges around the coast which provide information on sea levels to the national storm tide warning service, which is operated on the Ministry's behalf by the Meteorological Office.

Neptune is a local warning system of events which may lead to flooding on the west coast between Llandudno and the Solway Firth. It is operated by the National Rivers Authority and draws on information from tide gauges at Workington, Heysham, Fleetwood and Liverpool, as well as gale warnings from the Manchester weather centre and surge forecasts from the storm tide warning service. The National Rivers Authority has carried out a wave measuring experiment, using wave rider buoys, in Morecambe bay over the past 12 months with the aim of improving understanding of wave conditions for forecasting purposes.

Relocation

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the costs and benefits of relocating parts of her Department's headquarters' work from the south-east, with particular reference to the financial implications of moving work from Guildford to York.

Mr. Jack: The overall costs of running our relocated operations in York will be significantly lower than a similar operation in the south-east. There are, in addition, distinct operational benefits in bringing together under one roof in York a number of related, but previously geographically separated, divisions, especially those with close working links with the new MAFF central science laboratory under construction at Sand Hutton, just outside York. The main costs of the move cover expenditure on moving staff and fitting out costs for the new building.

Agriculture Wages Board

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she now expects to complete her consideration of the response she has received to consultative document on the future of the Agriculture wages board.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I hope to be able to complete my initial consideration of the responses soon. It will then be necessary to consult other ministerial colleagues with an interest in the matter.

I hope that an announcement on the way forward can be made before Easter.

Herbs

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to restrict the availability of herbs and herbal ingredients; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans at present to restrict the availability of herbs and herbal ingredients used as foods.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all those organisations from which she has recently received representations calling for restrictions on the availability of herbs and herbal ingredients.

Mr. Soames: We have received no such representations.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans she has *(a)* to extend the current voluntary ban on comfrey and comfrey products to other herbs and herbal ingredients or *(b)* to introduce a compulsory ban on any such herb; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if the review of herbs from which medicinal licences have been withdrawn by the Department of Health but are still on sale as foods has now been completed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans either to alter or to extend the action that we have already taken on comfrey. The review of other herbal substances by the independent expert committees that advise the Government on food safety issues has been completed—and the conclusion that there were no problems requiring action was announced in the September edition of the Food Safety Directorate bulletin.

Area Payments

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the administrative cost of operating the area payments system; and how many staff are involved in the procedures.

Mr. Jack: The arable area payments scheme is one of a number of schemes covered by the integrated administration and control system—IACS. It is not possible to give precise costs for administering each of the individual schemes within this joint system but the estimated United Kingdom cost for administering the arable area payments scheme for the 1993-94 financial year, including an appropriate share of the cost of IACS, is £7·2 million, involving some 365 man years.

These figures do not include certain initial development costs.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent on the payment of the new area allowances in the current financial year; what is the maximum individual sum paid to date; and what is the general purpose of the area payments.

Mr. Jack: Arable area payments made by the end of December 1993 totalled £692 million. This does not include the final instalment of the area payment for oilseeds, which is due to be made early in 1994.

Under the integrated administration and control system, a single application must be submitted in respect of all holdings farmed by the same individual or organisation and some applications cover a significant number of separate holdings; the maximum total payment to an individual IACS applicant to date has been just over £1¼ million.

Arable area payments were introduced as part of the 1992 package of measures to reform the common agriculture policy. They are intended to compensate farmers for significant reductions in EC support prices for cereals over the next three years and to replace earlier support systems for oilseeds and proteins.

Set-aside

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government are seeking to change the EU regulations which prevent the development of forestry on agricultural set-aside land.

Mr. Jack: The Government believe that use of set-aside land for woodland should be further encouraged. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in pressing for the EC rules to be changed to allow arable land withdrawn from production under EC forestry schemes to count as set-aside under the arable area payments scheme. My right hon. Friend the Minister achieved significant progress at the Agriculture Council last month, when the Commission was asked by the Council to carry out a study of the relationship between set-aside and arable land taken out of production for forestry or environmental purposes. We are pleased that the matter is at last to be given serious attention, and we shall continue to press for a satisfactory outcome.

Woodland planting on set-aside land is not entirely ruled out under the present rules of the arable area payments scheme, provided that the trees are not used for commercial purposes and that no EC-funded grant, other than set-aside, is paid.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies she is conducting into possible alternative uses of set-aside land.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom has taken the lead in the EC in seeking to enable set-aside to be used for longer term environmental purposes, by pressing for arable land taken out of production under forestry or agri-environment schemes to count as set-aside under the arable area payments scheme; the Commission has now been asked by the Council to study this. We will also be encouraging farmers to put their set-aside land to recreational use through the proposed countryside access scheme which we hope to launch later this year.

Set-aside land may also be used to grow crops for non-food use, such as oilseed rape, linseed, and short rotation coppice.

We are keen to encourage crops which have the potential for commercial viability. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and, in some cases, other Government Departments are funding research into industrial oilseeds, energy crops, fibre crops and an assessment of novel crops. MAFF, with other Government Departments, also funds joint research projects with industry through the LINK—crops for industrial use—programme.

Forestry, Cornwall

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all the plantations at present owned by the Forestry Commission in Cornwall, and those disposed of within the last 10 years giving, in each case, their acreage and the extent of public access, indicating which are included in the current disposals programme and setting out her plans to ensure no future erosion of rights of access.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission manages 3,290 hectares of woodland in Cornwall. The commission is preparing a list of the individual woods and I shall send a copy to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. The commission is compiling a list of the areas sold in 1993 and a copy will be placed in the Library when this is completed.

The Commission does not maintain detailed records of the extent of public access to individual woods.

The areas of forest land in Cornwall that the commission is currently offering for sale on the open market are as follows:

Name	*Area (hectares)*
Croft Pascoe	45
Hay Wood	54
Penance and Derrys	7
Port Elliot Estate	108
Prideaux	24
Treworgey	17
Wheal Par	5

Rights of way over commission land are unaffected by a change of ownership. In addition, arrangements for securing continued public access to former Forestry Commission woodlands after sale, by way of prior agreements entered into between the commission and local authorities, have been in place since October 1991. These arrangements are currently being reviewed.

Fish Diseases

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect EU directive 91/87 has had on the implementation of the Diseases of Fish Act 1983, with respect to fish farms in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The fish health directive 91/67/EEC came into force on 1 January 1993. It provides for measures,

applicable throughout the Community, to safeguard zones of proven high fish health status within the context of the single market. Great Britain and Northern Ireland have secured such approved zone status in respect of the most serious fish diseases and accordingly we are able to restrict introductions of fish, particularly the salmonid species, from other parts of the Community on the basis of the disease risks which they might pose. We are also seeking additional guarantees in respect of trade in species susceptible to some of the less serious fish diseases.

We have thus carried forward in the EC context the United Kingdom's longstanding disease controls embodied in the Diseases of Fish Acts of 1937 and 1983, with the controls largely unchanged. The Community measures will be supplemented later this year by new arrangements which member states must apply in the event of an outbreak of serious fish diseases. Overall, we are confident that these measures, taken together, will afford sound protection to our farmed and wild fish stocks and provide United Kingdom producers with new trade opportunities.

Organic Farming

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration she has given to the effect of her decision to concentrate support for organic farming on new entrants; what information she has as to the support given to organic agriculture in each other EU member state and on the competitive pressure placed on existing organic enterprises; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has given careful consideration to the proposed aid scheme which she has discussed with representatives of organic farmers. The decision to concentrate aid on those wishing to convert to organic farming represents the best value for money in terms of increasing the area of land farmed organically.

I shall write to the hon. Gentleman concerning aid in other member states.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(2) if she will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(3) if she will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not held centrally and collection of the information would be at disproportionate cost. Summary details of appointments made by my right hon. Friend, including details of remuneration, are contained in "Public Bodies", published annually by the Cabinet Office and available in the Library of the House.

Potatoes

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress she has made in her discussions with other members of the EU Council of Agricultural Ministers to achieve an effective, comprehensive and fully supportive potato marketing regime to replace the United Kingdom scheme.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 3 December at column *852*.

Dover Sole

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are the recorded landings of Dover sole in area 4c from beam trawlers of 17 m and over in each year since 1983;

(2) what is the yearly total of recorded Dover sole fish landed from over 10 m and under 17 m boats in area 4c in each year since 1983.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is as follows:

Landings of Dover sole by United Kingdom vessels from ICES area IVc

Year	*Beamers over 17 m* *Tonnes*	*10–17 m vessels* *Tonnes*	*Total United Kingdom vessels* *Tonnes*
1984	57	292	468
1985	158	321	614
1986	171	184	440
1987	101	220	443
1988	217	208	570
1989	312	205	713
1990	511	243	963
1991	504	190	900
1992	272	116	585

Note:

All quantities are given in tonnes liveweight. Length bands given relate to registered, not overall, length because prior to 1989 vessel lengths were measured in terms of registered lengths only. No comparable data is available for 1983 and the final figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Arable Areas

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many holdings in each county of England have taken up the arable area payments scheme;

(2) how many hectares have been taken up under the arable area payments scheme in its first year of operation for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* oilseeds, *(c)* proteins, *(d)* linseed, *(e)* simplified scheme and *(f)* set aside in the county of Nottinghamshire; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: County-based figures will be published as soon as possible and I will place a copy in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many landowners in England are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme *(a)* in each £25,000 band up to £500,000 and *(b)* over £500,000; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: This information can currently be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many holdings there are in each county of England in 1992 and 1993 growing *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Jack: The following table gives the requested information for 1992. Data from the June 1993 agricultural and horticultural census are not yet available by county.

County	*Holdings with*					
	Cereals	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Sugar beet*	*Horticultural produce*	*Oil seed rape*
Bedfordshire	691	183	87	28	344	252
Berkshire	292	24	76	0	83	89
Buckinghamshire	682	39	75	0	136	262
Cleveland	260	45	8	0	27	120
Cambridgeshire	2,575	1,063	368	1,407	922	619
Cheshire	1,120	608	18	19	324	104
Cornwall	2,126	777	133	10	697	54
Cumbria	1,406	344	4	0	117	17
Derbyshire	1,030	298	17	17	143	196
Devon	2,921	684	188	6	627	65
Dorset	672	69	103	[1]—	221	58
Durham	789	142	50	0	59	343
Essex	1,763	398	380	219	868	805
Gloucestershire	1,005	173	227	11	380	278
Hampshire	850	148	274	[1]—	514	247
Isle of Wight	133	38	47	0	75	36
Hereford and Worcester	2,408	828	116	277	1,329	336
Hertfordshire	553	48	103	6	195	255
Kent	1,280	353	374	3	1,451	464
Lancashire	659	509	10	29	936	78
Leicestershire	1,362	171	157	45	130	485
Lincolnshire	3,979	1,786	626	2,034	2,053	1,244
Merseyside	239	143	7	20	177	36
Greater London	71	12	12	0	138	28
Norfolk	3,285	1,098	557	2,367	1,374	349
Northamptonshire	1,044	79	173	25	94	532
Tyne and Wear	139	22	13	0	25	73
Northumberland	1,079	105	55	0	66	435
Nottinghamshire	1,260	366	209	392	225	487
Oxfordshire	1,034	105	234	6	158	433
Avon	415	113	35	0	194	56
Shropshire	1,940	539	75	438	205	168
Somerset	1,242	330	114	20	522	94
Staffordshire	1,047	355	58	108	235	162
Suffolk	2,279	392	415	967	713	612
Isles of Scilly	0	28	0	0	52	0
Surrey	229	25	77	0	280	68
East Sussex	476	74	154	0	294	119
West Sussex	513	81	168	0	508	165
Warwickshire	1,118	246	116	8	187	366
Greater Manchester	192	99	[1]—	8	153	31
Wiltshire	1,046	119	258	5	175	322
West Midlands	150	69	[1]—	8	65	27
North Yorkshire	686	233	154	98	114	234
South Yorkshire	3,783	1,260	425	889	410	1,045
West Yorkshire	506	195	41	32	225	165
Humberside	2,412	771	378	658	759	1,010

[1] Data suppressed to prevent disclosure of information about individual holdings.
Source: June 1992 Agricultural and Horticultural Census, MAFF (excludes estimates for minor holdings).

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares were taken up in each county of England in 1992 and 1993 by *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Jack: The following table gives the requested information for 1992. Data from the June 1993 agricultural and horticultural census are not yet available by county.

County	*Area of crops (ha)*					
	Cereals	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Sugar beet*	*Horticultural produce*	*Oilseed rape*
Bedfordshire	47,580	691	1,922	492	2,077	8,803
Berkshire	29,001	107	2,111	0	433	4,299
Buckinghamshire	41,762	132	1,597	0	508	7,666
Cleveland	13,102	149	108	0	47	2,569
Cambridgeshire	153,531	11,349	6,182	23,149	10,201	19,422

County	Cereals	Potatoes	Linseed	Sugar beet	Horticultural produce	Oilseed rape
Cheshire	23,984	4,418	402	175	1,154	1,714
Cornwall	37,982	4,052	1,933	104	2,808	927
Cumbria	20,772	553	52	0	221	318
Derbyshire	29,687	1,013	416	331	606	3,712
Devon	58,164	1,554	2,345	56	1,905	1,342
Dorset	46,447	274	2,909	[1]—	606	2,104
Durham	35,496	865	710	0	140	7,014
Essex	143,983	5,464	6,808	4,246	5,668	25,733
Gloucestershire	58,814	844	6,195	177	1,554	8,454
Hampshire	88,601	835	7,692	[1]—	3,419	8,902
Isle of Wight	7,152	272	887	0	360	1,132
Hereford and Worcester	82,126	7,649	1,492	4,531	9,647	6,346
Hertfordshire	52,472	378	2,340	171	390	8,957
Kent	77,170	4,056	7,495	2	21,823	16,005
Lancashire	16,198	2,719	142	308	5,303	1,136
Leicestershire	78,520	1,262	3,389	963	623	13,315
Lincolnshire	273,449	17,530	13,158	33,913	36,453	35,459
Merseyside	8,560	894	48	208	1,134	472
Greater London	3,540	98	173	0	713	703
Norfolk	200,235	14,025	11,341	57,557	22,418	8,948
Northamptonshire	81,374	794	3,475	405	218	18,558
Tyne and Wear	6,405	69	161	0	108	1,609
Northumberland	75,594	1,058	1,091	0	450	11,601
Nottinghamshire	73,235	5,535	4,343	8,276	2,417	11,277
Oxfordshire	89,697	791	5,350	118	913	15,569
Avon	13,417	211	457	0	404	1,049
Shropshire	79,514	7,701	1,016	10,057	938	3,380
Somerset	38,305	1,708	1,399	365	2,344	1,716
Staffordshire	40,578	4,071	941	2,432	1,384	3,807
Suffolk	158,367	5,437	7,572	23,541	11,828	16,475
Isles of Scilly	0	27	0	0	173	0
Surrey	9,928	81	1,574	0	1,195	1,748
East Sussex	21,541	296	3,510	0	1,444	2,962
West Sussex	34,091	977	3,886	0	1,635	5,032
Warwickshire	58,674	2,354	2,665	167	1,367	10,398
Greater Manchester	5,442	508	[1]—	45	882	435
Wiltshire	93,286	639	6,505	98	589	10,027
West Midlands	4,968	349	[1]—	182	310	625
South Yorkshire	32,679	1,640	3,830	1,855	792	4,691
North Yorkshire	187,990	12,083	5,728	12,522	2,498	18,660
West Yorkshire	20,926	1,075	491	406	1,083	3,023
Humberside	167,952	8,483	5,202	9,387	12,919	23,487

[1] Data suppressed to prevent disclosure of information about individual holdings.
Source: June 1992 Agricultural and Horticultural Census, MAFF (excludes estimates for minor holdings).

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring is conducted of the arable area payments scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: It is not Government policy to publish specific information about monitoring arrangements, as that could seriously hamper effective enforcement. However, a number of techniques are used to monitor compliance with the scheme, including detailed checks of area aid applications and field inspections.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Agriculture Council of 13 to 16 December, indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 17 December, *Official Report*, columns *1071-72*.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much will be spent in England in each year from 1993-94 to 1995-96 on *(a)* environmentally sensitive areas, identifying the amount allocated for the new access option, *(b)* new nitrate sensitive areas, *(c)* the moorland scheme, *(d)* the new habitat scheme, *(e)* the new countryside access scheme, *(f)* the organic acid scheme and *(g)* the total amount of money being spent on the agri-environment scheme in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Forecast expenditure on agri-environment payments, including new schemes planned for launch later this year, is shown in the following table:

£ million

	1993-94	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	18·0	31·0	43·1
Nitrate Sensitive Areas	1·6	1·6	8·3
Moorland Scheme	—	—	1·6
Habitat Scheme	—	—	3·0
Countryside Access Scheme	—	—	4·5
Organic Scheme	—	0·8	1·5
Countryside Stewardship	7·5	9·3	9·8
TOTAL	27·1	42·7	71·8

There is a single budget for environmentally sensitive areas, which includes the new access option, and a single budget for nitrate sensitive areas, which includes both current and new areas.

Sheep Quota

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what assessment she has made of whether all farmers will be able to obtain, complete and return the forms for sheep quota by 7 January following advice to do so by Reading regional service centre on 11 December; and what contingency plans she has to relax the deadline;

(2) why Reading regional service centre of her Department changed its advice to sheep farmers and stopped sending application forms for sheep quota automatically.

Mr. Jack: It is essential that producers applying to the reserve receive their payments under the sheep annual premium scheme as quickly as possible. For this reason, we decided that applications should be invited first from producers eligible to apply to categories 1 and 2 of the 1993 sheep reserve. For the same reason, and to keep the burden of paper to the minimum, the application form was not sent out automatically to all sheep producers. Not all producers were eligible to apply to these categories. All sheep producers received a letter explaining the situation clearly, and in detail. The deadline of 7 January was also set so that payments could commence quickly. It allowed adequate time for the completion of the application form which was kept as simple as possible. The reserve categories have been the subject of widespread consultation and discussion, so that most producers will have given detailed consideration to their eligibility well in advance of receiving the application form.

Livestock Imports

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to review the system governing livestock imports from eastern Europe; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* My right hon. Friend does not have any proposals to review the system governing imports of livestock from eastern Europe, which is set out in the Europe agreements that the EU has concluded with the six countries principally involved, and in other EU legislation. My right hon. Friend has, however, recently announced newly strengthened measures designed to help prevent the introduction of disease into Great Britain through imported animals generally. These measures include an increase in the number of routine checks carried out on all imported livestock at points of destination and, because of particular concerns arising from the import of foot and mouth disease sero-positive cattle from Eastern Europe in 1992, the blood testing of all cattle imported from Eastern Europe.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will set out the considerations underlying the recent cuts in funding for less-favoured areas; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Despite the reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowances over the last three years, overall levels of direct subsidies from all sources to hill farmers have increased, and total payments of direct subsidies in 1994 are expected to be at least £550 million. The decision to reduced the rates payable under the 1994 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme was taken as part of the autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. This showed that net farm incomes of hill farmers have risen by 33 per cent. in real terms during 1992-93 and are forecast to rise by a further 28 per cent. in the next year. A copy of the statistical tables which formed the basis of the review is in the Library of the House. The rates of grant available under the farm and conservation grant scheme 1989 have been reduced in the light of progress in reducing pollution incidents resulting from farm wastes and the development of other schemes addressing particular environmental concerns.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the average *(a)* single man's, *(b)* single woman's, *(c)* married man's and *(d)* married woman's personal income as chargeable for income tax from self-employment in the capacity as a hill farmer in the less-favoured areas of the United Kingdom for each year since 1979 in both nominal and real terms;

(2) what proportion of self employed male hill farmers in the less-favoured areas in the United Kingdom claimed the married man's tax allowance in the tax year prior to the change over to the independent method of assessing taxation and in the tax year for which the most recent figures are available;

(3) what is the average income from self-employment as assessed for tax for farmers in the less-favoured areas of the United Kingdom for each year since the 1981-82 tax year;

(4) what was the average personal income of a *(a)* single man, *(b)* single woman, *(c)* married man and *(d)* married woman hill farmer in the less-favoured areas of the United Kingdom as chargeable to income tax from all sources other than self-employment in farming for each year since 1979 in both nominal and real terms.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The Inland Revenue's survey of personal incomes provides information on the income as assessed for tax from a sample of persons with an income from agriculture. It is not, however, possible to analyse this data for farms of particular types or for farmers in the less-favoured areas. I regret, therefore, that the information requested is not available.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what according to *(a)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data she has available and *(b)* the farm business survey, was the average number of (1) beef cows and (2) ewes, carried on less-favoured areas livestock farms, by county and in England.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The following table provides information on the average number of beef cows and ewes on cattle and sheep farms, wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas in England from the agricultural census as at June 1992. As the farm business survey covers only farms which are considered to be full time commercial businesses, very small farms are excluded from the survey. The farm business survey records the average number of livestock on the holding throughout the year. The average numbers of beef cows

and ewes on cattle and sheep—LFA—farms in England estimated from the farm business survey in 1992-93 were 30 and 456 respectively. This compares with averages as at June 1992 of 30 and 420 respectively for similar farms in the agricultural census. Results from the farm business survey are not available by county.

Average number of animals on cattle and sheep farms, wholly or mainly in the LFA as at June 1992

County	Beef cows	Ewes
Cleveland	10	115
Cheshire	10	243
Cornwall	20	114
Cumbria	20	407
Derbyshire	12	158
Devon	20	202
Durham	23	290
Hereford and Worcester	15	267
Lancashire	12	224
Northumberland	40	441
Shropshire	22	292
Somerset	26	399
Staffordshire	12	72
Greater Manchester	10	123
South Yorkshire	19	168
North Yorkshire	17	351
West Yorkshire	10	101
England	19	271

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure by her Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by her Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is her estimate for expenditure on administration by her Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* (i) The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Department in 1992-93 is £358 million.

(ii) The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £418 million. This reflects the reduction on the Department's gross running cost limit announced by the Minister on 1 November 1993.

(iii) The Department's planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 is £407 million.

The GDP deflators required to calculate real terms figures are shown on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95" (HC 31), copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to ensure the reorganisation scheme for milk marketing in England and Wales is successful, both in relation to the Agriculture Act 1993 and to relevant European Union legislation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Under the Agriculture Act 1993 it is for the Milk Marketing Board to decide what to propose in its reorganisation scheme. My right hon. Friends the Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales have responsibility for deciding whether to approve the reorganisation scheme in accordance with the terms of the Act. This requires them to have regard to all the circumstances. These include the compatibility of the board's proposals with European Community law.

Hill Farming

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the subsidy and price support available to hill farming enterprises over the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how they have varied in value at constant prices in relation to *(a)* farm input costs and *(b)* retail prices index over the same period.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* I estimate that the total direct subsidies paid on cattle and sheep in the less-favoured areas in 1994 will be about £550 million. The support available to individual hill farming enterprises will depend on the number of livestock on which subsidy is claimed as well as the rates of subsidy available. The figures in the following tables show the information requested for the direct livestock subsidies available to farmers. The subsidy rate are those available in the scheme years shown; different rules of eligibility apply and these may vary from year to year. Not all livestock will qualify for all schemes. Support is also available through intervention and other forms of market support, but it is not possible to apportion the effects of this to hill farmers.

Detailed information on 1991-92 net farm incomes for LFA livestock farms can be found in table 1.16 of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom 1991-92", a copy of which can be found in the Library of the House.

Rates of subsidies available to hill farmers—United Kingdom

Current prices *£/head (unless otherwise specified)*

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Sheep										
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances										
SDA Sheep (higher rate)	6·25	6·25	6·75	6·75	6·75	6·75	7·50	8·75	8·75	6·50
SDA Sheep (lower rate)	4·25	4·25	4·50	4·50	4·50	4·50	4·50	4·90	4·90	3·60
DA	—	2·12	2·25	2·25	2·25	2·25	2·25	2·45	2·45	2·86
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme[1]	4·68	7·32	5·12	6·24	6·11	6·94	9·88	12·91	17·48	[2]19·25
LFA supplement	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·12	6·57	5·16
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg (dead weight)[1,3]	48·35	50·60	40·94	43·11	59·11	44·40	41·61	63·06	—	—
Beef										
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances										
SDA	44·50	44·50	54·50	54·50	54·50	54·50	54·50	63·30	63·30	63·30
DA	—	22·75	27·25	27·25	27·25	27·25	27·25	31·65	31·65	31·65

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Suckler Cow Premium[1]										
Basic Rate	24·74	24·74	24·74	33·40	33·40	47·43	51·69	59·64	59·64	65·73
Extensification Premium	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28·17
Beef Special Premium[4,5]										
Basic Rate	—	—	—	—	—	29·19	31·81	31·82	35·90	[6]56·34
Extensification Premium	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[6]28·17
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg[1,7]										
Dead weight[8]	15·85	15·71	16·33	17·71	15·87	18·09	—	—	—	—
Live weight	8·72	8·64	8·98	9·74	8·73	9·95	—	—	—	—
1990 prices—deflated by Agricultural Input Prices Index										
Sheep										
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances										
SDA Sheep (higher rate)	7·14	7·10	7·80	7·76	7·42	7·02	7·50	8·45	8·21	5·81
SDA Sheep (lower rate)	4·86	4·83	5·20	5·17	4·95	4·68	4·50	4·73	4·60	3·22
DA	—	2·41	2·60	2·59	2·47	2·34	2·25	2·36	2·30	2·56
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme[1]	5·35	8·32	5·92	7·17	6·72	7·21	9·88	12·46	16·40	[2]17·21
LFA supplement	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·01	6·16	4·61
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg (dead weight)[1,3]	55·26	57·48	47·31	49·57	65·00	46·15	41·61	60·86	—	—
Beef										
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances										
SDA	50·86	50·55	62·98	62·66	59·93	56·64	54·50	61·09	59·38	56·58
DA	—	25·84	31·49	31·33	29·97	28·32	27·25	30·55	29·69	28·29
Suckler Cow Premium[1]										
Basic Rate	28·27	28·10	28·59	38·40	36·73	49·30	51·69	57·56	55·95	58·75
Extensification Premium	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25·18
Beef Special Premium[4,5]										
Basic Rate	—	—	—	—	—	30·34	31·81	30·71	33·68	[6]50·36
Extensification Premium	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[6]25·18
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg[1,7]										
Dead weight[8]	18·12	17·85	18·87	20·36	17·46	18·80	—	—	—	—
Live weight	9·97	9·82	10·39	11·20	9·60	10·34	—	—	—	—
1990 prices—deflated by Retail Prices Index										
Sheep										
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances										
SDA Sheep (higher rate)	8·84	8·34	8·70	8·36	7·97	7·39	7·50	8·27	7·97	5·72
SDA Sheep (lower rate)	6·01	5·67	5·80	5·57	5·31	4·93	4·50	4·63	4·46	3·17
DA	—	2·83	2·90	2·79	2·66	2·46	2·25	2·32	2·23	2·52
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme[1]	6·62	9·77	6·60	7·73	7·21	7·60	9·88	12·20	15·92	[2]16·94
LFA supplement	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·95	5·99	4·54
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg (dead weight)[1,3]	68·41	67·50	52·80	53·37	69·76	48·60	41·61	59·59	—	—
Beef										
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances										
SDA	62·96	59·37	70·28	67·47	64·32	59·66	54·50	59·82	57·66	55·70
DA	—	30·35	35·14	33·74	32·16	29·83	27·25	29·91	28·83	27·85
Suckler Cow Premium[1]										
Basic Rate	35·00	33·00	31·90	41·35	39·42	51·92	51·69	56·36	54·33	57·83
Extensification Premium	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	24·79
Beef Special Premium[4,5]										
Basic Rate	—	—	—	—	—	31·95	31·81	30·07	32·70	[6]49·57
Extensification Premium	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[6]24·79
Average Variable Premium—pence/kg[1,7]										
Dead weight[8]	22·43	20·96	21·06	21·92	18·73	19·80	—	—	—	—
Live weight	12·34	11·53	11·58	12·06	10·30	10·89	—	—	—	—

[1] GB figures.
[2] Based on Commission estimate made in November 1993 converted at current green rate.
[3] Average of weekly rate. Sheep Variable Premium Scheme phased out in 1991.
[4] Figure each year up to 1992 as at December.
[5] Beef Special Premium Scheme started 1st April 1989.
[6] Full rate. Actual payments will be scaled back as regional ceilings have been exceeded.
[7] Average of weekly rate. Beef Variable Premium Scheme ended March 1989.
[8] Assumes a killing out ratio of 0·55.

Forests, Honiton

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the Forestry Commission woods in the Honiton constituency.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission has no forest land on the market at present in my right hon. Friend's constituency.

Hill Farmers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hill farmers there are in England; what is the total amount of subsidy that has been paid to them in each of the last five years; and what are her forecasts for the amount she expects they will be paid in the next year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The system of farm classification distinguishes farms in the less-favoured areas, it does not distinguish hill farms. Analysis of the returns for the June 1992 census for England shows that there were 11,840 cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas. Statistics are not collected on the total amount of subsidy paid to each type of farm. It is, however, estimated that the total amount paid on cattle and sheep in the less-favoured areas in the United Kingdom under the various livestock subsidy schemes will be about £550 million in 1994.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *369*, if she will set out each reason why she cannot estimate the precise cost to United Kingdom consumers of the CAP; and what is the best approximate figure available to her for the cost *(a)* to the Exchequer and *(b)* to an average family in terms of food prices.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of the cost of the CAP to United Kingdom consumers, and of the savings that could be secured if current policies were ended, are possible only be making many assumptions. Important judgments are necessary about the current levels of world prices—no simple matter given the wide variations in quotations and substantial fluctuations from year to year—and the changes in these prices if present policies were abandoned. The latter depend on how producers and consumers throughout the world might respond to the new circumstances and on the impact on such factors as exchange rates.

Estimates made by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—OECD—using a particular set of assumptions, imply that the transfers from European Community consumers in 1992 resulting from agricultural policies in European Community as a whole were equivalent to £11 per week for a family of four. This is one estimate of the extent to which the CAP raises the cost of food and agricultural products compared to existing world prices. The estimate takes no account of the effect that removal of farm support would have on world prices, and other variables, and thus gives no indication of the extent to which European consumers might be better off if current policies were removed. OECD does not publish a separate estimate for the United Kingdom.

The Exchequer cost of CAP expenditure in the United Kingdom in the current financial year is estimated at £2,727 million. In addition, the United Kingdom also contributes to the cost of the CAP in other member states. However, the United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, and this is reduced by the Fontainebleau abatement which cannot be attributed to particular sectors of the EC budget.

Research and Development

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the spending on research and development in each of the last five years given in 1992-93 prices in her Department.

Mr. Jack: MAFF's expenditure on agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and food R and D, in cash and real terms, is:

Year	*Cash £ million*	*Real terms[1] £ million*
1988-89	115·0	146·8
1989-90	112·2	133·9
1990-91	119·1	131·5
1991-92	121·5	126·2
1992-93	134·4	134·4

[1]Using the GDP deflator (1992-93=100).

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Costs Awards

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *637*, what is the average interval between the award of *(a)* costs and *(b)* expedited costs, including tax costs, and their payment in (i) the inner London criminal court, (ii) outer London courts and (iii) other courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No information is available about the average interval between the award and payment of costs in civil or criminal proceedings. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, the following information on the taxing and payment of costs in criminal proceedings may be helpful:

The Crown Court is responsible for the payment of defence costs from the legal aid fund in respect of proceedings in that court if the defendant has been granted a legal aid certificate, or from central funds if a privately represented defendant is acquitted on any count in the indictment and the judge orders the award of a defendant's costs order. The Legal Aid Board is responsible for legal aid costs incurred in respect of magistrates courts proceedings.

Where costs are to be paid from the legal aid fund or central funds by the Crown Court, legal representatives are required to submit their claims to the court within three months of the conclusion of proceedings, although that period may be extended upon reasonable request. An officer of the Crown Court is then required to consider the claim and allow such sums as will provide reasonable remuneration in respect of work reasonably done.

Targets have been set to ensure payments are made within a reasonable time. Where a practitioner has claimed a standard fee, the target is for payment within five working days where the claim is lodged on the day that the case is concluded, and within 10 working days where it is not. For non-standard fees, where counsel's brief fee or the solicitor's total costs are less than £4,000, there is a target of no more than 30 per cent. of claims to be outstanding after four weeks from date of receipt. If counsel's brief fee or the solicitor's total costs are in excess of £4,000, these claims are considered by the central taxing teams which

were established in March 1991 to give a consistent approach to the determination of large claims from the legal aid fund or central funds. The targets set for these claims are that 75 per cent. of claims should be determined within three months of becoming ready to tax—that is to say, when all related claims have been lodged—and that all claims should be determined within six months of becoming ready to tax.

The tables provide the most recent figures for the performance against these targets:

Crown Court
Performance for Standard Fees
(Target: All to be paid within 5 to 10 working days)

	Counsel Per cent.	*Solicitors Per cent.*
Percentage paid in time—November 1993		
Inner London sessions house	98·03	99·31
All London courts	88·7	93·6
All courts	88·84	89·6
January to November 1993		
Inner London sessions house	98·3	97·9
All London courts	78·1	80·9
All courts	85·1	85·9

Performance for ex post facto fees below £4,000
(Target: No more than 30 per cent. outstanding after 4 weeks)

	Counsel Per cent.	*Solicitors Per cent.*
Percentage outstanding after four weeks—October 1993		
Inner London sessions house	0	2·13
All London courts	19·39	12·91
All courts	25·3	26·7
Percentage outstanding after four weeks April—October 1993		
Inner London sessions house	3·6	4·1
All London courts	35·3	30·4
All courts	26·8	28·2

Performance for ex post facto fees over £4,000
(Target: 75 per cent. determined within three months and 100 per cent. determined within six months of becoming ready to tax)

Circuit	*Percentage taxed within three months Per cent.*	*Percentage taxed within six months Per cent.*
November 1993		
South Eastern	50	100
Midland and Oxford	51	100
Northern	97	100
North Eastern	99	100
Wales and Chester	65	97
Western	80	100

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A complete answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the schedule includes details readily to hand of members of the House of Lords who have been appointed by the Lord Chancellor since 1979 to non-departmental public bodies for which he has ministerial responsibility.

Public body	*Member*	*Date of appointment*	*Retainer £*
Council on Tribunals	Lord Archer of Sandwell QC[1]	1 November 1992—31 October 1995	28,248
	Lord Gibson-Watt MC[1]	May 1980—April 1986	17,290
	Lord Wigoder QC	February 1980—February 1986	2,960
	Lord Tweedsmuir[1]	Retired April 1980	not known
	Lady Fulton	Retired March 1980	nil
	Lord Mancroft TD	Retired December 1979	not known
Legal Aid Advisory Committee	Lady Park of Monmouth	as Chairman 1985-90	nil
	Lady Flather of Windsor and Maidenhead	1985-88	nil
Advisory Council on Public Records	Lord Skidelsky	29 March 1988—31 December 1993	nil
Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct	Lord Griffiths MC	16 October 1990 (appt. as chairman announced)—30 September 1993	nil
Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace in Northern Ireland (Fermanagh Division)	Earl of Earn	Member 1975 Chairman 1986	nil
Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace in Northern Ireland (Tyrone Division)	Duke of Abercorn	Chairman 1987	nil

[1] Denotes chairmanship as well as membership.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A complete answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Readily available

records on the appointments made by the Lord Chancellor since 1979 to non-departmental public bodies for which he has ministerial responsibility do not indicate that any were former British representative members in the European Parliament.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A complete answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, details readily to hand of hon. Members who have been appointed by the Lord Chancellor since 1979 to non-departmental public bodies for which he has ministerial responsibility, are as follows:

the Right Hon. the Lord Archer of Sandwell, QC who was a Member of the House of Commons, as Peter Archer, 1974-1992. He was appointed as chairman of the Council on Tribunals at a retainer of £28,248. The appointment runs from 1 November 1992 to 31 October 1995.

In addition, the following existing hon. Members are members of the Advisory Council on Public Records:

Alexander Charles Carlile QC—13 March 1989 to 31 December 1994;

Terence Anthony Gordon Davis—13 March 1989 to 31 December 1994;

David Sumberg—23 November 1992 to 31 December 1995.

Appointments to the Advisory Council on Public Records do not attract a fee.

This list is not complete as in many cases only current or recently finished appointments have been included and no information on rule committees, tribunals, advisory committees on justices of the peace in England—excluding the Duchy of Lancaster—and Wales, and on advisory committees on general commissioners of income tax in England and Wales has been included. A full answer could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

BBC Radio

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has concerning the cost per listener hour of the output of each of the British Broadcasting Corporation's national radio stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the BBC that the cost per listener hour for each BBC network radio station, in 1992-93, was as follows:

	pence
Radio 1	0·37
Radio 2	0·81
Radio 3	7·26
Radio 4	1·51
Radio 5	4·81

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has concerning the total number of listeners attracted per week by each of the national radio stations operated by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the BBC that, for the period 21 June to 19 September 1993, the estimated weekly audience reach for each BBC network radio station was as follows:

	million
Radio 1	16
Radio 2	9
Radio 3	3
Radio 4	8
Radio 5	4

Note: The audience reach figures for each station are based on the total number of listeners tuning in for at least 15 minutes per week.

Film Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will commission a report on *(a)* the levy, *(b)* the investment incentive, and *(c)* other measures which have been adopted by each member country of the European Community in seeking to encourage investment in its film production industry with a view to making a statement to the House indicating which of those measures might be appropriate for adoption in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: Film support measures in other member states are a matter for the authorities of those states to determine according to their own policies and circumstances. I have no plans to adopt measures designed to meet objectives which we do not share. Last year, I held a series of 10 consultative meetings with all sectors of the United Kingdom film industry to review the state of the industry and hear their ideas about possible further action to raise the level of investment in film production. I am carefully considering all the views put to me during the round of meetings and subsequently, and I shall announce the Government's conclusions as soon as practicable.

London Orchestras

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has about the cost of the Hoffman inquiry into the funding of London's orchestras.

Mr. Brooke: The Hoffman inquiry was commissioned by the Arts Council as part of its review of its support for the London orchestras. I understand that the Council's direct costs in connection with the inquiry were in the region of £5,000, arising mainly from the travel and subsistence costs of the members of the Hoffman committee. I have no details of costs incurred by other parties involved in the review.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Brooke: Care is taken to ensure that my special adviser does not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. He is not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each advisor is responsible.

Mr. Brooke: My special advisor is Dominic Loehnis. His job is to provide me with advice of a political nature which assists me in my role as a Minister in Her Majesty's Government, advice which it would not be proper to expect from those civil servants who work in my Department.

Civil Servants

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil servants are employed at the Department of National Heritage to deal with sport issues; and what is the total annual cost of their salaries.

Mr. Brooke: There are 23 posts in the Department's sport and recreation division, including secretarial and typing support—two posts. The paybill budget for 1993-94 amounts to £641,350.

Administration Expenditure

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The information is as follows:

(i) The final outturn for the current costs of running my Department, including the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and the Royal Parks Agency, in 1992-93 is £34·871 million.

(ii) The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £45·404 million—£43·975 million in 1992-93 prices.

(iii) My Department's planned running costs expenditure figure for 1994-95 is not yet available. The figure will be published in the unified Budget supplement to the Autumn Statement and my Department's annual report due in February/March.

EDUCATION

Student Grants

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will review the operations of the discretionary grant system as it affects students of the performing arts.

Mr. Boswell: The responsibility for making discretionary awards rests with local education authorities. The early results of a national survey led by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Sir John Cass' Foundation show total numbers of discretionary awards bestowed and total local education authority spending on discretionary awards above the levels of three years ago. My right hon. Friend awaits with interest the full results of the survey, which are expected in March.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage of all dependent students receiving a full maintenance grant, and the percentage of those receiving no maintenance grant, assuming residual parental income is calculated without the benefit of a covenant agreement, for each of the academic years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91; if he will calculate the percentage change across this period; and if he will make a statement on the causes of the changes over that period.

Mr. Boswell: In determining the residual parental income under the regulations, any deductions made for income tax purposes in respect of payments made under covenant are disregarded.

Information on the percentage of dependent students receiving a full maintenance grant under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations and those receiving nil maintenance are given.

Percentage of dependent students receiving full and nil maintenance in England and Wales

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[1]	*Percentage point change 1988-89 to 1990-91*
Full maintenance	29·1	27·4	27·1	−2·0
Nil maintenance	28·2	29·1	29·0	0·8

[1] Calculated from subset of LEAs able to provide data.

The changing distribution reflects the effects of a range of, sometimes conflicting, factors including the economic climate over the period and the changing socio-economic composition of the parents of mandatory award holders.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(2) if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(3) if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Boswell: Information is given relating to members of the House of Lords and former hon. Members appointed to our public bodies since 1988.

No current United Kingdom Member of the European Parliament has been appointed to any of our public bodies.

Information concerning membership of our public bodies dating back to 1979 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Name of NDPB and peer	Post	Remuneration	Duration of appointment
Council for National Academic Awards			
Baroness MacFarlane	Member	—	4·5 years
Lord Pearson	Member	—	2 years
National Council for Educational Technology			
Lady Parkes	Chairman	—	3 years[1]
School Examinations and Assessment Council			
Lord Griffiths	Chairman	£275 per day[2]	2 years
Lord Skidelsky	Member	—	3 years[1]
University Commissioners			
Lord Butterworth	Member	£246 per day[2]	5 years
Universities Funding Council			
Lord Chilver	Chairman	£14,000 per annum[2]	3 years
Visiting Committee of the Cranfield Institute of Technology			
Lord Lewis	Chairman	—	10 years

[1] Served 1 year.
[2] Part-time.

Name of NDPB and former hon. Member	Post	Remuneration	Duration of appointment
Further Education Funding Council			
Mr. N. Bennett	Member	£4,000 per annum[1]	3 years
Higher Education Funding Council			
Mr. M. Fallon	Member	£4,000 per annum[1]	3 years

[1] Honorarium.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools have been approved so far in the secondary sector.

Mr. Robin Squire: To date, 559 secondary schools have been approved for self-governing—grant-maintained—status.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils are now being taught in grant-maintained schools; and what is the expected number by August 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: More than half a million pupils are currently being educated in over 800 self-governing—grant-maintained—schools.

Over 160 more schools have already been approved to become self-governing later this year or have applications in the pipeline, and there is continuing demand for parental ballots on the question of self-governing status. The number of pupils in self-governing schools will therefore continue to grow. The rate of growth will depend on the views of parents in ballots, and on the merits of the applications submitted to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list *(a)* the political control and *(b)* the number of grant-maintained schools in each local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

LEA	Political control	Number of self-governing schools operating at 11 January 1994
Avon	NOC	2
Barking	Lab	0
Barnet	Con	11
Barnsley	Lab	0
Bedfordshire	NOC	13
Berkshire	Lab/LD/Ind	17
Bexley	Con	6
Birmingham	Lab	18
Bolton	Lab	4
Bradford	Lab	7
Brent	Con/Ind	9
Bromley	Con	13
Buckinghamshire	Con	15
Bury	Lab minority	1
Calderdale	NOC	6
Cambridgeshire	LD/Lab	22
Camden	Lab	2
Cheshire	Con/LD	6
City	Ind	0
Cleveland	Lab	0
Cornwall	LD	0
Coventry	Lab	0
Croydon	Con	6
Cumbria	Lab minority	21
Derbyshire	Lab	21
Devon	LD minority	7
Doncaster	Lab	0
Dorset	LD	10
Dudley	Lab	7
Durham	Lab	0
Ealing	Con	9
East Sussex	LD/Lab	0
Enfield	Con	6

LEA	Political control	Number of self-governing schools operating at 11 January 1994
Essex	Lab/LD	117
Gateshead	Lab	0
Gloucestershire	NOC	29
Greenwich	Lab	0
Hackney	Lab	0
Hammersmith	Lab	1
Hampshire	LD/Lab/Ind	30
Haringey	Lab	0
Harrow	Con	1
Havering	Lab minority	4
Hereford and Worcester	Lab/LD	5
Hertfordshire	NOC	25
Hillingdon	Lab	23
Hounslow	Lab	2
Humberside	Lab	2
Isle of Wight	LD	0
Isles of Scilly	Ind	0
Islington	Lab	0
Kensington	Con	2
Kent	NOC	72
Kingston-upon-Thames	Con minority	5
Kirklees	Lab	2
Knowsley	Lab	1
Lambeth	Lab minority	10
Lancashire	Lab	9
Leeds	Lab	2
Leicestershire	NOC	5
Lewisham	Lab	1
Lincolnshire	Lab/LD	44
Liverpool	Lab minority	3
Manchester	Lab	0
Merton	Lab	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Lab	0
Newham	Lab	1
Norfolk	Lab minority	23
North Yorkshire	NOC	0
North Tyneside	Lab	0
Northamptonshire	Lab	21
Northumberland	Lab	1
Nottinghamshire	Lab	3
Oldham	Lab	0
Oxfordshire	NOC	1
Redbridge	Con	1
Richmond upon Thames	LD	0
Rochdale	Con/LD	4
Rotherham	Lab	0
Salford	Lab	1
Sandwell	Lab	1
Sefton	NOC	0
Sheffield	Lab	6
Shropshire	Lab/LD	6
Solihull	Con/Ind	1
Somerset	LD	2
South Tyneside	Lab	0
Southwark	Lab	9
St. Helens	Lab	0
Staffordshire	Lab	6
Stockport	NOC	0
Suffolk	Lab/LD	0
Sunderland	Lab	0
Surrey	Con/LD	22
Sutton	LD	11
Tameside	Lab	3
Tower Hamlets	LD	1
Trafford	Con	4
Wakefield	Lab	0
Walsall	Con/Ind	8
Waltham Forest	Lab	2
Wandsworth	Con	8
Warwickshire	Lab minority	8
West Sussex	LD minority	0
Westminster	Con	0
Wigan	Lab	0
Wiltshire	NOC	19
Wirral	NOC	2
Wolverhampton	Con minority	3

Key:

Con = Conservative
Ind = Independent
Lab = Labour
LD = Liberal Democrat
NOC = No overall control

Notes:

1. No Overall Control. Such councils are not controlled by any party or group of parties.
2. Where several parties are shown—Lab/LD/Ind—the authority is being run by a joint administration of some sort. This does not mean that there will necessarily have been a formal pact. In several cases the joint administration will be as a result of an informal understanding of some kind.

Language Teaching (Primary Schools)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to making funding available to primary schools for extra language teaching, in the light of the reductions in section 11 funding for these schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local education authorities—LEAs—at present receive an additional allowance in their standard spending assessment—SSA—to meet the educational needs of children with origins outside predominantly English-speaking countries. SSAs are not prescriptive and LEAs are responsible for funding primary schools according to their own priorities between and within services. When undertaking the recent review of education SSAs for the 1994-95 financial year, we took account of the reduction in the section 11 grant rate.

University Applicants

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change in the percentage of applicants to the Universities Central Council on Admissions from social class V between 1986 and 1991.

Mr. Boswell: UCCA has collected these details from the academic year 1989-90 onwards. The percentage of applicants to UCCA from social class V has increased slightly since then from 1·2 per cent. in 1989 to 1·7 per cent. in 1992. A number of factors will have contributed to this change. Data collected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys suggest the proportion of the total young population in social classes IV and V declined over this period.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish figures for the social class of 1992 university applicants on the same basis as has been published in UCCA's statistics in previous years.

Mr. Boswell: Comparable data on the social class of applicants have been published by UCCA in its annual

statistical supplement for more than the last 10 years, the latest for 1992. Students applying to the former polytechnics and colleges which are members of PCAS —Polytechnics central admissions systems—have also been asked, since 1991, to provide information on their social background on the same basis as UCCA applicants. The new joint admissions agency, UCAS—Universities and Colleges Admissions Service—will continue to collect and publish information on the social background of higher education applicants.

Student Incomes

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage income of a university degree/course student, whose parental contribution is assessed as nil, derived from grants and loans for each year from 1988; and what is his forecast for the next three years.

Mr. Boswell: Information is not available in the form requested. No data are collected centrally that identify the percentage of total income which a student whose parental income is assessed as nil derives from grant and student loan. The hon. Member may find it helpful to refer to the student income and expenditure survey published on 16 December 1993, a copy of which is in the Library. The table gives the maximum income available to a student from the main rates of grant and loan.

Academic year	*Total* £
1988-89	2,050
1989-90	2,155
1990-91	2,685
1991-92	2,845
1992-93	2,980
1993-94	3,065
1994-95	3,190

No forecast is available for 1995-96 or 1996-97.

Note to table

The table assumes that the student is studying outside London and living away from his parents. From the academic year 1990-91 when student loans were introduced, the income from grant and student loan will depend on whether the student applies for a loan and, if eligible, on how much of the loan he takes up. The grant and loan rates for 1994-95 are subject to Parliamentary approval of the relevant regulations.

Further Education Colleges

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on changes in *(a)* the number of senior non-teaching posts in further education colleges and *(b)* salaries of principals and senior staff, so designated by the instruments and articles of government in further education colleges in each of the last five years; and whether such information will be collected in future as a prerequisite for securing funding from the Further Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: The Department does not collect information on numbers of staff in non-teaching posts, except where those posts are filled by staff employed on academic-research pay scales. Average salaries of principals of further education colleges in England in each of the four years up to 1991, the latest year for which figures are available, are shown in the table. Comparable figures for vice-principals and other heads of departments for years up to 1990 are also given; similar information for these groups is not available for 1991 because these posts were transferred to a new "Management spine" from April 1990.

	Average salary (£) at 31 March			
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Principals	28,030	29,820	32,980	39,120
Vice-Principals	24,750	26,400	28,810	—
Other Heads of Department	21,800	23,030	24,980	—

Under the financial memorandum between the Further Education Funding Council and institutions in the new further education sector, which sets out terms and conditions for the payment of grant, institutions will be required to disclose in the notes to their accounts the salaries of all of their senior posts holders.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on the number of students in further education colleges undertaking courses in construction, motor vehicle maintenance and engineering in each of the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is shown in the table.

Numbers of full and part-time students on further education courses in construction, motor vehicle maintenance and engineering at 1 November of each year (England)

Data from the Further Education Statistical Record for the appropriate years

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*[1]
Construction and Related Subjects	110,909	120,831	114,070	97,569	82,395
Motor Vehicle Maintenance	39,771	43,541	41,084	40,113	38,566
All Other Engineering	120,869	126,447	126,505	127,647	121,430

[1] Provisional.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the capital allocation made to local education authorities for 1994-95 together with the bid made in each case; and if he will give each allocation as a percentage of the relevant bid.

Mr. Forth: The table gives details of allocations to local education authorities of annual capital guidelines for schools.

Allocation of annual capital guidelines (ACGs) for 1994-95

LEA	*Total ACG bid (£000)*	*Total ACG (£000)*	*ACG as percentage of bid*
Barking	5,409	556	10
Barnet	11,514	2,838	25
Bexley	6,881	1,880	27

LEA	Total ACG bid (£000)	Total ACG (£000)	ACG as percentage of bid
Brent	4,675	665	14
Bromley	9,937	2,761	28
Croydon	7,613	748	10
Ealing	40,012	2,945	7
Enfield	6,656	3,052	46
Haringey	15,688	2,288	15
Harrow	11,156	2,357	21
Havering	8,665	606	7
Hillingdon	9,349	1,085	12
Hounslow	11,959	2,347	20
Kingston	1,747	772	44
Merton	10,050	366	4
Newham	11,379	518	5
Redbridge	3,733	3,715	100
Richmond	4,490	228	5
Sutton	5,049	1,403	28
Waltham	10,085	1,830	18
City	0	0	—
Camden	1,544	576	37
Westminster	475	67	14
Greenwich	8,101	273	3
Hackney	8,438	1,493	18
Hammersmith	2,775	744	27
Islington	9,135	438	5
Kensington	2,919	198	7
Lambeth	9,703	1,061	11
Lewisham	23,049	1,514	7
Southwark	6,263	631	10
Wandsworth	11,856	786	7
Tower Hamlets	25,560	10,915	43
Birmingham	51,514	10,904	21
Coventry	4,087	716	18
Dudley	6,090	667	11
Sandwell	9,685	1,472	15
Solihull	5,325	2,238	42
Walsall	6,218	621	10
Wolverhampton	11,465	1,167	10
Knowsley	13,496	859	6
Liverpool	15,662	4,540	29
St. Helens	5,544	937	17
Sefton	3,445	1,563	45
Wirral	6,098	1,547	25
Bolton	4,180	122	3
Bury	3,536	864	24
Manchester	49,217	12,900	26
Oldham	7,815	1,628	21
Rochdale	14,464	599	4
Salford	13,104	1,997	15
Stockport	2,115	488	23
Tameside	11,031	1,434	13
Trafford	6,292	591	9
Wigan	5,055	390	8

LEA	Total ACG bid (£000)	Total ACG (£000)	ACG as percentage of bid
Barnsley	4,198	881	21
Doncaster	6,178	396	6
Rotherham	2,792	605	22
Sheffield	36,617	2,773	8
Bradford	37,329	6,926	19
Calderdale	5,275	1,424	27
Kirklees	9,499	2,572	27
Leeds	26,671	2,568	10
Wakefield	27,991	7,550	27
Gateshead	5,488	845	15
Newcastle	29,483	4,356	15
North Tyneside	11,510	3,749	33
South Tyneside	7,000	618	9
Sunderland	6,373	1,212	19
Isle of Scilly	94	134	143
Avon	12,314	3,060	25
Bedfordshire	5,888	1,855	32
Berkshire	13,267	2,386	18
Buckinghamshire	14,981	6,829	46
Cambridgeshire	25,235	7,244	29
Cheshire	21,141	10,071	48
Cleveland	11,683	4,883	42
Cornwall	16,030	1,744	11
Cumbria	25,037	6,312	25
Derbyshire	36,317	6,460	18
Devon	25,526	7,961	31
Dorset	22,612	5,395	24
Durham	53,165	4,593	9
East Sussex	38,458	12,942	34
Essex	58,195	9,795	17
Gloucestershire	32,281	7,964	25
Hampshire	50,728	18,583	37
Hereford and Worcester	14,432	3,218	22
Hertford	9,806	2,722	28
Humberside	19,253	3,894	20
Isle of Wight	10,369	3,992	38
Kent	40,464	15,660	39
Lancashire	40,633	7,948	20
Leicester	11,838	5,900	50
Lincolnshire	17,278	9,503	55
Norfolk	12,791	3,890	30
North Yorkshire	17,530	4,182	24
Northampton	14,097	3,404	24
Northumberland	5,996	2,511	42
Nottinghamshire	17,045	1,778	10
Oxfordshire	21,641	3,745	17
Shropshire	8,448	6,990	83
Somerset	10,090	3,240	32
Staffordshire	16,119	3,188	20
Suffolk	19,715	5,892	30
Surrey	25,970	11,452	44
Warwickshire	5,384	856	16
West Sussex	16,087	2,810	17
Wiltshire	13,051	2,420	19

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in respect of how many boards, authorities, committees, and other public bodies he is responsible, in whole or in part, for appointments; what is the total number of such appointments; and what is the total public spending by such boards, authorities, committees and other public bodies.

Mr. Boswell: The information required may be found in "Public Bodies 1993" published last month by the Cabinet Office. The information given applies to those bodies not included in that report.

	Number or amount
School Curriculum and Assessment Authority	
Total number of appointments	15
Budget for financial year 1993-94 (£ million)	17
The (nine) Regional Committees of the Further Education Funding Council	
Total number of appointments	102
The regional committees are advisory bodies and do not have funding responsibilities. Administrative costs are met by the FEFC	
Student Loans Company Ltd	
Total number of appointments (made jointly by the Secretaries of State for Education and Scotland)	3
Administrative expenditure, financial year 1993-94 (maximum grant in aid available jointly from DFE, SOED and DENI) (£ million)	16·1
Current gross provision for making loans to students, financial year 1993-94 (funded jointly by DFE, SOED and DENI) (£ million)	292·3

Low Achievers

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that the Further Education Funding Council encourages schools and colleges to do more for low achievers on training courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The new funding methodology being developed by the Further Education Funding Council will help low achievers by requiring colleges to reach agreement with individual students on their lerning needs, their learning programmes and their goals. This will provide an incentive to colleges to ensure that they match students to programmes as effectively as possible. In addition, the funding methodology recognises that the cost of providing suitable courses for low achievers in colleges requires additional support. The Further Education Funding Council's funding responsibilities do not cover schools.

Training Targets

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to ensure that his Department is fully committed to the national education and training targets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: As my right hon. Friend made clear in the House on 26 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns 692-759, the national education and training targets have the full commitment of the Department. The Department's action plan on the targets published in March 1993 sets out a four-fold strategy towards the achievement of the targets, which is being actively pursued: publicising and promoting the targets among education institutions at all levels; co-operating with others in developing necessary data sources for monitoring purposes; monitoring policies and, as appropriate, developing new ones to facilitate progress towards the targets; and developing human resources, in particular aiming to gain maximum benefit from the Investors in People standard. In addition, it is a requirement in the Department that every new policy proposal must demonstrate its contribution to the achievement of the targets.

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that the Further Education Funding Council favours those colleges which plan vocational and part-time courses in relation to national education and training targets.

Mr. Boswell: The new funding methodology being developed by the Further Education Funding Council will provide incentives to colleges to assist more students, including students taking vocational and part-time courses, to achieve qualifications contributing to the national education and training targets.

Teaching Hours

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the 12 schools with *(a)* the longest and *(b)* the shortest teaching hours per week and the hours at which teaching takes place in each school.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is not satisfied with the reliability of the figures provided by the small number of schools which have reported hours of lesson time per week at the extremes of the range. I have taken steps to improve the accuracy of the return in future.

PRIME MINISTER

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The main source of heating for 10 Downing street is the Whitehall district heating scheme—WDHS. The WDHS charges for 10 Downing street are based on a percentage of the overall cost and, including both space and water heating, for each of the last four years were as follows:

	£
1989-90	4,728
1990-91	3,983
1991-92	3,782
1992-93	3,700

For the current year heat meters have been installed and charges have yet to be levied.

Civil Servants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister how many civil servants in the Cabinet Office, and of what grade, are currently working on constitutional matters.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

None works exclusively on constitutional issues although much of the work of the Cabinet Office requires an understanding of constitutional matters.

Michael John Smith

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will refer the case of Michael John Smith to the Security Commission.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

In accordance with the established procedures in such matters, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has consulted the chairman of the Security Commission and the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on this case and has decided to refer it to the Security Commission with the following terms of reference:

"To investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have or may have occurred arising out of the case of Micheal John Smith, who was convicted on 18 November 1993 of offences under section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1911; and to advise in the light of that investigation whether any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable."

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 11 January.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is travelling back from the NATO summit in Brussels.

Genetic Testing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements Her Majesty's Government are making to respond to the report under the chairmanship of Professor Dame June Lloyd of the Nuffield council of bioethics relating to genetic testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The Government welcome this authoritative and timely report.

We will consider the conclusions and recommendations of the report and study the reaction of public and professional interests before deciding whether action by the Government is needed.

Ministers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about ministerial responsibility and the accountability of Ministers for decisions taken by the Department.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Guidance on ministerial responsibility and accountability is provided at paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list each Minister who has left his Administration, with the reason for their departure in each case.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The names of resigning Ministers, and the reasons for their resigning, have been announced on each occasion.

Documents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to advise all Ministers that marginal notes on documents circulated between themselves or departmental officials always are made directly on to the documents and not on detachable notes.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has no plans to issue such advice.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations he has received in the form of coupons from the advertisement placed by the citizens of Hiroshima, Japan, in *The Times* of 20 December, setting out opposition to the THORP reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received numerous representations.

EC Directives

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) of 17 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *959,* how the list of 17 EC directives which the European Council agreed should be repealed or withdrawn has been made available to the general public.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The Commission's report on subsidiarity, which includes the annex to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred in his answer of 17 December to my hon. Friend, the Member for Southend, East, has been published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. As is the practice for all official Community plublications, it is available to the general public through HMSO.

Police and Magistrates

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister what amount of new money is proposed to support the reformed *(a)* magistrates courts system and *(b)* the police authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The costs of establishing the new administrative structure for the magistrates courts service will depend on local management decisions, but during the one to two year implementation period costs in the region of £5 million a year may be incurred. The Government have reflected the additional costs of the reforms in determining future grant provision for the service.

As regards the police, the overall effect of the changes in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill on ongoing expenditure from the Consolidated Fund and by local government will be broadly neutral. It is expected that additional expenditure by police forces on financial and personnel management will be offset by increases in efficiency.

Some start-up costs are expected. These will arise from a period of parallel operation by the current police authorities and their successors to be established by the Bill. The new authorities will incur some costs for their own purposes and some for the purposes of the police force for whose maintenance they will become responsible from April 1995. The force may need to recruit and train new staff in areas such as personnel or finance or to purchase computer hardware. Taken together, the start-up costs of the reforms for police authorities and police forces are not expected to exceed £21 million. They will be met by central Government grant.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister how many press officers his Office has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

Detailed figures were not recorded separately prior to 1987-88. From then onwards the complement remained at six, until 1 April 1992, when it was increased to seven to enable the press office to continue to respond effectively to the growing number of press inquiries.

SCOTLAND

Enterprise Directors

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many directors of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are (i) male and (ii) female; how many are from ethnic minority backgrounds; how many directors are from the private sector and which industrial sectors they come from; how many non-private sector directors are from *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* local education authorities, *(c)* other educational organisations, *(d)* trade unions, *(e)* voluntary organisations, *(f)* ethnic minority organisations, *(g)* employers associations and *(h)* others.

Mr. Stewart: Directors of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are senior executives, directly responsible to the chief executives of the enterprise bodies.

At board level there are in total 23 members of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, of whom 19 are male and four are female. No information is collected on their ethnic origin.

The information requested on numbers of board members from the private and public sectors, set out in the table, relates to the principal activity of the member concerned. Many of Scottish Enterprise's and Highlands and Islands Enterprise's board members are currently active in more than one of these areas.

	Scottish Enterprise	*Highlands and Islands Enterprise*
Private Sector		
Agriculture and Fisheries	—	2
Construction and Manufacturing	5	4
Financial and other Services	3	3
Total	8	9
Public Sector		
(a)	1	1
(b)	—	—
(c)	1	—
(d)	1	—
(e)	—	1
(f)	—	—
(g)	—	—
(h)	1	—
Total	4	2

Health Board Staff

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider giving advice to health boards concerning the re-employment on the same salary of staff who have been sacked by the health boards but who are threatening legal action.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has, at present, no plans to issue such advice.

Hospitals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospital wards were closed at weekends in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1989 and *(d)* the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to establish ratios of qualified nurses to patient numbers in all branches of in-patient hospital provision.

Mr. Stewart: No. All patients should be carefully assessed on admission to hospital and their combined needs for care and treatment will determine the number of qualified nursing staff required.

Lung Cancer

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women have died of lung cancer in each year since 1975; and how much he plans to spend on publicising these figures.

Mr. Stewart: The information is set out in the table:

Year	*Numbers*
1975	735
1976	806
1977	890
1978	1,017
1979	1,010
1980	990
1981	1,117
1982	1,199
1983	1,187
1984	1,272
1985	1,336
1986	1,284
1987	1,377
1988	1,372
1989	1,426
1990	1,453
1991	1,503
1992	1,547

The figures are published in the annual report of the Registrar General for Scotland. The policy statement "Scotland's Health: A Challenge to Us All" published in 1992 drew specific attention to the fact that Scottish women have the highest mortality rate from lung cancer in the developed world and this has influenced our policies on smoking and targets for reduction of cancer mortality.

Spending Statistics

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much will be spent in Scotland in each year from 1993-94 to 1995-96 on *(a)* environmentally sensitive areas, identifying the amount allocated for the new access option, *(b)* new nitrate sensitive areas, *(c)* the moorland scheme, *(d)* the organic aid scheme and *(e)* the total amount of money being spent on the agri-environment scheme in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The forecast outturn expenditure on environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland for 1993-94 is £1·5 million. Subject to approval by Parliament and the EC Commission, the Government propose to introduce a heather moorland scheme, an organic aid scheme, a habitat scheme and a set-aside access scheme, which, together with the environmentally sensitive area scheme, will comprise the agri-environment programme for Scotland. There are no nitrate sensitive areas currently designated or proposed in Scotland. Planned expenditure on the Scottish agri-environment programme as a whole is expected to be in the region of £7 million for 1994-95 and £11 million for 1995-96.

Land Use

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many holdings there are in each region of Scotland in 1992 and 1993 growing *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds;

(2) how many hectares were taken up in each region of Scotland in 1992 and 1993 by *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Sir Hector Monro: Final June agricultural census information for 1993 is not yet available. The figures for main holdings at June 1992 are as follows:

Region	Cereals		Potatoes	
	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)
Borders	865	60,890	163	1,950
Central	375	12,225	69	153
Dumfries and Galloway	885	17,946	115	397
Fife	678	42,162	285	2,961
Grampian	4,056	137,040	1,312	6,042
Highland	1,292	30,127	715	1,049
Lothian	631	41,933	149	2,053
Strathclyde	1,353	22,814	391	1,064
Tayside	1,813	91,429	1,142	11,843
Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles	1,038	3,962	1,172	365

Region	Linseed		Horticultural Crops		Oilseeds	
	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)
Borders	37	510	106	1,513	217	6,506
Central	6	62	31	100	67	1,155
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	43	47	17	332
Fife	9	105	162	3,062	290	6,470
Grampian	45	730	340	3,233	928	20,844
Highland	[1] —	[1] —	111	168	150	2,900
Lothian	7	88	118	961	195	4,231
Strathclyde	[1] —	[1] —	166	304	16	298
Tayside	62	906	528	6,159	695	14,111
Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles	0	0	195	57	9	13

[1] Less than 5 holdings.

Figures for sugar beet are not collected.

GP Fundholders

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioner fundholders there are in each health board area.

Mr. Stewart: The latest information from health boards indicates the numbers of operational general practitioner fundholders as set out in the table.

Health Board	Current Number of Fundholders
Argyll and Clyde	5
Ayrshire and Arran	3
Borders	1
Dumfries and Galloway	0
Fife	3
Forth Valley	2
Grampian	25
Greater Glasgow	4
Highland	1
Lanarkshire	8
Lothian	9
Orkney	0
Shetland	0
Tayside	8
Western Isles	0
TOTAL	69

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many landowners in Scotland are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme *(a)* in each band of £25,000 up to £500,000 and *(b)* over £500,000; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many holdings in each region of Scotland have taken up the arable area payments scheme.

Sir Hector Monro: The number of applications in Scotland under the arable area payments scheme in 1993 was as follows:

	Number
Less-favoured area (LFA)	3,957
Non-less-favoured area (non-LFA)	4,892
Combined claimes	603

Combined claims are those which include both LFA and non-LFA land.

NHS Common Services Agency

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been made redundant in the past year in the building division of the national health service Common Services Agency, and for what reason; and if the work formerly done by it will now be carried out by *(a)* direct labour or *(b)* private contractors.

Mr. Stewart: Thirty staff have been made redundant in the past year. It was necessary to restructure the organisation to reflect increased efficiency and change in the workload.

Building Division is fee earning and has to compete with private firms for its share of the advisory, design and consultancy work available at this time in relation to NHS building projects. Private firms have also had to make redundancies where they have not won contracts.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sites of special scientific interest in Scotland have been damaged or destroyed in each year since 1982; whether each of these sites *(a)* was lost completely, *(b)* was partially lost, *(c)* suffered long term damage or *(d)* suffered short term damage; whether the damage or destruction in each case was due to (i) agriculture, (ii) forestry, (iii) poor management, (iv) pollution, (v) third party activities, (vi) developments controlled through the planning system, (vii) road building or (viii) other activities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of damage to sites of special scientific interest in Scotland are published in the annual reports of the former Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on management agreements in Scotland under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for sites of special scientific interest in each year since the Act came into force; if for each year he will give the number of agreements, the hectarages involved, and what the threats of damage were; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of the annual expenditure on management agreements in Scotland and the area involved are published in the annual reports of the former Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sites of special scientific interest in Scotland have been denotified in each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The number of sites of special scientific interest which have been denotified in Scotland is published in the annual reports of the former Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Compulsory Purchase

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the occasions when his powers of compulsory purchase of land under section 17 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 have been used in Scotland in each year since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Such powers of compulsory purchase are not available to my right hon. Friend; they are exercisable by Scottish Natural Heritage, previously the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council, but only with my right hon. Friend's authorisation. No use of these powers has been made.

Management Agreements

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of management agreements that have been entered into under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Scotland where payments have been in each band of £10,000 up to £60,000 or £60,000 and over; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Agreements may involve either annual or capital payments. An analysis of the information by both categories is set out in the following table.

Range of costs	*Type of cost*	
	Annual	*Capital*
No costs	94	107
Up to £9,999	200	131
£10,000 to £19,999	13	13
£20,000 to £29,999	5	15
£30,000 to £39,999	1	13
£40,000 to £49,999	0	8
£50,000 to £59,999	2	3
Over £60,000	0	25
	315	315

Figures as at 31 March 1993.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the investigation into the dismissal of Mr. Laurence Peterken as general manager of Greater Glasgow health board when it is published; and if he will list within the report those consulted in the course of the investigation.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend announced in the House on 8 December that the report would be published in due course.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of Mr. W. S. Fyfe's chairmanship of Greater Glasgow health board before the dismissal of Mr. Laurence Peterken; and what action he took.

Mr. Stewart: Mr. Fyfe brought to the chairmanship of Greater Glasgow health board in April 1993 the qualities of leadership he had displayed earlier over 12 years as chairman of Ayrshire and Arran health board. His actions in dismissing Mr. Peterken, however, led the non-executive members of the board to lose confidence in him.

Common Services Agency

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date it was decided that the operation of the Common Services Agency needed review; and whether a list of external management consultants was drawn up at any stage in the process with a view to inviting them to tender for this work.

Mr. Stewart: The chief executive decided that a review of the Common Services Agency was necessary soon after his appointment on 1 September. No list of external management consultants was drawn up with a view to inviting them to tender for this work.

EC THERMIE Programme

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish applicants there have been for the EC THERMIE programme; how many of these applications were successful; what level of funds were awarded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The THERMIE programme is administered by the Directorate General of Energy of the European Commission who keeps records of the number of applications from the United Kingdom, but only as a whole. Up to and including the 1993 round, there have been a total of 281 applications from the United Kingdom, of which 88 were successful. Although information on the number of Scottish applicants is not available, the Commission has advised my Department that 19 THERMIE projects located in Scotland have been approved and awarded a total of £11·46 million.

WALES

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many landowners in Wales are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme *(a)* in each band of £25,000 up to £500,000 and *(b)* over £500,000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is not possible to differentiate between landowners and tenants who claim aid. The number of claimants receiving payment is:

1. £25,000-£49,000: 10
2. £50,000 and above: none

Agriculture

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many holdings there are in each county of Wales in 1992 and 1993 growing *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Redwood: Data for 1992 are shown in the following table. The requested information is not yet available for 1993.

Number of holdings as at June 1992 growing:

	Cereals	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Sugar beet*	*Horticultural produce*	*Oilseeds*
Clwyd	619	163	11	[1]—	93	12
Dyfed	1,577	608	38	[1]—	208	25
Gwent	303	161	6	[1]—	76	10
Gwynedd	491	270	0	[1]—	58	6
Mid Glamorgan	57	27	4	0	19	5
Powys	664	142	9	[1]—	47	13
South Glamorgan	119	30	8	0	26	9
West Glamorgan	118	118	0	0	75	0
Wales	3,948	1,519	76	19	602	80

Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural Census.
Note: Figures exclude minor holdings.
[1] Data withheld to avoid disclosure of information relating to any particular land or business.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hectares were taken up in each county of Wales in 1992 and 1993 by *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Redwood: The requested information for 1992 is shown in the following table along with the only available data so far for 1993 which are provisional figures at national level.

	Cereals	Potatoes	Linseed	Sugar beet	Horticultural produce	Oilseeds
	Hectares at June 1992 taken up by:					
Clwyd	8,188	298	152	[1]—	371	200
Dyfed	18,084	2,211	453	[1]—	384	308
Gwent	6,180	452	80	[1]—	251	181
Gwynedd	4,659	293	0	[1]—	91	81
Mid Glamorgan	1,809	70	112	0	71	207
Powys	9,640	310	98	[1]—	85	230
South Glamorgan	3,647	137	79	0	61	109
West Glamorgan	1,144	302	0	0	249	0
Wales	53,350	4,074	974	97	1,564	1,316
			[2]*Hectares at June 1993:*			
Wales	47,879	3,769	1,738	105	1,548	1,433

Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural Census.
Note: Figures exclude minor holdings.
[1] Data withheld to avoid disclosure of information relating to any particular land or business.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much will be spent in Wales in each year from 1993-94 to 1995-96 on *(a)* environmentally sensitive areas, identifying the amount allocated for the new access option, *(b)* new nitrate sensitive areas, *(c)* the moorland scheme, *(d)* the new habitat scheme, *(e)* the new countryside access scheme, *(f)* the organic acid scheme and *(g)* the total amount of money being spent on the agri-environment scheme in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Current provision is as follows:

£ million

	1993-94	[1]1994-95	[2]1995-96
i. Environmentally sensitive areas	5·037	6·863	7·015
ii. Public access in ESAs	—	0·051	0·052
iii. The Moorland Scheme	—	1·090	3·168
iv. The New Habitat Scheme	—	0·500	0·700
v. The New Countryside Access Scheme	—	[3]—	[3]—
vi. Organic Aid Scheme	0·050	0·170	0·310
Total	5·087	8·674	11·245

[1] Figures to be confirmed in the 1994-95 Main Supply estimates.
[2] Figures may be subject to change in the 1994 Public Expenditure Survey round.
[3] Provision to be determined.

I have no plans to designate any nitrate sensitive areas in Wales.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(2) if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(3) if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Redwood: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The information in respect of current appointments that I make is as follows:

Name/Post	Remuneration (£)	Appointment commenced	Appointment expires
Former MPs			
Mr. Ian Grist Chairman South Glamorgan District Health Authority	19,285 per annum (pro rata 3·5 days a week)	1 August 1992	31 July 1996
Former MEPs			
Miss Beata Brookes Member Consumers Committees for Great Britain and for England and Wales[1]	Nil	16 April 1991	15 April 1994
Members of the House of Lords			
Lord Brooks of Tremorfa			
(i) Deputy Chairman Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	18,050 per annum (pro rata 2 days a week)	30 November 1992	31 March 1996
(ii) Chairman Sportsmatch Awards Panel	Nil		
The Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor Member Historic Buildings Council for Wales	Nil	1 October 1971	30 September 1995
Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas Chairman Welsh Language Board	20,544 per annum (pro rata 2 days a week)	1 September 1993	20 December 1996

Name/Post	Remuneration (£)	Appointment commenced	Appointment expires
Lord John Moran Member NRA Advisory Committee for Wales	Nil	1 April 1990	31 August 1994
The Earl of Selborne Chairman Joint Nature Conservation Committee[2]	24,045 per annum (pro rata 2 days a week)	24 November 1991	31 March 1994
Rt. Hon. The Lord Rees, QC Member National Museum of Wales Court and Council	Nil	1 March 1987	8 February 1994

[1] Joint Appointment with the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland.
[2] Joint Appointment with Secretaries of State for Environment and Scotland.

Overgrazing

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales before making hill livestock compensatory allowance payments, what steps are taken by the Welsh Agriculture Department to ascertain whether overgrazing is causing adverse effects on the growth, quality or species composition of vegetation.

Mr. Redwood: Between a quarter and one third of livestock subsidy claimants are visited each year by Welsh Office field staff who are trained to look out for evidence of overgrazing either from the sward or the general condition of the animals. Any complaints from individuals or bodies about possible overgrazing will be investigated by these field staff. The rules of the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme contain stocking and financial limits per hectare which also militate against overgrazing.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in persuading the European Union to incorporate within the sheep annual premium scheme a requirement that payments should be withheld where overgrazing is causing adverse effects on the growth, quality or species composition of vegetation.

Mr. Redwood: The Council of Ministers agreed in December a regulation which provides that member states may apply to the annual ewe premium environmental protection measures appropriate to their particular situation.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since the introduction of a definition of overgrazing in the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) Regulations 1992, hill livestock compensatory allowances payments have been withheld because of adverse effects on the growth, quality or species composition of vegetation.

Mr. Redwood: Claimants for the hill livestock compensatory allowances are warned that if the land on which the stock is kept is found to be overgrazed the payment will be reduced. There have been no claims so far where this has been necessary. There are in the scheme regulations additional stocking rate safeguards which discourage overgrazing and these are applied quite frequently.

National House Building Council

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what action his office has taken with regard to complaints about the performance of the National House Building Council following correspondence with Mr. C. Gavin of 15 Palace close, Flint, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will institute a review into the operation of the complaints procedure with regard to the National House Building Council in Wales;

(3) if he will carry out an independent assessment of whether properties in Palace close, Flint, comply with Schedule 1 Part B of the Fire Building Regulations 1985; and if he will reconsider the approval given by the Inspector authorised by the National House Building Council to that effect.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no powers to intervene in individual cases involving approved inspectors. However, since Mr. Gavin first wrote in February 1992 my officials have made inquiries of the National House Building Council on a number of occasions.

Private Beds

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many private pay beds there are in each health authority in Wales; and how many there were in each year since 1986.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Private pay beds in Welsh health authorities

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Clwyd	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	—[1]
East Dyfed	7	7	7	7	15	15	15	—[1]
Gwent	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	[2]3
Gwynedd	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Mid Glamorgan	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	[2]3
Pembrokeshire	3	3	3	3	3	3	—[1]	—[1]
South Glamorgan	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]	11+2Em[3]
West Glamorgan	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	[2]2

[1] Figure is not applicable as pay bed allocation is the responsibility of NHS Trusts.
[2] Figure does not include pay beds in NHS Trusts.
[3] To be used solely for emergency admissions and only when the basic number of beds is already occupied.

Unemployment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the unemployment levels in each travel-to-work area in Wales; and what are the top 10 areas for people continuously unemployed for periods of *(a)* six months and *(b)* 12 months.

Mr. Redwood: The unemployment data requested are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on line by the staff of the Library of the House.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the advertisement in the "Supplement to the Official Journal of the European Communities" in relation to the property management services contract on offer for the marketing and negotiation of disposals of approximately £75 million of industrial property assets of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. Public bodies such as the agency are required to advertise in the Official Journal of the European Communities for contracts over a certain threshold—currently £149,728. The sale of industrial property forms part of the agency's established and continuing strategy of disposals to the private sector thereby providing a welcome injection of private finance for reinvestment to the Welsh economy and reducing the burden to the taxpayer.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the Welsh Development Agency is required to notify his Department over the engagement of lawyers.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he was informed of the plan by the Welsh Development Agency to offer for sale a large number of factories; and what formal arrangements exist for the notification by executive agencies in Wales wanting to sell off their assets.

Mr. Redwood: The sale of industrial property forms part of the agency's established and continuing strategy of disposals to the private sector; it provides a welcome cash injection for reinvestment in the Welsh economy. I have told Parliament of the need for a mixture of grant and asset sales to pay for new asset creation.

SSSIs

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites of special scientific interest in Wales have been damaged or destroyed in each year since 1982; whether each of these sites *(a)* was lost completely, *(b)* was partially lost, *(c)* suffered long-term damage or *(d)* suffered short term damage; whether the damage or destruction in each case was due to (i) agriculture, (ii) forestry, (iii) poor management, (iv) pollution, (v) third party activities, (vi) developments controlled through the planning system, (vii) road building or (viii) other activities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Prior to the establishment of the Countryside Council for Wales in April 1991 the Nature Conservancy Council gave details in its annual report of all loss and damage to SSSI in Great Britain although not in the detail requested. Separate details for Wales are not available for this period. Since 1991 similar information has been included in the Countryside Council's annual reports. Copies of the reports are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites of special scientific interest in Wales have been denotified in each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Between 1982 and April 1991 the Nature Conservancy Council approved 34 SSSI for denotification, although the procedure for two of them concluded after the Countryside Council for Wales was established. The Countryside Council has not approved any for denotification. The details are as follows:

	Number
1982	3
1983	2
1984	2
1985	7
1986	6
1987	10
1988	—
1989	1
1990	1
1991	2
1992	—
1993	—

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the number of management agreements that have been entered into under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Wales where payments have been in each band of £10,000 up to £60,000 or £60,000 and over; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much has been spent on management agreements in Wales under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for sites of special scientific interest in each year since the Act came into force; if for each year he will give the number of agreements, the hectarages involved, and what the threats of damage were; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Management agreements are negotiated with owners and occupiers of SSSI under the terms of the Countryside Act 1968. Information in the format requested is not available centrally.

However, prior to the establishment of the Countryside Council for Wales in April 1991 the Nature Conservancy Council gave details in its annual reports of all management agreements in Wales. Since then the Countryside Council has continued to report such information in its annual reports. Copies of the reports are in the Library of the House.

Superannuation Funds

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which authority will administer the superannuation funds currently managed by the county councils in the event of the reorganisation of local government in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I will announce my decision as to which authorities will administer superannuation funds in due course.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make an announcement on the reorganisation scheme submitted by the milk marketing board in Wales under the provisions of the Agriculture Act 1993.

Mr. Redwood: When Ministers have finished studying it.

Superannuation Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *853*, if he will estimate the cost of superannuations transferred to his Department's running cost budget in the present financial year; from which vote they were transferred; and what was the estimated cost under that vote in 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: The Department's running cost budget for superannuation is £5·4 million in 1993-94. These costs were previously met from class XVIII, vote 4 HM Treasury: civil superannuation. The estimated cost under that vote in 1992-93 was £6·1 million.

Public Appointments

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that all appointments to non-departmental public bodies in Wales will be made from individuals resident in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: No, I wish to appoint the best people for the job, irrespective of where they live.

Health Authority Spending

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the forecast spending for each health authority in Wales for each of the last five years; and what was the actual expenditure.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The following table—table 1—gives the total final cash allocations, as at 31 March of each financial year.

Table 1
DHA final allocations 1988-89 to 1992-93

£000s

Health Authority	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Clwyd	108,963	115,683	126,724	164,941	175,161
East Dyfed	67,268	77,402	87,398	92,903	108,854
Gwent	129,822	138,892	151,447	169,075	183,530
Gwynedd	64,496	68,264	74,496	94,864	110,865
Mid Glamorgan	151,922	161,916	180,235	220,227	240,599
Pembrokeshire	25,905	29,045	33,090	46,440	46,447
Powys	29,992	32,568	35,587	54,702	62,338
South Glamorgan	173,656	188,941	216,094	196,050	218,304
West Glamorgan	115,748	123,695	135,358	147,062	164,924

Source: Final allocation notified to individual authorities within period specified.

Table 2 shows the authorities' outturn expenditure—revenue plus capital—as recorded in their annual accounts. These figures are in accruals terms and differ from cash allocations and cash expenditure due to the effect of movements in debtors, creditors, stocks and year-end cash balances.

Table 2

£000s

Health Authority	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Clwyd	109,681	116,075	127,534	164,826	180,858
East Dyfed	66,501	77,261	86,017	97,918	107,747
Gwent	128,706	138,995	152,907	175,195	181,888
Gwynedd	64,715	69,412	75,156	96,150	111,199
Mid Glamorgan	149,941	162,687	182,452	218,863	237,265
Pembrokeshire	26,245	29,846	33,592	45,087	48,626
Powys	29,903	32,378	35,852	55,988	62,345
South Glamorgan	171,328	190,563	214,811	198,689	219,111
West Glamorgan	114,495	125,600	135,721	151,432	173,372

Source: Health Authority Annual Accounts.

Compulsory Purchase

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the occasions when his powers of compulsory purchase of land under section 17 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 have been used in Wales in each year since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Hedgerows

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many agreements have been made, how much has been spent and how many kilometres of hedgerow were restored under the hedgerow renovation scheme by his Department in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94 in each county in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information which is available only on a regional basis is as follows:

		December 1992 to March 1993	April 1993 to December 1993
North Wales (Clwyd/Gwynedd)	Agreements	4	42
	Total spent	£2,926	£119,410
	Length of hedgerow renovated	0·5 km	18·0 km
Mid Wales (Dyfed/Powys excluding Brecon Beacons NP)	Agreements	6	82
	Total spent	£11,306	£192,972
	Length of hedgerpw renovated	2·0 km	44·0 km
South Wales (Gwent/Mid, South and West Glamorgan, Brecon Beacons NP)	Agreements	—	32
	Total spent	—	£77,131
	Length of hedgerow renovated	—	17·0 km
Total	Agreements	10	156
	Total spent	£14,231	£389,513
	Length of hedgerow renovated	2·5 km	79·0 km

Agreements are made with landowners covering a 10-year period, and additional funds are availble under the scheme from the Welsh Office Agriculture Department, although these are not included in the figures. A significant feature of the scheme is that the agreements bring under management all hedgerows on a landholding, not just those which are to be renovated.

NHS Public Relations

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance his Department has issued to health authorities and trusts on staff relations with the media, public and hon. Members.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media was issued to health authorities and NHS trusts in June 1993. General managers and chief executives were asked to ensure that all staff were made aware of the guidance and that all staff have access to a copy. A copy of the guidance is available in the Library of the House.

Wells Kelo

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make a final decision on whether to *(a)* relocate or *(b)* extinguish Wells Kelo of Holyhead, Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The decision on whether to relocate or extinguish the business at Holyhead is a commercial one for the directors of Guiness Brothers Group plc, the successors of Wells Kelo Ltd., to make.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* the district valuer concerning the relocation of Wells Kelo of Holyhead, Gwynedd.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* None, although I have been kept informed of developments.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the advice given by the district valuer that Wells Kelo of Holyhead, Gwynedd, be extinguished rather than relocated.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* No such advice has been given.

I have received 14 representations in respect of the land compensation negotiations between Wells Kelo Ltd., its successor company at Holyhead Guiness Brothers Group plc and the district valuer.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the total sums expended to date by *(a)* the Welsh Office and *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency, on the project to relocate Wells Kelo of Holyhead, Gwynedd.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* To date, the Welsh Office has made discretionary advance payments of compensation totalling £1·161 million. In addition, the Welsh Development Agency has spent £1·424 million on the provision of a new factory.

One-stop Shops

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the report by the enterprise and business support working group on one-stop shops for business support to be completed.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) on 16 December 1993 at columns *854-55*. In reaching my decision I took into account the work of the Enterprise and Business Support working group which gave advice to me last year.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of new pieces of legislation, including regulations, which have been implemented, and which the Health and Safety Executive is required to enforce, since 1 April 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since 1 April 1980, 194 regulations have been introduced which the Health and Safety Executive is required to enforce. Of these 69 have subsequently been revoked as part of the Health and Safety Commission's on-going programme of rationalisation and modernisation of health and safety legislation and the need to implement European legislation.

Youth Training

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Kent have not been offered training, education or work under the Government's guarantee in the latest year for which information is available; and what was the figure in the previous year.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the number of young people who have not had an offer of training, education or work is not collected. However, in November there were 53 young people in Kent who were covered by the youth training guarantee and waiting for eight or more weeks and almost 5,700 in training. This is a significant improvement over March last year when there were 338 young people waiting for eight or more weeks. There is no reliable information available for November 1992 on eight-week queues.

Unemployment

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the levels of unemployment in *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment figures are available nationally from January 1971 and regionally from April 1974. For travel-to-work areas, only unadjusted unemployment figures are available and these go back to June 1983.

All this data can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in respect of how many boards, authorities, committees, and other public bodies he is responsible, in whole or on part, for appointments; what is the total number of such appointments; and what is the total public spending by such boards, authorities, committees and other public bodies.

Miss Widdecombe: The non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Employment Department are listed in the recently published book "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library. In addition, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has recently appointed the Commissioner for Protection against Unlawful Industrial Action and the chief executive of Investors In People UK. My right hon. Friend is responsible for over 3,300 appointments.

The total gross expenditure for 1992-93 of the non-departmental public bodies is also listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council of 22 December, indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There was no meeting of the Labour and Social Affairs Council on 22 December.

Training and Education (Tenders)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy in respect of independent companies other than existing training and enterprise councils tendering for public contracts to manage training, education and enterprise programmes.

Miss Widdecombe: Training and enterprise councils are strategic organisations which reflect the composition of local business and the wider community. I have a close relationship with TEC boards and I am satisfied with their performance to date. I have no plans to change this policy.

Training for Work

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of how positive outcomes from the training for work programme compare with those achieved under employment training programmes.

Miss Widdecombe: Training for work replaced employment training—ET—in April 1993 and it is still too early to say how many leavers have gained a positive outcome. The latest period for which figures are available is April 1992 to February 1993. In that period 41 per cent. of all ET leavers in Great Britain gained a positive outcome.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost per job placement under the training for work programme.

Miss Widdecombe: There is no current information on the cost of job placements in training for work—TfW—which started in April 1993. The plans for the first three years of TfW do however include costs per positive outcome. A positive outcome is a job, further education or training. The planned costs which include the allowances paid to participants are as follows:

Year	*Cost per positive outcome £*
1993-94	9,718
1994-95	8,451
1995-96	7,548

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what are the latest figures from the 1993 labour force survey for each standard United Kingdom region of the number and percentage of *(a)* all males, *(b)* all females and *(c)* total of those recorded as economically inactive and of working age;

(2) what is the formal definition of "economically inactive".

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates from the labour force survey showing the number and percentage of economically inactive individuals of working age are given in the table. Estimates for regions in Great Britain are for summer 1993, while the latest available Northern Ireland results are for spring 1993.

According to the guidelines recommended by the International Labour Office—ILO—economically inactive people are defined as:

"all those who are neither in employment (including those on Government employment and training programmes and unpaid family workers), nor unemployed on the ILO definition."

Economically inactive people of working age[1]. Not seasonally adjusted

Thousands/percentage

Standard regions	*Males*	*Per cent.*	*Females*	*Per cent.*	*Total*	*Per cent.*
South East	657	11·6	1,468	28·0	2,125	19·5
Greater London	322	14·6	644	30·7	967	22·5
Rest of South East	334	9·7	824	26·3	1,158	17·6
East Anglia	67	10·0	158	26·2	225	17·7
South West	168	11·5	340	25·5	508	18·1
West Midlands	214	12·8	450	29·7	664	20·8
East Midlands	156	12·0	321	27·2	477	19·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	216	13·7	396	27·6	612	20·4
North West	319	16·0	557	30·3	875	22·9
North	172	17·8	263	29·7	435	23·5
Wales	171	19·1	271	33·2	442	25·8
Scotland	243	15·1	449	30·1	692	22·3
Northern Ireland (spring 1993)	88	18·0	185	40·0	273	28·7
United Kingdom	2,469	13·5	4,858	28·9	7,327	20·9

[1]Percentages are of the total population of working age (for example men aged 16 to 64 and women aged 16 to 59).
Source: Labour Force Survey, summer 1993 and spring 1993.

Private Pits

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what authority TECs in coalfield areas are allocating money to private mineowners to reopen pits; what sums of money are involved; and whether the sums of money are paid for each miner employed.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department contracts with coalfield training and enterprise councils to implement business plans to help communities affected by pit closures. The plans cover labour market measures in line with TEC remits and provide job search, training and business start up programmes for those affected by the closures.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the total cost to the Health and Safety Executive of publishing guidance and otherwise promoting awareness and understanding of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations throughout Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive—HSE—spent approximately £700,000 publishing control of substances hazardous to health—COSHH—guidance since the regulations were implemented in 1989. This includes the production and print costs of the COSHH approved code of practice and free leaflets for industry and employees.

An advertising campaign aimed at promoting awareness and understanding of COSHH was mounted by HSE in 1989-90 at an additional cost of £270,000, plus £80,000 spent on fulfilment—distribution, handling, postage, etc.

Sales revenue from COSHH guidance published by HSE amounted to £650,000 to 30 September 1993.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive will amend its publication "Safety Representatives and Safety Committees" (ISBN 0118839594) to include references to the new regulation 4A(1), which was enacted by regulation 17 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations on 31 December 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive proposes to take forward work on this publication in 1994-95 following publication of an open learning package for safety representatives and taking account of recent research.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for altering charges to industry for the services provided by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission has under review the scope for introducing new charges for the performance by the Health and Safety Executive of statutory functions and the provision of facilities and services. Existing charges are reviewed annually.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Health and Safety Commission will publish the findings of its review of regulations prior to publishing proposals for the reform of the regulatory system for health and safety at work based upon the review.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission will be submitting to Ministers the findings of its review of regulation in April 1994. If the Government decide, in the light of these findings, to put forward proposals for changes in health and safety legislation, these will of course be subject to consultation.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action the Health and Safety Executive has taken in response to the view recently expressed in paragraph 46 of the efficiency scrutiny report commissioned by the President of the Board of Trade "Review of the Implementation and Enforcement of EC law in the UK: Health and Safety" on guidance for all sizes of business on what is required to undertake risk assessment; and what

action has been taken to comply with the recommendation that the HSE considers issuing a basic pro forma which businesses could use or adapt.

Mr. Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive is to publish, next month, a leaflet which will meet the efficiency scrutiny recommendations. The leaflet will provide guidance on how to assess risks in the workplace and what should be recorded. It will incorporate a pro forma with blank spaces, which employers can use to record their assessments.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many letters complaining about the burden of health and safety legislation he received in the 12 months prior to requesting the Health and Safety Commission to commence its review of health and safety regulations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the 12 months preceding my request to the Health and Safety Commission to undertake a review of existing regulation, the Department received over 750 letters about health and safety.

Many of these raised issue about the interpretation, contents enforcement of health and safety regulations, and identified what the writer considered a burden on his or her business. However, it is not possible without disproportionate cost to separately identify the letters which raised these issues specifically.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Health and Safety Executive has to publish a second edition of its publication "100 Practical Applications of Noise Reduction Methods".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive is currently preparing a new edition of this publication which it hopes to publish in the summer of 1994.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive staff-years have been expended on the review of regulations; and what has been the effect of the other activities of the HSE of servicing the review.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that 3·5 staff years will be expended by the Health and Safety Executive's review team on the review of regulation. Additional resources for the review were built into the Health and Safety Commission's plan of work for 1993-94 and beyond as part of its medium term aim to propose reform of existing legislation under the 1974 Act.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what activities currently carried out by the Health and Safety Commission and Executive will be curtailed as a result of the reduction in its grant-in-aid provision in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about financial provision for the Health and Safety Executive will be published in the departmental report. The Health and Safety Commission's planned future activities will be set out in its plan of work for 1994-95 and beyond which is scheduled for publication in June.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive guidance on the electricity at work regulations for hotels will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the end of January 1994.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the members of the sector task groups appointed by the Health and Safety Commission to assist in its review of regulations will be fully consulted over the contents of the commission's final report prior to it being submitted to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission. It appointed the task group members to assist it under section 13 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. I am informed that the groups are making an invaluable contribution to the Commission's review and I would expect that to be reflected in both the preparation and content of the Commission's final report.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to the view expressed by the Health and Safety Executive director-general in the foreword to the HSE annual report that Government policy has created imperatives, like the review of regulations, which have impinged upon the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Reform of health and safety law has been central to the achievement of a better health and safety system since the passing of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 some 20 years ago. The Health and Safety Commission's review of regulation has given fresh impetus to this work, but is fully consistent with the roles and duties of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive already laid down in the 1974 Act.

Health and Safety Commission (Chairman)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of the duties or activities carried out by his full-time predecessor the part-time chairman of the Health and Safety Commission will not fulfil.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for the Health and Safety Commission chairman to decide how best to carry out his functions and duties within the time available.

The decision to make the chairman's appointment part-time reflected the loading of the post in current circumstances, including the appointment last year of a second full-time deputy director general of the Health and Safety Executive. This additional post will strengthen the senior management support available to the chairman, allowing the full responsibilities of leading the Commission to be managed without a full-time commitment.

Deregulation (Briefings)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who was responsible for briefing all seven of the Health and Safety Commission's sector task groups on the findings of the Department of Trade and Industry deregulation task forces, as referred to in paragraph 5 of the interim report of the HSC review of regulations sent to the Minister on 22 November 1993; and on what dates these briefings were carried out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am informed that Department of Trade and Industry officials, appointed to support the Government's deregulation sector task forces, were

responsible for briefing the Health and Safety Commission's—HSC—sector task groups on their emerging findings, and that this was done through a series of meetings with HSC task group chairmen in August and September and in subsequent correspondence.

Works Councils

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on works councils in British companies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government wholeheartedly supports voluntary employee involvement. If a company in the United Kingdom wishes to introduce a works council or any other form of employee involvement, it is free to do so in whatever way best suits its circumstances. The Government are resolutely opposed to any measure which would force United Kingdom companies to adopt prescribed structures or forms of employee involvement.

HEALTH

GPs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the relative level of income and expense reimbursement of general practitioners for areas of low mortality and morbidity and inner city areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information placed in the Library shows, by family health services authority the gross payments in 1992-93 to general medical practitioners for provision of general medical services and the standardised mortality ratios for the local authority areas which most closely match each FHSA. Information on morbidity by inner city areas is not available.

There are many factors affecting the level of payments to general medical practitioners, such as list size and cost of premises, which make it difficult to draw conclusions about levels of payments in relation to mortality data.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress of general practitioner fundholding in the Worcester area.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas. Nationally 25 per cent. of the population is covered by fundholding, in the West Midlands region the figure is just over 26 per cent. From April about a third of the population will be covered.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer on 13 December, *Official Report*, column *470*, if she will break down the amounts retained by general practitioner fundholders by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 17 December 1993 at col *1010*.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give figures for the management consultants' fees for assessing applications by general practitioners for fund-holder status by *(a)* wave and *(b)* region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. Regional health authorities are responsible for assessing applications to join the fund-holding scheme.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fund-holding general practitioners are now in place.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are now over 6,000 general practitioner fundholders in over 1,200 practices.

Occupational Health Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department to employing bodies within the national health service to establish an occupational health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Current guidance on establishing occupational health services in the national health service is contained in HN(82)33, copies of which are in the Library.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number of extra-contractual referrals agreed by region in the last year.

Mr. Sackville: The information on which to base an estimate is not available centrally.

University College London Hospitals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much transitional funding is being made available to University College London hospitals; and what is the source of this funding.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1993-94 to date, £8·247 million transitional funding support has been agreed in respect of University College London hospitals. Transitional funding for London in 1993-94 is being sourced from central top-sliced funds from within the overall national health service allocation.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the agreed programme for consolidating the University College London hospitals into fewer buildings; and if this includes the construction of new buildings.

Dr. Mawhinney: The University College London hospitals—UCLH—have already made progress on consolidating services on the Middlesex site as part of their programme of rationalisation. We await further detailed proposals from UCLH.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contributions have been agreed by the private sector to the development of a new facility at St. Bartholomew's for minor injuries; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There has been no agreement about what, if any, contribution the private sector might make, to the new minor injuries facility at St. Bartholomew's.

We welcome the interest the City has shown in this proposal and we will be exploring what positive and practical contribution it can make to its development.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, col. *722-23*, concerning changes in certain hospital

provision in London, if she will list the number of accident and emergency cases dealt with by that department of St. Bartholomew's hospital in the first six months of 1993, indicating the numbers within any convenient category of treatment or severity; and how many within each such category she would expect to be dealt with in each adjacent and named accident and emergency unit which she plans to retain.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally for the first six months of 1993. However, there were 31,278 new attendances at the St. Bartholomew's hospital accident and emergency departments in the 12 months from 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993.

A sample of these attenders showed that 12 per cent. were suitable for general practitioner care; 36·5 per cent. for care in a minor injuries unit, and 51·5 per cent. for care in a hospital accident and emergency department.

The expected patient flows to other hospitals have been modelled, assuming the alternative facilities announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 15 December 1993 are in place. This analysis shows the expected attendances:

Hospital	*GP care*	*MIU care*	*Accident and Emergency care*	*Total*
Royal London	300	650	4,850	5,800
Homerton	250	450	2,100	2,800
Whittington	100	100	800	1,000
UCH	450	950	5,700	7,100
Guy's / St. Thomas'	50	200	2,300	2,550
Smithfield Minor Injuries Unit	—	9,450	—	9,450
Totals	1,150	11,800	15,750	28,700

Note: 2,450 cases are estimated to go to alternative primary care centres. In addition, a small number of cases are "lost", when an A and E department closes. In this case, an estimate of 375 "lost" cases has been made.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representatives she has received on piggyback licensing on the back of generic drugs; what is her charging policy in such instances; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Applications made under article 4.8.a.i, of directive 65/65/EEC—sometimes known as piggyback applications—are permitted for generic drugs. The application fee, payable on receipt of the application, is presently £2,090. We are not aware of any recent representations about these applications.

Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton

Mr. Mellor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has considered Wandsworth borough council's report on the findings of the South West London hospitals review group and the specialty review team's report on plastic and burns as they affect Queen Mary's university hospital, Roehampton; and if she will make copies available in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: South West Thames regional health authority considered the views of Wandsworth borough council, the specialty review report on plastics and burns, and the views of other bodies who responded to the South West London hospitals review, before submitting its recommendations to the Department. The report of the South West London hospitals review and the region's recommendations on it are currently being considered by the London implementation group. A copy of Wandsworth borough council's report will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters she has received opposing the findings of *(a)* the specialty review team's report on plastics and burns and *(b)* the South West London hospitals review group as they affect Queen Mary's university hospital, Roehampton; and if she will give due consideration to the views of local people when considering the future of the vital services the hospital provides.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers received 401 letters concerning Queen Mary's university hospital, Roehampton between 1 August 1993 and 31 December 1993. No decisions will be taken on the future pattern of services at Queen Mary's without careful consideration of all the arguments and proposals put forward. Any proposals to materially change the pattern of services would of course be subject to public consultation.

Homerton Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of redevelopment of Homerton hospital; and from what sources it will be met.

Dr. Mawhinney: The estimated capital cost of further redevelopment at Homerton hospital is £25 million. This is a preliminary figure subject to formal appraisal and business case approval. Funding for the development will be made available from the national health service capital programme.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what planned improvements in local primary care facilities will relieve pressure on local accident and emergency services at Homerton hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: Improvements to primary care services around the Homerton hospital are being made as part of the investment programme within the London initiative zone. Specific projects include the development of facilities at Barton house, John Scott and Sorsby road health centres; these schemes will improve primary care services to the residents of north Hackney, who look to Homerton hospital for accident and emergency treatment and, in some cases, for primary care services as well.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will tabulate for the months of July to November the response performance by percentage of emergency call of the London ambulance service for each month under the headings *(a)* activation time, *(b)* response time within eight minutes, *(c)* response time within 14 minutes and *(d)* response time within 26 minutes; and what was the average number of calls per day in each month where the response time exceeded 26 minutes, together with an indication under each heading of the ORCON and patients charter standard.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table. Data for November are not yet available.

Month	*Activation time: Within 3 minutes* Per cent.	*Response time: Within 8 minutes* Per cent.	*Response time: Within 14 minutes* Per cent.	*Average daily number of "999" calls received* Number	*Average daily number of calls where response 26 minutes or over* Number
July	38	13	62	1,083	76
August	40	14	65	1,034	67
September	38	13	64	1,051	63
October	31	10	58	1,115	91

Performance benchmarks:
95 per cent. of calls activated within three minutes.
50 per cent. of calls responded to within eight minutes.
95 per cent. of calls responded to within 14 minutes.

Patient's Charter Standard:
95 per cent. of calls responded to within 14 minutes.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer on 15 December, *Official Report*, col. *721*, concerning an increase of £14 million for the London ambulance service in the financial year 1994-95, what portion of this sum is likely to be used in defraying and deficit in the year 1993-94; what net increase in the number of emergency ambulances and qualified ambulance personnel she expects to be in service by December 1994 or any later month; and what percentage increase this represents over those currently available in each case.

Mr. Sackville: The reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracy) on 15 December at col. *721* stated that, the London ambulance service—LAS—will receive an extra £14·8 million in 1994-95 over its baseline budget for 1993-94. None of this is expected to be used to cover any deficit in the 1993-94 financial year. £4 million is capital money to assist the LAS in the purchase of 120 new accident and emergency vehicles. The balance is revenue moneys, of which £3·5 million is to fund on-going developments already started by the LAS including: extra telephonists in central ambulance control, improved fleet maintenance, motorcycle and rapid response units and paramedic training. The remaining £7·3 million is to fund an increase in accident and emergency staffing, additional paramedic training and to strengthen management skills, especially in information technology. The LAS will now be able to renew over a third of its accident and emergency fleet and, by December 1994, to increase the number of qualified ambulance persons by 240—16 per cent.—sufficient to staff an additional 20 ambulances—15 per cent.—around the clock every day.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in respect of how many boards, authorities, committees, and other public bodies she is responsible, in whole or in part, for appointments; what is the total number of such appointments; and what is the total public spending by such boards, authorities, committees and other public bodies.

Mr. Sackville: The boards, authorities, committees and other public bodies for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible are listed in the publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are available in the Library. Government spending on the national health service is forecast to be £29,215 million in 1993-94 and planned to rise to £30,669 million in 1994-95. Government spending on Department of Health non-departmental public bodies outside the NHS is shown in "Public Bodies".

Prescriptions (Selected List)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the new selected items that have been made available to the NHS;

(2) if she will list the new chemical entity products made available to the national health service since February 1993 that would have been covered by the selected list scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the representations she has received from *(a)* the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, *(b)* those who prescribed drugs and *(c)* others to extend the number of drugs on the current selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which drugs have been deleted from the current selected list giving their manufacturers, since February 1993; and which company manufactured each.

Dr. Mawhinney: The generic drug Ammonia and Ipecacuanha Mixture BP has been deleted from the selected list since February 1993.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what drugs have been included on the selected list since February 1993; and who were their manufacturers.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Drug	*Manufacturer*
Algipan	Wyeth Laboratories
Anadin Extra Soluble Tablets	Whitehall Laboratories
Arnica Lotion	Weleda UK
Asilone Liquid	Crookes Healthcare
Ayrtons Analgesic Balm	Ayrton Saunders
Beecham Analgesic Cream	SmithKline Beecham
Boots Menthol and Wintergreen Embrocation	Boots Pharmaceuticals
Bronalin Decongestant	Seton Healthcare
Calpol Infant Suspension	The Wellcome Foundation
Camphor Spirit	J. M. Loveridge
Cremalgin Balm	Rhone Poulenc Rorer
Cuprofen Soluble Tablets	Seton Healthcare
Culpepper Healing Ointment	Culpepper
Culpepper Rheumatic Cream	Culpepper
Cupanol Under Six Suspension	Seton Healthcare
DHL Rheumatic Massage Cream	DHL Products
Diazepam oral solution 5mg/5ml	Generic; various manufacturers
Diazepam oral suspension 5mg/5ml	Generic; various manufacturers
Disprin Direct Tablets	Reckitt & Colman
Dragon Balm	Gerrard House
Dubam Cream	Norman Chemicals
Dubam Spray Relief	Norman Chemicals
Elliman Universal Embrocation	SmithKline Beecham
Fibrosine Analgesic Balm	International Chemicals
Fiery Jack Cream	J. Pickles & Sons
Fiery Jack Ointment	J. Pickles & Sons
Fluimucil Granules	Zambon (UK)
Gaviscon 250 Tablets	Reckitt & Colman
Germolene Ointment	SmithKline Beecham
Goodards White Oils Embrocation	LRC Products
Isoaminile Linctus	Fisons Pharmaceuticals
Lemsip Flu Strength	Reckitt & Colman
Lloyds Cream (Odour Free)	Seton Healthcare
Lloyds Heat Spray	Haventrail
Mentholatum Deep Heat Massage Liniment	Mentholatum Company
Mentholatum Deep Heat Maximum Strength Rub	Mentholatum Company
Mentholatum Deep Heat Rub	Mentholatum Company
Nella Red Oil	Nella Pharmaceuticals
Paldesic Elixir	RP Drugs
Panadol Body and Infant Suspension	Sanofi Winthrop
Panadol Extra Soluble Tablets	Sanofi Winthrop
Phor Pain	Goldshield Pharmaceuticals
Phor Pain Double Strength	Goldshield Pharmaceuticals
Potters Household Liniment	Potters Herbal Supplies
Potters Nine Rubbing Oils	Potters Herbal Supplies
PR Heat Spray	Crookes Healthcare
Radian-B Liniment	Fisons Consumer Health
Radian-B Rub	Fisons Consumer Health
Ralgex Cream	SmithKline Beecham
Ralgex Stick	SmithKline Beecham
RRC1 Cream	Radiol Chemicals
Salonair	Salonpas (UK)
Sanatogen Children's Vitamins Plus Minerals	Fisons Consumer Health
Solpadeine Tablets	Sterling Health
Sudafed Nasal Spray	The Wellcome Foundation
Superdrug Heat Spray	Mentholatum Company
Thermogene Medicated Rub	SmithKline Beecham
Tiger Balm Liquid	LRC Products
Tiger Balm Red	LRC Products
Tiger Balm White	LRC Products
Unicap M Tablets	Upjohn
Unicap T Tablets	Upjohn
Vadarex Wintergreen Heat Rub	Cupal Products
Vicks Vaposyrup Childrens Dry Cough	Procter & Gamble
Zam Buk Ointment	Fisons Consumer Health

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the procedure for *(a)* pharmaceutical companies and *(b)* prescribers to (i) ask for a particular drug to be included in the selected list and (ii) overturn a decision to remove a drug from the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: Prescribers or manufacturers can at any time ask the committee to review any product which is on the list of non-prescribable drugs, or to ask for one to be added to it.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with *(a)* representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and (b) the advisory committee on NHS drugs about research and development into new products and medicines that may be affected by the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Drugs Advisory Committee

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures are in place to ensure the effectiveness of the advisory committee on NHS drugs since February 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The independent advisory committee has been asked to provide expert advice to Ministers. We are satisfied that it does so effectively.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the representations she has received since February 1993 from pharmaceutical manufacturers regarding the posts on the advisory committee on NHS drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received no such representations. A member with experience of the pharmaceutical industry was appointed to the committee in February 1993.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the composition of the advisory committee on NHS drugs; for how long appointees have served on the committee; and what was the level of remuneration where appropriate.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of the members and the dates they were appointed are shown in the table.

	First appointed
Chairman	
Dr. Jeremy Metters	1989
Members	
Professor A. M. Breckenridge	1985
Professor M. Castleden	1990
Mr. D. L. Coleman	1985
Professor H. D. Edmondson	1987
Dr. P. R. Fellows	1993
Professor D. Ganderton	1985
Miss A. F. Glasier	1993
Dr. C. Gratton	1993
Dr. A. Greenough	1993
Dr. G. Hargreaves	1993
Professor S. Holgate	1993
Dr. D. Jones	1992
Professor R. M. Jones	1990
Mr. A. G. Kerr	1990

	First appointed
Mrs. S. Noyce	1993
Dr. S. J. Richards	1989
Dr. C. H. Swan	1991
Professor P. J. Tyrer	1989
Dr. D. M. B. Ward	1991

Members other than the chairman receive a fee of £100 for attending each meeting.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria appointees to the advisory committee on NHS drugs have to meet.

Dr. Mawhinney: Appointments to the advisory committee are made by Ministers from names which have been put forward by the relevant professional organisations.

Salford District Health Authority

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost to date of the honouring of the contract of the immediate past district manager of Salford health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a local matter for Salford health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Dr. F. B. Beswick, for details.

Sellafield (Radiation)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she made of the National Radiological Protection Board report NRPB–M453, published in October, on the estimate of collective radiation doses from Sellafield.

Mr. Sackville: The report was prepared by the National Radiological Protection Board—NRPB—in line with a recommendation by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment. The results of the NRPB work confirm that the discharges from THORP will result in radiation doses much lower than natural background radiation levels. The NRPB has described the annual attributable risk to individuals in the world population as "vanishingly small".

Drug Costs

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on drug costs in each member state of the European Community.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total levels of public expenditure on drugs supplied to patients in each member state of the European Union is shown in the table. Data on public expenditure cannot be taken to correlate to total expenditure—public and private—as the share of the public sector if total spending differs between countries.

Country	Public expenditure (£ million)	Public expenditure (£) per capita
United Kingdom	3,349·3	58
Germany	7,983·6	126
France	5,317·9	94
Italy	5,463·1	95
Spain	2,407·1	62
Netherlands	762·1	51
Belgium	704·4	71
Portugal	357·6	36
Greece	137·9	14
Ireland	193·9	55
Denmark	121·2	23
Luxembourg	51·4	114

Source: Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development. Figures have been converted to £ at purchasing power parities. Figures are for 1990, except those for Portugal and Denmark where 1989 figures are the latest available.

Non-prescription Drugs

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the availability of over-the-counter medicines.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are continuing to extend the range of medicines which may be supplied without prescription where this can be done safely. In January 1993, we introduced a new timetable to provide for reclassification within 12 months and an order—SI 1993 No. 3256—which will allow a number of medicines previously restricted to prescription control to be supplied as pharmacy medicines, was laid on 31 December 1993 and is due to come into effect on 21 January. From July 1994, we shall be increasing the opportunities for reclassifying medicines by making two orders a year.

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional financial provision is made for hospitals adjacent to motorways to take into account the cost of treating victims of traffic accidents; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is for district health authorities to purchase accident and emergency services and emergency ambulance services which take account of local factors and meet the needs of all comers, regardless of their district of residence. The cost of any in-patient treatment, following attention in the A and E department, is charged to the patient's district of residence.

External Bodies (Funding)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations received how much money in grants from her Department in each of the last three years.

Mr. Bowis: The Department makes a large number of grants to voluntary organisations. The main channel is the section 64 general scheme and for details of those grants for the last three financial years I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) by my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) on 21 May 1991 at cols. *435-39;* the reply given to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) on 18 January 1993 at col. *96;* and the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 21 June 1993 at cols *34-39.*

Health Authority Projects

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, columns *70-71*, what are the capital assets of the regional health authority earmarked for current projects where contracts have already been signed.

(2) pursuant to her answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, columns *70-71*, what is the value of the assets of regional health authorities earmarked for projects over each of the next five years *(a)* where contracts have already been signed and *(b)* where contracts have not been signed.

Dr. Mawhinney: Proceeds from the sale of capital assets are not normally earmarked to offset the cost of individual capital developments, but enable the total capital spending for a region to increase.

Community Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates have been made by her Department regarding the future need for community nurses in each health district.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not keep estimates of the need for community nurses by health district. It is the responsibility of regions to plan the demand for health visitors and district nurses.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on community care per thousand of population in each local authority area for the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not held centrally in this form, because expenditure by the national health service on community health and expenditure by the Department of Social Security on some social security benefits are not available at local authority level.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on community care for people aged 75 years and over per thousand of population in each local authority area in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the integration of health commissioning functions with community care under local authority control.

Mr. Bowis: Various proposals for change are received from time to time but at present there is no intention to alter the current responsibilities for the provision of health care.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Sackville: Available information shows that no former British representative members in the European Parliament have been appointed to Department of Health non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(2) if she will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 20 July 1993 at columns *112-14*.

NHS Estates Information Group

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the income of the national health service estates information group in 1992-93 and what is the projected income for 1993-94;

(2) what was the net cost of the national health service estates information group to the National Health Service Estates Executive Agency in 1992-93; and what is the projected cost for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The income for the information systems group of the national health service estates agency for 1992-93 was £1·3 million. The projected income for 1993-94 is £1·25 million.

The group made a surplus of income over expenditure for 1992-93 of £40,000. The projected cost of the group for 1993-94 is £1·25 million.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of a magnetic resonance imaging scanner.

Mr. Sackville: The price of a magnetic resonance imaging scanner will depend on the technical specification required by the site purchasing the machine and negotiation with manufacturers before a contract is awarded.

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many magnetic resonance imaging scanners are at present the property of the NHS; and in which hospitals they are located.

Mr. Sackville: According to information held by the Department, the number of magnetic resonance imaging scanners installed in national health service premises—up until June 1993—in England is 59.

These are located in the following hospitals:

The Maudsley hospital, Newcastle general hospital, South Cleveland hospital, Hull royal infirmary, St. James's University hospital, Leeds, Leicester royal infirmary, Nottingham university hospital, Royal Hallamshire hospital, Derby royal infirmary, Addenbrooke's hospital, Hammersmith hospital, Northwick Park hospital, Mount Vernon hospital, Royal Brompton and National Heart hospital, St. Mary's hospital, Paddington, Royal Marsden hospital, Royal National Orthopaedic hospital, Middlesex hospital, St. Bartholomew's hospital, Royal Free hospital, The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, The

Hospital for Sick Children, London, the London hospital (Whitechapel), Royal Surrey County hospital, Atkinson Morley's hospital, St. George's hospital, Poole general hospital, Southampton general hospital, Stoke Mandeville hospital, John Radcliffe hospital, Nuffield orthopaedic centre, Royal Berkshire hospital, Bristol royal infirmary, Cheltenham general hospital, Royal Cornwall hospital, Frenchay hospital, Walsgrave general hospital, Royal Orthopaedic hospital, Birmingham, Liverpool MR research centre, Walton hospital, Liverpool, Clatterbridge Centre, Wirral, Manchester royal infirmary, Royal Preston hospital.

Some locations have more than one scanner.

Information about the ownership of these scanners is not available centrally.

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the national health service pays at present to privately-run hospitals for the use by national health service patients of their scanners.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

"Health of the Nation"

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made to the proportion of the target for the reduction in road accidents in her "Health of the Nation" White Paper which could be achieved by a move to central European time.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The "Health of the Nation" White Paper sets the following targets for reduction by the year 2005 in the death rate from accidents of all types, measured against a baseline of the average rate for the three years 1989-91:

	Percentage reduction
Children under 15	33
Young people aged 15 to 24	25
People aged 65 and over	33

It is estimated that the introduction of single-double summer time would reduce accidental deaths among children by some 4 per cent. below their level in 1989-91 and by 1 per cent. among the rest of the population.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Widening)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the scheme to widen the M1 between junctions 28 and 32 will commence; what is the estimated cost; and what is the projected length of time from beginning to end for work on the scheme.

Mr. Key: We are holding local public exhibitions in February of proposals for widening to dual four lanes within the existing land take between junctions 31 and 32. The work is estimated to cost £5 million.

The remaining proposals for the section of M1 between junctions 28 and 32 are at an earlier stage of development. Further progress will depend on the priority accorded to them following the current review of schemes, the completion of any statutory procedures and the availability of funds. The next stage would be public consultation about the options for widening. The estimated works cost for the whole section at the time of the 1990 report, "Trunk Roads, England into the 1990s", was approximately £200 million.

Flags of Convenience

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the country or origin of flag of convenience fishing boats on the British register.

Mr. Norris: There are 99 EC qualified fishing vessels on the British register, of which 73 are Spanish, 24 are Dutch and two are 50 per cent. Danish owned.

A27

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will update the table on the page headed "Alternatives Considered", of his Department's document entitled "A27 Worthing/Lancing Improvement Statement", explaining the proposals and new technical summary of the environmental statement to give up-to-date figures for the three alternatives and if he will also give figures for the Government's published scheme if the tunnel is bored rather than constructed on the basis assumed in this document;

(2) what are his latest estimates of the cost of converting the A24 to dual carriageway in current and 1989 prices; and if he will express these figures so that they are comparable with updated figures in a table corresponding to that in his Department's leaflet summarising the A27 Worthing/Lancing improvement proposals.

Mr. Key: The public inquiry into the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement scheme is now under way. Current estimates of the cost for the scheme and related proposals will be available from the Department's representative at the inquiry. I will ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Light Dues

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the amount paid in light dues by merchant ships entering the Tees and Hartlepool ports last year.

Mr. Norris: The total amount of light dues collected by Customs and Excise in the financial year to 31 March 1993 was £4,133,427 in the area of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority.

Bus Fares

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study his Department has made of the effect on bus fares of the rise in duty on diesel fuel.

Mr. Freeman: The effect should be very small. The rise in duty on diesel fuel represents an increase of under 1 per cent. on total operating costs.

Coastal Shipping

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has undertaken to assess the reduction in heavy goods vehicle traffic movements resulting from an increase in the use of transshipment or feeder journeys using coastal shipping.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 22 October at column *342*.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set targets for the greater use of coastal shipping as an alternative to road transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No. The choice of transport mode for freight is primarily a commercial matter.

We encourage shippers and others in the freight industry to consider the merits of coastal and short sea shipping where this is a practical option.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which *(a)* inland ports and *(b)* small ports he proposes to increase coastal shipping traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: It is for individual ports to decide what facilities they will provide for coastal shipping. It is for shippers and ship operators to decide how they will use such facilities. The Government are assisting this process by removing constraints on the ability of ports to operate efficiently, and by continuing to provide grants for inland waterways freight facilities, under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981, where these can be justified on environmental benefit grounds.

Coopers and Lybrand

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has anything to add to his answer of 25 November concerning Coopers and Lybrand, *Official Report*, column *102*, following the 63rd report of the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 1992-93, HC658.

Mr. Freeman: Further to my reply of 25 November, there is no comparison between the circumstances of the appointment of consultants to the Wessex Regional health authority and Sir Christopher Foster's role as adviser to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. As my earlier answer made clear, the need to avoid potential conflicts of interest was covered in Sir Christopher's terms of appointment.

Common Transport Policy

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the European Council of Ministers in respect of the common transport policy for European ports in respect of United Kingdom ports where he intends to develop inter modal transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Officials from my Department are taking part in the Community initiative for pilot action for combined transport. As one of the projects under that initiative the United Kingdom and Ireland plan shortly to commission a study of combined transport links between Ireland, the United Kingdom and mainland Europe.

Crossrail

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the terms of reference of the current review of crossrail include an assessment of the possibilities of linking the channel tunnel rail link with Crossrail.

Mr. Norris: Although not specifically included in the terms of reference, the consultants have been asked to consider links to Union Railways at Stratford.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the estimated cost, at current values, of the crossrail project before the start of the Bovis/Gibb study; what was the date of that estimate; and what proportion of that cost related to compensation payable under the statutory compensation code.

Mr. Norris: The base cost of the crossrail project was estimated in April 1993 to be £1,703 million at March 1990 prices, which is equivalent to £2,049 million at current values. The latter figure includes a sum of £259 million for property purchases and compensation for loss and disturbance to property owners in accordance with existing legislation.

Register of Shipping

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will reject proposals for a British open register of shipping;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of his reply to the chief executive and secretary of the Baltic Exchange's letter of 3 December concerning proposals for a British open register of shipping.

Mr. Norris: These proposals will need to be studied carefully before any conclusion is reached.

The Department's letter of 15 December, acknowledging the one from the chief executive of the Baltic Exchange, briefly explained this.

Container Ports

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give in respect of *(a)* imports into and *(b)* exports from the United Kingdom for each United Kingdom container terminal port the number of containers currently discharged subsequently transhipped to (i) other ports in the United Kingdom and (ii) other European ports.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available to my Department.

Transport Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the transport supplementary grant/transport policy and plans allocations for 1994-95, giving the relevant bid in each case and expressing the allocation made as a percentage of the bid.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures are as follows:

Bids, and accepted expenditure, for transport supplementary grant (TSG) and credit approvals for 1994-95

	Total bid 1994-95 £'000s	*Gross accepted for TSG and credit approvals 1994-95* £'000s	*Per cent.*
City of London	3,068	1,749	57·0
Barking and Dagenham	7,122	1,132	15·9
Barnet	5,647	2,602	46·1
Bexley	10,004	8,022	80·2
Brent	8,023	2,743	34·2
Bromley	4,023	1,895	47·1
Camden	7,123	4,064	57·1
Croydon	12,295	5,045	41·0
Ealing	7,394	3,268	44·2

	Total bid 1994-95 £'000s	Gross accepted for TSG and credit approvals 1994-95 £'000s	Per cent.
Enfield	12,241	5,507	45·0
Greenwich	4,888	2,613	53·5
Hackney	7,362	3,347	45·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	9,953	5,516	55·4
Haringey	6,989	3,159	45·2
Harrow	9,510	8,594	90·4
Havering	2,183	868	39·8
Hillingdon	13,892	5,129	36·9
Hounslow	9,858	5,599	56·8
Islington	8,023	3,127	39·0
Kensington and Chelsea	1,602	1,153	72·0
Kingston upon Thames	7,880	3,505	44·5
Lambeth	3,129	1,728	55·2
Lewisham	15,001	9,876	65·8
Merton	3,635	1,727	47·5
Newham	16,638	11,174	67·2
Redbridge	7,292	1,689	23·2
Richmond upon Thames	2,594	1,936	74·6
Southwark	5,872	3,841	65·4
Sutton	5,982	2,319	38·8
Tower Hamlets	15,471	5,373	34·7
Waltham Forest	4,481	2,510	56·0
Wandsworth	13,551	6,401	47·2
Westminster	19,090	3,709	19·4
Bolton	7,855	3,693	47·0
Bury	4,978	2,266	45·5
Manchester	46,162	24,685	53·5
Oldham	15,644	5,115	32·7
Rochdale	5,477	2,420	44·2
Salford	16,448	2,949	17·9
Stockport	11,104	4,834	43·5
Tameside	8,555	1,929	22·5
Trafford	23,864	11,399	47·8
Wigan	7,815	1,415	18·1
Knowsley	23,216	19,498	84·0
Liverpool	11,480	6,018	52·4
St. Helens	5,846	722	12·4
Sefton	5,702	1,122	19·7
Wirral	7,092	3,083	43·5
Barnsley	9,941	6,666	67·1
Doncaster	9,539	6,248	65·5
Rotherham	8,794	4,803	54·6
Sheffield	56,086	20,145	35·9
Gateshead	3,700	1,351	36·5
Newcastle upon Tyne	17,991	9,255	51·4
North Tyneside	4,148	1,692	40·8
South Tyneside	2,783	1,319	47·4
Sunderland	13,972	3,733	26·7
Birmingham	55,591	38,660	69·5
Coventry	16,056	15,176	94·5
Dudley	16,428	10,640	64·8
Sandwell	15,387	5,828	37·9
Solihull	4,709	3,713	78·8
Walsall	25,953	17,704	68·2
Wolverhampton	28,274	19,487	68·9
Bradford	18,012	7,215	40·1
Calderdale	9,689	3,412	35·2
Kirklees	15,506	7,079	45·7
Leeds	43,944	20,507	46·7
Wakefield	13,972	3,421	24·5
Avon	37,386	18,750	50·2
Bedfordshire	13,415	5,037	37·5
Berkshire	29,574	10,203	34·5
Buckinghamshire	12,106	3,256	26·9
Cambridgeshire	17,010	6,716	39·5
Cheshire	38,453	21989	57·2
Cleveland	18,596	12,702	68·3
Cornwall	18,658	11,260	60·3
Cumbria	16,927	4,927	29·1
Derbyshire	16,067	5,175	32·2
Devon	29,423	10,320	35·1
Dorset	9,902	6,458	65·2
Durham	20,168	11,204	55·6
East Sussex	21,495	8,760	40·8
Essex	38,263	19,318	50·5
Gloucestershire	19,100	8,302	43·5
Hampshire	46,513	28,864	62·1
Hereford and Worcester	12,369	3,647	29·5
Hertfordshire	22,155	12,011	54·2
Humberside	24,524	17,484	71·3
Isle of Wight	4,813	2,982	62·0
Kent	142,843	94,124	65·9
Lancashire	59,957	26,352	44·0
Leicestershire	25,195	7,603	30·2
Lincolnshire	13,678	7,432	54·3
Norfolk	32,912	14,275	43·4
Northamptonshire	18,120	6,135	33·9
Northumberland	19,461	7,776	40·0
North Yorkshire	33,166	15,613	47·1
Nottinghamshire	27,463	10,715	39·0
Oxfordshire	11,520	5,967	51·8
Shropshire	20,726	5,081	24·5
Somerset	20,982	10,460	49·9
Staffordshire	29,060	14,416	49·6
Suffolk	31,883	9,387	29·4
Surrey	52,645	26,395	50·1
Warwickshire	11,515	4,504	39·1
West Sussex	17,921	7,012	39·1
Wiltshire	9,491	4,600	48·5
	1,908,984	937,334	

Marchioness Disaster

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who was the inspector conducting the inquiry into the collision of the Bowbelle and Marchioness on the night of 20 August 1989; what was his period of service and what responsibilities he held in his Department; for what other inquiries before or since he has had prime or associated responsibility; what were his qualifications and professional experience, particularly in respect of navigation of the Thames above Greenwich; and if he will name any person having such knowledge, and their experience and qualification, who assisted the inspector.

Mr. Norris: The inspector who led the inquiry was the deputy chief inspector of marine accidents. Prior to his appointment as deputy chief inspector he had some 37½ years service in shipping and is a fully qualified and experienced master mariner. His service included eight years as principal nautical surveyor with particular responsibility for casualty investigation in the Department of Transport marine directorate; in that capacity he was concerned with numerous inquiries including those into the losses of the Herald of Free Enterprise and Marques. He was assisted by several inspectors with expertise appropriate to different aspects of the accident, including two officers closely concerned with navigation on the River Thames.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who was the inspector referred to in the letter he received from the chief inspector of marine accidents dated 5 June 1990; who conducted the inquiry into the Bowbelle-Marchioness collision; where and on what dates the inquiry took place; where the public or hon. Members can obtain a list of witnesses appearing at the inquiry; if he

intends to publish their written and oral evidence; by whom witnesses were subject to questioning in the course of the inquiry; and what interest was represented by each of those persons carrying out the questioning.

Mr. Norris: The inspector referred to is the deputy chief inspector of marine accidents who led the inquiry. Investigation began on the morning of the accident, 20 August 1989, and the inquiry was completed when the deputy chief inspector submitted his report to the chief inspector on 26 January 1990.

The inquiry obtained evidence on many dates and at various places, including the office of the marine accident investigation branch, the Department of Transport district marine office, offices of the Port of London Authority and Tidal Cruises Ltd., on board mv Bowbelle, at the yard where the Marchioness was slipped and afloat on the River Thames. Witnesses were questioned by one or more of the appointed inspectors whose interest, as laid down, was to determine the circumstances and causes of the accident with the aim of improving safety and avoiding recurrence. It is not the practice to give a list of witnesses nor to publish their evidence.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each matter taken into consideration by the inspector conducting the inquiry into the Bowbelle collision, which was not referred to by the report received in his Department from the chief inspector of marine accidents.

Mr. Norris: As in any thorough investigation, the inspectors considered many aspects which subsequently proved not to be germane to the accident. It is therefore not practicable to list such matters.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence has been given in private or in public by the captain of the launch Hurlingham in respect of the collision between the Bowbelle and Marchioness; and if he will place copies of that evidence in the Library.

Mr. Norris: Apart from any evidence which he may have given either in the coroner's or the magistrates courts, the captain of the launch Hurlingham gave evidence to the marine accident investigation branch inspectors in the form of a declaration under section 27 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979; such declarations are given in confidence and may not therefore be released.

A66-A1 Intersection

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to providing a full four-way motorway intersection between the A66 (M) and the A1 (M); and when he will publish his conclusions.

Mr. Key: An assessment of this interchange has been undertaken as part of a study to provide information about the longer term requirements of the A1 (M) motorway in the Northern region. From the work undertaken the need has not been established for increased capacity at this junction.

Roads Programme

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the results of the review of the roads programme.

Mr. Key: The current review of the road programme is intended to increase efficiency and speed of delivery by establishing clear priorities. The results will be published in good time to provide instructions to the chief executive of the new Highways Agency, which is being launched at the beginning of the new financial year.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what occasions since its inception he, or other Ministers of the Crown have visited the premises of his marine accident investigation branch at Southampton; and if he will list the occasions when any Minister in his Department has had formal meetings with the chief inspector of marine accidents since April 1992.

Mr Norris: Various Ministers with responsibility for shipping have visited MAIB. The most recent visit was by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Aviation and Shipping on 1 May 1992. The chief inspector meets the Secretary of State and Ministers as required.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reference numbers and headings of each vote in the estimates relating to expenditure incurred directly, or otherwise ascertainable, defraying the expenses of the marine accident investigation branch.

Mr. Norris: The MAIB provision is contained within the 1993-94 supply estimates, class VI, vote 2, part II (section A), (section B) and section B1(6).

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the nature and extent of the accommodation occupied by his marine accident investigation branch at 57 Brunswick place, Southampton and any other premises occupied by them elsewhere; if he will list the number and description of each category of persons employed within the Department; and what principal variations have been executed or planned since its inception.

Mr. Norris: The sole accommodation occupied by MAIB is situated at 5-7 Brunswick place, Southampton, which consists of office space on two floors. The staff complement is 11 professional officers from the three main maritime disciplines and 10 administrative, executive and support grade staff. There has never been any change made in the accommodation. The original complement was 15—nine professional officers and six administrative staff. However, at the branch's inception the full complement was not in post and at that time its staff numbered 11—five professional and six administrative. In April 1990 the complement was increased to the current number.

MAIB

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the titles and relevant dates of the printed reports of the marine accident investigation branch, together with the titles and expected dates of publication of any reports in hand, the number of each report printed, the cost to the general public and the method of distribution adopted by his Department.

Mr. Norris: The information on published reports will be found in appendix B of the periodic MAIB publication entitled "Summary of Investigations", a copy of which is

in the Library. It is anticipated that the chief inspector's report, "Engine failure and subsequent grounding of the Motor Tanker Braer at Garths Ness, Shetland" will be published in the new year. Distribution of all priced publications is carried out by HMSO, which makes a commercial decision on the number of copies printed.

Zeebrugge and Marchioness (Inquiries)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the main differences in terms of procedure, public access, conduct and report adopted between the inquiries into the Zeebrugge and Marchioness disasters.

Mr Norris: The capsize of the Herald of Free Enterprise off Zeebrugge was followed by a preliminary inquiry and a formal investigation both of which were held under section 55 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970. The loss of the Marchioness was followed by an inspector's inquiry under section 33 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 and regulation 6 of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989. A comparison between the three types of inquiry is set out in the table.

	Preliminary inquiry (PI)	*Formal investigation (FI)*	*Inspector's inquiry*
Procedure	Ordered under S.55 of MSA 1970 (now repealed).	In 1987, as PI (now amended to S.56 of MSA 1970).	Ordered under regulation 6 of MS (accident investigation) regulations, made under S.33 of MSA 1988.
Public access	No provision.	(Usually)[1] held in public.	Public invitation to make representations. No other provisions before report stage.
Conduct	Peripatetic. No rules of conduct laid down. Inspector's powers set out in S.27 of MSA 1979.	Quasi-court procedures, laid down in MS (formal investigation) rules 1985.	Peripatetic. Governed by MS (accident investigation) regulations. Inspector's powers as for PI.
Report	No provisions laid down. Practice was for report to be regarded as confidential to Department.	Report of court to Secretary of State, usually[1] published.	Report by chief inspector to Secretary of State, usually[1] published. Any parties who are criticised must see the report in draft and may make representations to the chief inspector.

[1] The usual procedure was followed with both the Zeebrugge and River Thames accidents.

Thames Collision Inquiry

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what inquiries, or reports concerning the seven collisions on the Thames involving the Bowbelle, were taken into account by the inspector conducting the inquiry into the collision of that vessel with the Marchioness following his answer of 21 January 1992, *Official Report*, column *157;* by whom any such inquiry in respect of each collision was conducted; to whom any report was sent; and if it is publicly available.

Mr. Norris: As section 15 of the chief inspector's report shows, the inquiry considered past accidents generally, not exclusively those concerning Bowbelle. Particular regard was given to those having points of similarity with the collision with Marchioness, which included one incident involving Bowbelle when she was in collision with the Pride of Greenwich. That, and the other River Thames incidents described in the report, were investigated by a surveyor of the Department of Transport, whose report was sent to the marine directorate. Such reports were not published, but a summary report of the Bowbelle/Pride of Greenwich collision was released in 1991.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport further to the Minister for Roads and Traffic's reply to the Consolidated Fund debate on 14 December about the Marchioness disaster, whether the transcript of the "Dispatches" television programme on which he relied portrayed the computer graphics included in the broadcast.

Mr. Norris: No. I have, however, now seen the video of the complete broadcast and I can confirm that I do not believe it adds anything material to that which is already known and recorded.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration was given by the marine accident investigation branch inquiry into the Bowbelle-Marchioness collision as to the health and capability of the helmsman of the Bowbelle and official documentation related thereto.

Mr. Norris: The helmsman was interviewed by an inspector who was fully satisfied of his capability. He held a valid medical certificate.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the forward extent of deadwater viewed from the wheelhouse of the dredger Bowbelle by a person of average height when *(a)* loaded with a full cargo down to the marks at level trim, *(b)* unloaded with ballast tanks filled as per company practice for navigation above bridges on the Thames and *(c)* as ballasted to the extent it was at Southwark on the night of 20 August 1989; and what evidence was taken, and what tests were made, by the inspector conducting the inquiry into the collision.

Mr. Norris: A precise figure for the extent of deadwater cannot be given, irrespective of the state of loading, because it resulted not only from the vessel's trim but also from the presence of dredging gear, as is shown in the chief inspector's report: the effect of this is partly dependant on the observer's position. The significance of the poor visibility from the wheelhouse is given emphasis in the report; the inspector's opinion on this was based on close visual inspection including but not limited to a passage down river in conditions similar as far as possible to those on the night of the accident. As the report says, during this trial the launch taking the place of Marchioness could not be seen from the wheelhouse when she was in any position reasonably close ahead or on the starboard bow.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps were taken by his Marine Accident Investigation Branch to contact the survivors and witnesses

of the Bowbelle collision with a view to its submission of written or oral evidence to the subsequent inquiry; and if lists of such persons were supplied to it by the Metropolitan police or other persons or bodies.

Mr. Norris: Lists of survivors from Marchioness were supplied by the Metropolitan police. Copies of their statements and those of other witnesses were also provided; all were examined. When it appeared that the witness was in a position to provide evidence as to the circumstances of the accident, an attempt was made to contact them and invite them to meet an inspector. In addition, press advertisements were placed inviting anyone who so wished to contribute to the inquiry.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public evidence has been given, orally or in writing, by the captain of the Bowbelle concerning his seeking or obtaining permission to navigate or anchor subsequent to the collision with the Marchioness on 20 August 1989.

Mr. Norris: Evidence was given by the master in the form of a declaration before the inspector as required under the Merchant Shipping Act 1979, and therefore not in public. He said that he was given permission to anchor in Long Reach but then told to go to Gravesend, which was later amended to Gallions reach. This is confirmed by the VHF transcript.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what test had been made, and what information had been requested by or made available to the inspector conducting the inquiry into the Bowbelle collision of 20 August 1989, concerning the nature of that vessel's bow light when navigating with foremast lowered at night above bridges; what was the strength of such a light used whilst so navigating; what requests had been made by the owners of the vessel in respect of these or related matters; what rule or regulation prevented installation of a stronger than normal bow light for such passages; and what evidence was given to the inspector conducting the inquiry on this matter;

(2) what was the strength of the port and starboard navigation sidelights of the sand dredger Bowbelle on the night of 20 August 1989; what tests were made concerning the effect of any equipment carried on its deck or the trim of the vessel on forward visibility of such lights, particularly when viewed from near water level; and if the inspector conducting the inquiry into the collision took evidence on this matter.

Mr. Norris: Bowbelle carried approved port and starboard navigation lights, which have a luminous intensity of 12 candelas giving a range in ordinarily good visibility of least three miles. As explained in the chief inspector's report, she did not carry the usual forward masthead light being exempt from doing so under PLA bye-laws because the mast had to be lowered to pass under the bridges, but she carried in lieu of it a light about 4½ feet above the deck forward, of similar characteristics: that is having a luminous intensity of at least 94 candelas giving a six-mile range.

A trial passage down river in conditions similar as far as possible to those on the night of the accident permitted a subjective assessment of the effectiveness of the lights from near water level by the inspector on board the launch. As section 7 of the report says, the lights did not show up well: this, particularly in the case of the forward light, was due mainly to the effect of the background of shore lights.

Representations were made by the owners of Bowbelle and other commercial craft regularly using the river above Tower bridge on the subject of distinguishing lights for their ships, both at meetings and in correspondence. The relevant papers were examined by the inspectors and are discussed in section 15 of the chief inspector's report. The various possibilities were rejected as the report says principally because the Department of Transport considered there would be conflict with the requirement of the International Collision Regulations.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence the inspector conducting the inquiry into the Bowbelle collision on the River Thames took concerning sets and turbulence in the water in the vicinity of Southwark bridge at the time of the collision there on 20 August 1989.

Mr. Norris: A research project was commissioned and evidence was taken from the Port of London Authority; the subject is covered in section 6 of the chief inspector's report.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will name the vessel and person transmitting the radio messages, ascribed to an unknown vessel, contained in the radio-telephone transcript of the Port of London Authority Thames navigation service in the period immediately following the collision near Southwark bridge on 20 August 1989; if the name of that vessel and person were available to the inspector conducting the consequent inquiry; and what reference is made to it in the publicised report into that collision.

Mr. Norris: The vessel was the Hurlingham and the person making the broadcast was her skipper. Reference is at section 3.10 of the chief inspector's report.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date advice from his Department was given to the then Prime Minister concerning the merits of establishing a public inquiry into the Marchioness disaster of comparable scope to those conducted into disasters at King's Cross and Clapham.

Mr. Norris: The matter of a public inquiry was discussed on the day of the accident—20 August 1989. It was decided that the MAIB inquiry should proceed, with the option of a public inquiry—formal investigation—left open.

86. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what port or starboard effect the screw of the sand dredger Bowbelle unloaded with no, or little ballast had on its steering over the range of engine revolutions generally used and being used on the night of 20 August 1989; at what depths the boss and upper tip of its screw were below the surface when navigating King's reach that night; and what evidence was taken, or test made, in this regard by the inspector conducting the inquiry into the subsequent collision.

Mr. Norris: No significant effect was experienced at normal ahead revolutions or observed during the trial carried out in the inspector's presence. On going astern, the crew would be expected to cant the vessel but no astern movements took place on passage before the collision. The depths were about 5 ft and rather less than 2 ft respectively.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) where, and at what time, any representative or member of the management of South Coast Shipping boarded the Bowbelle in the early hours of 20 August 1989 and for what purpose; what such information was available to the inspector conducting the subsequent inquiry; if such a visit was referred to or discussed in evidence given to that inquiry by any member of the crew or management of the Bowbelle; and where it is referred to in the consequent report;

(2) if he will describe the movements of the sand dredger Bowbelle subsequent to its collision on 20 August 1989 with the Marchioness prior to its mooring at Orchard wharf, Leamouth; which persons representing which interests boarded or left the vessel over that period; and if this information was known and considered by the inspector conducting the subsequent inquiry.

Mr. Norris: The movements of Bowbelle immediately after the collision are described in sections 3.11 and 17.1 of the chief inspector's report. Subsequently, she proceeded down river and on instruction from the Port of London Authority anchored in Gallions reach at 0325 hours. She weighed anchor at about 0445 hours and berthed at Orchard Wharf at 0540 hours.

While at Gallions reach she was boarded by the operations manager of South Coast Shipping and by two officers of the Metropolitan police. This information was known to the inspector conducting the inquiry; it is not referred to in the report as it had no relevance to the accident.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what boats, lifebuoys, or other buoyant apparatus were thrown overboard, or otherwise used, after the Bowbelle-Marchioness collision on 20 August 1989 *(a)* from the Hurlingham and *(b)* from the Bowbelle; if such information was secured by the inspector conducting the inquiry; and whether it was referred to therein *(a)* in general or *(b)* in quantifiable terms.

Mr. Norris: Buoyant apparatus and life buoys were thrown into the water from Hurlingham, but none from Bowbelle. Evidence as to this was obtained by the inspectors; section 12 of the chief inspector's report refers to that.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what test or qualification was obtained by any officer of the sand dredger Bowbelle in respect of exemption from pilotage requirements for operation above bridges in the Port of London; for what period such exemption had been applied; from what date such exemption had been operative; and from what date it has not been necessary for a licensed Thames waterman to be in charge of sea-going vessels above Tower bridge.

Mr. Norris: As is explained in the chief inspector's report at section 9, there were at the time of the accident no requirements for pilotage in the Thames above London bridge; therefore equally there were no requirements for pilotage exemption in that area, although both officers on the bridge of Bowbelle at the time of the accident held valid exemptions for pilotage in the lower reaches. Following recommendation 16 in the report, pilotage or the possession of an exemption is now required. So far as is known, it has never been a requirement for a licensed waterman to have charge of a vessel above Tower bridge.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what record was made of the proceeding of the inquiry, by an inspector of his marine accident investigation branch, into the collision between the Bowbelle and the Marchioness in August 1989; where it is now held and by whom; how many copies have been made; to whom it has been sent; and if he will deposit a copy in the Library and make it publicly available.

Mr. Norris: The proceedings of the inquiry are recorded in the inspector's report the only copy of which was sent to, and continues to be held by, the chief inspector of the marine accident investigation branch. This procedure is in accordance with regulation 8(4) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989; there is no provision for an inspector's report to be released. However, regulation 9(1) provides for the publication of the chief inspector's report of the inspector's inquiry; the chief inspector's report on the collision between Marchioness and MV Bowbelle was published on 15 August 1991.

Air and Maritime Disasters

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will summarise the salient distinctions and similarities in the procedures in respect of investigation and report into *(a)* air and *(b)* maritime disasters, including arrangements for (i) giving and receiving evidence, (ii) publicity or privacy of inquiry proceedings and (iii) publication of reports together with references to the relevant Acts and statutory instruments.

Mr. Norris: The procedures for investigation of major accidents by the air and marine accident investigation branches are, in respect of the matters referred to, as follows:

Inspectors of both branches have power amoung other things to require the production of documents and the attendance of witnesses. Witnesses are required to answer the inspector's questions and sign a declaration of the truth of their answers. The full powers are set out in, respectively, the Civil Aviation (Investigation of Air Accidents) Regulations 1989, regulation 9 and the Merchant Shipping Act 1979, section 27.

Under the Air Accident Regulations an inspector's investigation shall be held in private. Under the Merchant Shipping Act, a witness giving evidence may nominate a person to accompany him but no other person may be present except any person allowed by the inspector.

The Air Accident Regulations (Reg 16) and the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989 (Reg 9) provide for the Secretary of State to publish a report, subject to specific requirements, unless in his opinion there is good reason not to do so. The report is that of, respectively, the inspector and the chief inspector.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to further Her Majesty's Governments objectives of open government by amending the terms of statutory instruments governing the conduct of current inquiries into marine accidents.

Mr. Norris: None. The existing regulations give sufficient discretion to appointed inspectors; adequately provides for those wishing to make representations; satisfactorily provides for consultation with criticised

parties; and, subject to certain safeguards, makes provision for the publication of reports of serious or important accidents.

River Safety

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings have taken place of the Thames district marine safety committee, established consequent to the recommendations of the Hayes report into river safety; what area that committee covers; who appoints, or recommends appointments to it; and which of its members represents the interests of *(a)* registered craft plying between Teddington and the Thames barrier and *(b)* their passengers.

Mr. Norris: Marine safety matters relating to the River Thames are considered by a sub-committee of the south east of England district marine safety committee, which has held four meetings since publication of the Hayes' report and which covers the Thames between Teddington lock and the Thames barrier. Appointments to the sub-committee are made on the recommendation of the chairman of the south east of England district committee. The interests of vessel owners are represented by the Thames Passenger Ship Federation and some individual owners. The interests of passengers are represented by the Department of Transport, the Port of London Authority, the Metropolitan police and the Port Health Authority.

M5

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from, or on behalf of, the residents of Whittington and Norton, adjacent to junction 7 of the M5, about noise levels following the widening of the motorway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Four representations have been received about noise levels on this stretch of motorway, including two via my hon. Friend. I am having the levels investigated and will write to him further.

M1/A1 Link

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the M1/A1 link will be open for traffic for its full length.

Mr. Key: The final section of the M1/A1 link between the M1 at Catthorpe and Rothwell is expected to open to traffic in June 1994.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost per mile of motorway lighting.

Mr. Key: The cost of installing lighting varies from one stretch of motorway to another, depending on such factors as the number of junctions and the costs of electrical cabling work at particular sites. A representative average figure at present is about £115,000 per mile.

Rail Privatisation

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance his Department has given to OPRAF on rail closures under privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The franchising director's role in closure cases is set out in sections 37 to 50 of the Railways Act 1993. We have not issued any guidance on closures to the franchising director.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the total net cost to public funds of rail privatisation so far.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her on 13 December 1993 at column *466*. At this stage there are no savings or benefits to net off the total expenditure fugure.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much of the consultancy costs for railway privatisation were spent on lawyers' fees in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and how much of the expected expenditure is expected to go to lawyers in 1993-94;

(2) if he will give a detailed breakdown of his Department's expenditure on consultancy costs for rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The breakdown of the Department's expenditure and estimated expenditure on consultancy costs for rail privatisation for 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 is as follows:

£ million

	Financial year		
	1991-92	*1992-93*	[1]*1993-94*
Legal issues	0·0	1·6	4·0
Merchant banking	0·1	0·3	2·0
Accountancy and actuarial	0·0	1·7	2·3
Access and access charges	0·4	1·1	0·9
Property matters	0·0	0·1	0·3
Marketing	0·0	0·0	0·9
Freight and franchising	0·0	0·6	0·7
Information systems	0·0	0·0	0·7
Insurance	0·0	0·0	0·1
Research	0·0	0·0	0·1
Recruitment	0·0	0·1	0·0

[1] Estimate.

M62

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what origin, and destination surveys have been carried out of traffic using the M62 west of the M63/M602 junction, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: No recent origin and destination surveys have been carried out on this particular stretch of motorway. However, other surveys have been carried out to provide a comprehensive assessment of traffic movements along the M62 through the Greater Manchester conurbation.

M6

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to light that section of the M6 between junctions 1 and 2.

Mr. Key: There are no plans at present to light the M6 between junctions 1 and 2, but we will continue to keep the matter under review.

M45

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the M45 will be illuminated.

Mr. Key: We do not have any plans to provide road lighting on the M45 motorway.

M1

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the motorway widening works at the southern end of the M1 will be finished.

Mr. Key: We expect completion of the widening between junctions 9 and 10 in mid-January.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(2) if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment;

(3) if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Norris: Detailed information on past and present appointees to non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs—formerly known as quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations—is not held in the Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, from such limited information as is available on present members of NDPBs, there is no evidence that any of them falls within any of the categories specified, apart from one member of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee who is a former Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones. He was reappointed as a member of the committee in December 1992 for a three-year period to December 1995. Committee members are not paid a salary but the Department meets their travel and subsistence costs.

Noise

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for noise insulation for commercial premises in respect of noise from new railways; and what consideration he gave to including such premises or problems arising from ground-borne noise in the draft noise insulation regulations upon which consultation is now taking place.

Mr. Freeman: The purpose of the proposed regulations is to provide, for new railways, arrangements which relate equitably to those already applicable to the insulation of dwellings near new roads; commercial premises were not therefore considered for inclusion. The regulations provide for sound insulation; this would not be effective against ground-borne noise, which involves different technical factors and is therefore specifically excluded.

Roads

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the amount of money provided by the Government for capital road expenditure schemes for North Yorkshire in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Key: Central Government support for local authority schemes in North Yorkshire has been provided as follows:

Year	*Transport supplementary grant (net) £ million*	*Capital allocations (until 1989-90) or credit approvals £ million*
1985-86	3·482	8·500
1986-87	3·562	9·050
1987-88	3·552	8·870
1988-89	1·925	6·440
1989-90	2·653	7·330
1990-91	3·444	4·909
1991-92	6·157	9·321
1992-93	6·452	8·607
1993-94	9·645	12·463
1994-94	4·298	8·904

Motorcycles

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the research evidence on which he bases his Department's estimates on the effect of fitting leg protectors to all motorcycles on the incidence of death and serious injury to motorcylists.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the Transport Research Laboratory's working paper WP/VS/213 entitled "TRRL Review of Research on Motorcycle Leg Protection —1991", a copy of which was placed in the Library in July 1992.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist for regulations applying to the United Kingdom requiring motorcycles to be fitted with leg protectors.

Mr. Key: None.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the European Commission proposal, Com 264B final, action programme on road safety, which refers to leg protection devices for mopeds, applies only to mopeds or to all motorcycles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The European Commission's action programme on road safety (COM 93 246 final) proposes, among other things, a new initiative in the field of "leg protection devices for mopeds", but translation inconsistencies in the document leave it unclear precisely what is intended. The United Kingdom proposes to clarify the matter in the Council working group to which consideration of the document has been remitted.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Videos

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought against those responsible for hiring video tapes of films with an 18 or 15 classification to those under age; and how many resulted in convictions, for the last year for which figures were available.

Mr. Maclean: The Video Recordings Act 1984 does not differentiate the supply of a video recording of classified work for hire from other forms of commercial supply, such as the supply of a classified video for sale. In 1989, there was a total of 47 prosecutions and 42 convictions under the Act, of which one was a successful prosecution under section 11 of the Act relating to supply of a video recording in breach of the classification awarded. Information collected centrally from 1990 onwards does not identify separately offences committed under this specific Act from other summary offences.

Alexander Schweidler

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if immediate steps will now be taken to withdraw the United Kingdom citizenship of Alexander Schweidler; and if he will make it his policy in future to refuse him entry into the United Kingdom on the grounds that his presence will not be conducive to the public good.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Where allegations of war crimes have been made against a British citizen or a person resident in the United Kingdom, they fall to be investigated by the police war crimes unit. Where a naturalised British citizen is involved, it would not be appropriate to consider deprivation of citizenship until those investigations had been completed. British citizens cannot be refused entry to the United Kingdom.

Dorothy Nwokedi

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *535,* whether valium was administered to Dorothy Nwokedi during her deportation on 9 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that a port medical inspector at Gatwick airport made available to Mrs. Nwokedi a 5 milligram tablet of valium, which she took after take-off.

Marchioness

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many victims of the Marchioness disaster had their hands severed by the authorities; and for what purpose this was done;

(2) who decided to sever the hands of some of the victims of the Marchioness disaster;

(3) who decided which victims of the Marchioness disaster should have their hands severed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Westminster coroner that hands were removed from the decomposed bodies of 25 victims of the Marchioness disaster, for the purpose of enabling fingerprinting to be carried out to assist in the process of identification. This was done on the coroner's authority, in the light of advice from the Metropolitan police and the pathologist on the best methods of establishing the identity of the bodies concerned. The question of which bodies needed to have the hands removed was a matter for decision by a Metropolitan police senior fingerprinting officer. Coroners are independent judicial officers and Ministers have no authority to comment upon the way in which a coroner conducts his inquiries in any individual case.

Fire Authority Report

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for what reasons he has not delivered to the chairman of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority, Her Majesty's inspectorate's report on the inspection of the authority made in the summer of 1993;

(2) for how long he has had possession of the Her Majesty's inspectorate report on the inspection of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority made in the summer of 1993;

(3) if he will instruct that Her Majesty's inspectorate's report on the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority be delivered immediately to the chairman of the authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The draft report was not completed and finalised until 17 November 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend approved publication of the report on 30 November and printing was completed on 20 December 1993.

Copies of the report were sent to the chief fire officer and the clerk to the authority on 21 December 1993. Copies will be available in the Library of the House and to the public from 11 January 1994.

Sentencing Policy

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library copies of the guidelines issued to magistrates with regard to sentencing policy in respect of guilty pleas; and why the question from the hon. Member for Ilford, South of 18 October received no answer.

Mr. Maclean: A copy of the sentencing guidelines issued by the Magistrates Association to its members on 17 September 1993 has been placed in the Library. I regret that the hon. Member's question of 18 October was not answered. As I explained when I wrote to him on 9 December, this was because of an administrative error that occurred when the question was transferred from the Lord Chancellor's Department to the Home Office. A copy of that letter has also been placed in the Library.

Body Belts

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *534,* on what occasions in the last year a body belt has been used in a police station; and what were the circumstances surrounding that use.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am not aware of any occasion in the past year in which a body belt has been used in a police station.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Michael Howard: Our records show that the following Members of the House of Lords have been appointed to Home Office non-departmental public bodies. Salary details where readily available have been provided. I will write to my hon. Friend concerning details of those salaries not included in the reply.

	Position	*Dates*	*Salary*
The advisory committee on animal experiments			
Lady Warnock	Member	1975-1979	Non-salaried
Lady Warnock	Chairman	1979-1984	Non-salaried
Lord Adrian	Member	1980-1985	Non-salaried
Animal procedures committee (which replaced the advisory committee in 1987)			
Lord Soulsby	Member	1987-1991 (re-appointed for a second four period in 1991)	Non-salaried
Lord Nathan	Chairman	1990-1993	Non-salaried
Community development foundation			
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede	Chairman	1978-1983	Non-salaried
Central fire brigades advisory council[1]			
Lord Boston	Chairman	January-April 1979	—
Lord Belstead	Chairman	May 1979-March 1982	—
Lord Elton	Chairman	April 1982-May 1985	—
Lord Glenarthur	Chairman	June 1985-August 1986	—
Lord Caithness	Chairman	September 1986-April 1988	—
Lord Ferrers	Chairman	May 1988-May 1993	—
Gaming Board of Great Britain			
Lord Allen of Abbeydale	Chairman	1980-1985	Salary details unavailable
Horserace Betting Levy Board			
Lord Plummer	Chairman	1980-1982	Salary details unavailable
Horserace Totalisator Board			
Duke of Devonshire	Chairman	1980-1986	Salary details unavailable
Lord Wyatt	Chairman	1987-1995	Salary of £92,000
Lord Chapple	Member	1986-1990	Salary of £7,772
Alcohol Education and Research Council			
Lord Windlesham	Chairman	1981-1984	Non-salaried
Viscount Colville of Culross	Chairman	1984-1990	Non-salaried
Parole Board			
Lord Henniker	Independent member	1979-1982	Salary details unavailable
Lord Harris of Greenwich	Chairman	1979-1982	Salary details unavailable
Lord Windlesham	Chairman	1982-1988	Salary details unavailable
Viscount Colville of Culross	Chairman	1988-1992	Salary of £27,040
Lord Belstead	Chairman	1992-1997	Salary of £45,060
Advisory Committee on Service Candidates			
Lady Birk	Member	1984-present	Non-salaried
Lord Renton	Member	1984-present	Non-salaried
Lord Wigoder	Member	1984-present	Non-salaried
Lord Ferrers	Member	1987-present	Non-salaried
Lord Barnett	Member	1987-present	Non-salaried
Lord Kilmarnock	Member	1987-present	Non-salaried
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	Member	December 1988—March 1995	Non salaried
Lord Carlisle of Bucklow			
Lord Carlisle of Bucklow	Chairman	March 1989—March 1995	Salary of £32,420
Lord Macaulay of Bragar	Member	January 1989—March 1995	Non salaried
Firearms Consultative Committee	Chairman	August 1989—July 1994	Non salaried
Lord Kimball			
Lord Shrewsbury	Member	September 1993	Non salaried

[1] Junior Ministers who have served, ex officio, as the Council's chairmen. No separate salary is payable for this post.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Howard: Our records show that the following former hon. Members have been appointed to Home Office non-departmental public bodies:

	Position	*Dates*	*Salary*
Community development foundation			
Richard Luce	Trustee	1978-1979	Non salaried
Guy Barnett	Trustee	1979-1985	Non salaried
Roger Thomas	Trustee	1985-1988	Non salaried
Michael Meadowcroft	Trustee	1986-1994	Non salaried
David Belotti	Trustee	1992-1994	Non salaried
Sir David Lane	Chairman	1983-1985	Non salaried
Horserace betting levy board			
Anna McCurley	Member	1988-1997	Salary of £12,000
Alcohol education and research council			
Right Hon. Christopher Chataway	Chairman	1991-1994	Non salaried
Police complaints authority			
Right Hon. Roland Moyle	Deputy Chairman	1985-1991	£28,369-£35,995
John Cartwright	Member	October 1992	£38,020
John Cartwright	Deputy Chairman	August 1993	£42,400
Parole board			
Mrs. Sheila Faith	Independent member	Since 1991	Non salaried
Criminal injuries compensation board			
Norman Miscampbell	Member	March 1993-1995	Non salaried
Firearms consultative committee			
Ben Ford	Member	1989-1991	Non salaried

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:

Parole Board

Mrs. Sheila Faith, independent member since 1991, non-salaried.

Bowbelle

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department where, and at what time, an officer of the Metropolitan police boarded the Bowbelle on 20 August 1989 for the purpose of taking any statement from any member of its crew; what statements were taken; if they were available to the inspector conducting the inquiry; whether they have been published; and if he will place them in the Library.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that no Metropolitan police officers boarded the Bowbelle on 20 August 1989 with the purpose of taking a statement from any member of the crew.

Deported Jamaicans

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of those passengers from Jamaica who were refused entry to the United Kingdom when they arrived at Gatwick on 21 December 1993; if he will list the names of those passengers who were given temporary admission to the United Kingdom; if he will list the names of those passengers who were detained at Campsfield House immigration detention centre; and if he will give a summary as to why each passenger was refused entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not our practice to disclose personal details of individuals with whom the Department has contact. Most of the passengers were refused entry because the immigration officer was not satisfied that they were genuine visitors who would return to Jamaica at the end of their visit. A small number were refused entry because they were apparently coming for settlement without the required entry clearance.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the opportunity given, in the time between the refusal to grant entry to the United Kingdom as visitors to Jamaican nationals at Gatwick on 21 December 1993 and their deportation from the United Kingdom, for passengers and their legal representatives to apply for judicial review of the refusal to grant entry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Removal is normally arranged as soon as practicable for passengers held in detention following refusal of leave to enter. Removal directions will normally be deferred for a short time if an application for judicial review is lodged.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when each passenger from Jamaica,

detained at Campsfield House from 21 December 1993, after being refused entry to the United Kingdom, was informed of their rights to legal advice and representation; on what dates written explanations of reasons to grant entry to the United Kingdom were passed to solicitors; for how many passengers such explanations were supplied; and how many written explanations were outstanding when detainees were removed from the United Kingdom on 25 December 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Each passenger was given written reasons for refusal of entry and advised that they were free to contact their High Commission or anyone else that they wished. One firm of solicitors acting for an individual detainee sought written details of the refusal decision and these were provided on 23 December. Oral explanations were given to various firms of solicitors acting for a further 12 detainess between 23 and 24 December. No requests for explanations, either written or oral, were outstanding at the time of removal.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Michael Lennon (Ref.: GAT 14116) was refused entry to the United Kingdom as a visitor at Gatwick on 21 December 1993; why applications by the hon. Member for Bradford, West for Mr. Lennon to ge given temporary admission to the United Kingdom were refused; whether Mr. Lennon applied to settle in the United Kingdom; whether Mr. Lennon inidicated he intended to seek employment in the United Kingdom; whether Mr. Lennon was known to have any criminal convictions or known to have criminal associates in the United Kingdom; whether he was in possession of any illegal substance when personally searched; who was his sponsor in the United Kingdom; whether he had a return air ticket to Jamaica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have written to the hon. Member.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors on flight YULE 966 from Kingston, Jamaica, were detained at Gatwick airport on 21 December 1993; and what were the reasons for their detention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: One hundred and seventy eight passengers were required to submit to further examination under the Immigration Act 1971 and were therefore detained at the airport while awaiting interview.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the decision to detain visitors from Kingston, Jamaica, at Gatwick airport on 21 December 1993 was a reflection of a change in policy by the Home Office.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. We continue to welcome genuine visitors from all countries. There has been no change in the criteria for visitor cases generally or Jamaican citizens in particular.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from solicitors and others concerning entry procedures for those wishing to visit the United Kingdom following the deportation of Jamaicans on 25 December 1993; what action he has taken following such representations; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We had received on 7 January 44 letters from various individuals and organisations. They raised various issues but most were supportive of the action taken. Replies will be sent to individual correspondents as appropriate.

EC Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the provisional list of countries whose nationals will require visas to visit the EC from 1996; what plans he has to include *(a)* Barbados and *(b)* the Bahamas on the list; and what representations he has received from (i) these or (ii) other countries concerning their inclusion on any common visa list.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We await receipt from the Council Secretariat of the European Commission's proposals in respect of the list of countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external borders of the member states. As soon as these proposals are received, they will be made available to Parliament in accordance with the normal scrutiny arrangements. No representations of the kind mentioned have been received.

Yardie Murderers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of Yardie murderers entering the United Kingdom by absconding from temporary admission licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am not aware of any case in which a convicted Yardie murderer has been granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom.

Immigration Documents

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of current instructions issued to immigration officers relating to those seeking to visit the United Kingdom; and copies of documents given to those refused entry to the United Kingdom as visitors, including advice given about rights to legal advice and legal representation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. It is not the normal practice to publish internal instructions. The written notice given to passengers refused entry as visitors informs them that they may contact their high commission or anyone else who they think may be able to help. I shall send a copy of the relevant notice to the hon. Member and arrange for one to be placed in the Library.

Illegal Substances

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what illegal substances were found by *(a)* immigration officers and *(b)* police officers on passengers who arrived on charter or scheduled flights from the Caribbean arriving at Gatwick on 21 December 1993; if he will give details of the circumstances; and how many passengers were charged with drugs-related offences.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No illegal substances were found by immigration officers. One passenger who had arrived on

flight JQ001, on being searched by police prior to detention, was found to have in his possession a small amount of herbal cannabis. No passenger was charged with a drugs-related offence.

Immigration Controls (Gatwick)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* immigration officials and *(b)* police officers were on duty during the day at Gatwick South Terminal on 7 December 1993, 14 December 1993, 21 December 1993, 28 December 1993 and 4 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The total numbers of immigration officers, chief immigration officers and immigration inspectors on duty at Gatwick South over the 24 hour periods in question were:

	Numbers
7 December 1993	86
14 December 1993	95
21 December 1993	114
26 December 1993	77
4 January 1994	91

In addition, on 21 December an additional 20 officers from other Gatwick offices were deployed at Gatwick South on an ad hoc basis for varying periods throughout the day.

For security reasons it is not the normal practice for the police to provide details of the numbers of officers on duty on particular days. However, the number of police officers involved in handling the consequences of flight JQ001 at Gatwick South on 21 December varied during the day up to a maximum of 15.

Jamaican Citizens

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Jamaican citizens were *(a)* granted entry to visit the United Kingdom and *(b)* refused entry to visit the United Kingdom during 1993; and how many of these Jamaican citizens were in possession of visas to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period January to September 1993, 12,000 Jamaican citizens were given leave to enter the United Kingdom as visitors and 418 were refused leave to enter, of whom six had an entry clearance or work permit. Correspondence data for the fourth quarter of 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Jamaican high commissioner concerning the treatment of Jamaican nationals who arrived at Gatwick on 21 December 1993 and were refused entry to the United Kingdom as visitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No written representations have been received from the Jamaican high commission, which has nonetheless maintained a close interest in the treatment of Jamaican citizens refused entry at Gatwick on 21 December.

Carrier Fines

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of carriers who have been fined under the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987 in connection with charter or scheduled flights to Gatwick from the Caribbean since 1 January 1993 to date; if he will detail the total fine in each case; what information officials received from any carrier or others about passengers from Jamaica arriving at Gatwick on 21 December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not the practice to disclose information about individual carriers. Payments of £2,000 each were demanded in three such cases between 1 January 1993 and 7 January 1994. One of the passengers had travelled from Jamaica but none was a Jamaican citizen. The immigration service received information, including a passenger list, from United Kingdom Leisure about its flight on 21 December.

Legal Assistance Treaty

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the treaty between the United Kingdom and the United States of America on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters comes into force and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I signed the treaty in Washington on 6 January 1994. The other co-signatory was the United States Attorney-General. The treaty will enter into force upon exchange of the instruments of ratification, which, in accordance with the terms of the treaty, will be as soon as possible. The treaty continues in force the drugs agreement entered into by the United Kingdom with the United States of America in 1988 and provides a binding framework within which the United Kingdom and the United States of America may provide a full range of mutual legal assistance covering all crimes. The United States of America is one of the United Kingdom's largest and most important mutual legal assistance partners. In the last two to three years, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have jointly handled more than two hundred requests for mutual legal assistance concerning fraud, drug trafficking and other serious offences. The treaty is a logical next step in the continuing process of collaboration between our two countries in the fight against serious and international crime.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amount of compensation Mr. James Bloomfield received under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and what amount of compensation a person with identical injuries would receive under the new system.

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board does not give details of awards in individual cases, nor will its successor body, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

Deportation

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *535*, what plans he has to ensure that deportees are advised of the immunisations which the Department of Health recommended for the country to which they are travelling, and that they and any children accompanying them are entitled to such immunisations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The immigration service is considering the question of immunisation for those removed or deported under powers contained in the Immigration Act 1971, and their dependants, in consultation with other interested parties including the Department of Health. I will inform the hon. Member of the outcome.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* non-visa nationals, *(b)* asylum seekers and *(c)* others were refused entry to the United Kingdom, detained and deported, since the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993; what was the minimum and maximum period in each case between an application to enter being lodged and deportation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Two hundred and twenty-one asylum seekers were refused leave to enter in the period 26 July to 31 December 1993 and have been removed from the United Kingdom. The majority were detained throughout their period of stay.

The minimum and maximum time periods between arrival and removal, and corresponding information on persons other than asylum seekers, is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total number of persons removed in August and September as a result of being refused leave to enter was 2,973; some may have been refused leave to enter prior to August. Corresponding data for October 1993 onwards are not yet available.

Post Office (Thefts)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of *(a)* assaults in the pursuit of robbery on Post Office delivery personnel and *(b)* theft of money or registered mail from Post Office vehicles have occurred in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Squatters

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the police operation to remove the squatters from Rutland Park mansions on the morning of Sunday 12 December; how many officers were involved; how many people were arrested; what led officers to believe that there would be violence; what acts of violence were committed; and whether the cost of the operation will be recovered from Brent council.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police that approximate additional police costs, excluding the use of support services, for the operation were £11,000. A total of 373 Metropolitan police officers were present. The police role was to prevent a breach of the peace. Prior intelligence had indicated that stong resistance might be offered to the enforcement of the order. In the event, there were no arrests and no acts of violence were committed. The Metropolitan police regard the orderliness of the eviction as a measure of the effectiveness of the police operation. They do not intend to seek recovery of any of the costs of the operation from the London borough of Brent.

Rutland Park Mansions

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to charging councillors in Brent with wasting police time, following the eviction of squatters from Rutland Park Mansions on 12 December.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that no consideration is being given by the Metropolitan police to charging councillors in Brent with wasting police time.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Howard: The number of press officers, including the director of information, is:

Year	*Numbers*
1983	15·75
1984	15·25
1985	14·00
1986	17·25
1987	18·00
1988	19·50
1989	22·00
1990	21·00
1991	20·00
1992	19·00
1993	16·00

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The special advisers employed by the Home Office are Mr. Patrick Rock and Mr. David Cameron. They provide advice on a range of departmental matters.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to kinds of information likely to create suspicions of impropriety.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what arrangements he will make to allow any country placed on the provisional list of countries whose nationals will require from 1996 visas to visit the EC to appeal against the inclusion on the visa list.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

There is no provision in article 100c of the treaty of Rome for appeals of this kind.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. David Davis: The breakdown by location for the Cabinet Office and its agencies is as follows:

	1989-90 £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	*[6]1993-94* £
London					
12 Downing Street	1,182	996	946	925	[1]n.a.
24 Whitehall	5,850	4,928	4,680	2,887	[2]2,243
36 Whitehall	4,608	3,882	3,686	3,606	[2]2,801
70 Whitehall	8,253	10,245	9,683	9,496	[2]7,391
Government Offices, Great George Street	10,871	12,134	11,437	11,181	[2]8,698
11 Belgrave Road	5,250	2,120	6,000	7,534	3,230
Hepburn House	n.a.	3,889	7,290	3,444	4,356
53 Parliament Street[3]	n.a.	6,336	9,888	7,153	6,600
Riverwalk House[3]	82,004	115,819	133,585	106,408	47,193
Murray House[4]	—	—	—	—	—
Albany House[4]	—	n.a.	n.a.	—	—
Ascot					
Sunningdale Park[5]	n.a.	n.a.	52,500	62,502	27,763
Basingstoke					
Alencon Link	n.a.	14,240	17,747	11,863	11,407
Chessington					
Government Buildings, Leatherhead Road	31,117	27,037	25,897	23,354	14,924
Edinburgh					
Hill Street	n.a.	3,705	3,141	3,620	3,365
Norwich					
Gildengate House[3]	27,278	36,455	35,360	36,195	12,080
Birmingham					
Cumberland House[4]	—	—	—	—	—
Cardiff					
Hayes House[4]	—	—	—	—	—
Durham					
Elvet House[4]	—	—	—	—	—
Manchester					
Boulton House[4]	—	—	—	—	—

[1] For the current year heat meters have been installed and charges have yet to be levied.
[2] Based on estimated annual charge.
[3] Includes lighting costs.
[4] Heating forms part of an overall charge and is not separately identifiable.
[5] Includes usage of gas for catering.
[6] To date.

Bowbelle-Marchioness Report

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many copies of the marine accident investigation branch report into the Bowbelle-Marchioness collision were printed by Her Majesty's Stationery Office; how many copies are still in stock; how many have been used for official or parliamentary purposes; and how many sold at the named price.

Mr. David Davis: HMSO printed 1,842 copies of the marine accident investigation branch report into the Bowbelle-Marchioness collision and 920 are still in stock. The Department of Transport received 320 copies for official purposes and 23 copies were purchased by other Government Departments. A total of 579 copies have been sold to date, either on wholesale terms or at the named price.

Quangos

359. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979

have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. David Davis: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is responsible for making appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies:

The Civil Service Appeal Board;
Agricultural and Food Research Council;
Economic and Social Research Council;
Medical Research Council;
Natural Environment Research Council; and the Science and Engineering Research Council.

The Earl of Selborne was chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council from 1 January 1975 to 31 December 1989. His annual salary in the last year of his appointment was £10,065.

Baroness Perry of Southwark was a member of the Economic and Social Research Council from 1 August 1988 to 31 July 1991. She received an annual honorarium, which in the last year of her appointment was £4,340.

The right hon. the Lord Shepherd of Spalding was chairman of the Medical Research Council—MRC—from 1 August 1977 to 31 July 1982. He received an annual honorarium, which in the last year of his appointment was £2,675.

The right hon. Lord Jellicoe was chairman of the MRC from 1 August 1982 to 31 July 1990. He received an annual honorarium, which in the last year of his appointment was £5,030.

Lord Cranbrook was a member of the Natural Environment Research Council—NERC—from 1 October 1982 to 31 July 1988. He received an annual honorarium, which in the last year of his appointment was £3,410.

Lord Chorley of Kendal has been a member of the NERC since 1 August 1988. His term is due to expire on 31 July 1994. He receives an annual honorarium of £4,730.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. David Davis: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is responsible for making appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies:

The Civil Service Appeal Board;
Agricultural and Food Research Council;
Economic and Social Research Council;
Medical Research Council;
Natural Environment Research Council; and the Science and Engineering Research Council.

James Provan, MEP for North East Scotland from 1979 to 1989, has been a member of the Agricultural and Food Research Council since 1 August 1990. His appointment expires on 31 March 1994. He receives an annual honorarium of £4,730.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. David Davis: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is responsible for making appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies:

The Civil Service Appeal Board;
Agricultural and Food Research Council;
Economic and Social Research Council;
Medical Research Council;
Natural Environment Research Council; and the
Science and Engineering Research Council.

Sir David Crouch, formerly Member of Parliament for Canterbury between 1966 and 1987, was an unpaid member of the Medical Research Council from 1 August 1983 to 31 July 1987.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library a copy of the Iraq document to which he referred in his evidence to the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Iraq note, along with many other highly classified documents, has been made available to the inquiry being conducted by Lord Justice Scott, who will in due course decide what is published in his report.

Documents (Marginal Notes)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to instruct all civil servants to ensure that marginal notes made on interdepartmental memoranda or other documents distributed for comment between Government Departments and executive agencies reporting to Government Departments always make comment directly on to the said documents and do not use detachable notes.

Mr. David Davis: There are no plans to issue such instructions.

DEFENCE

Belize

16. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the memorandum of understanding with the Government of Belize.

Mr. Hanley: We have advised the Belize Government that existing arrangements set out in memoranda of understanding, concerning the technical aspects of the British military presence in Belize need to be brought up to date to reflect the evolution of our military garrison into a jungle training team. The details of these arrangements are confidential between Governments.

British Troops (Germany)

17. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for bringing home British troops from Germany.

Mr. Hanley: The current strength of the Army in Germany is about 33,000. On current plans this will fall to some 24,700 by April 1995.

Defence Budget

18. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage proportion of defence expenditure will now, following the Chancellor's Budget statement, be assigned respectively to the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in 1994-95.

Mr. Rifkind: Details of planned expenditure by each top level budget holder, together with provision for sea, land and air systems equipment will be contained in the 1994-95 Supply Estimates.

Bosnia

19. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the volume of aid delivered by British troops in Bosnia in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In 1993 British troops in Bosnia escorted humanitarian aid convoys carrying a total of 77,739 tonnes of aid. In addition, the RAF humanitarian airlift into Sarajevo delivered a total of 10,354 tonnes of aid, and there have been over 1,000 such flights.

Economies

20. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which his Department has achieved all possible economies and reductions in unnecessary expenditures in respect of administrative and other running costs.

Mr. Hanley: Since the launch of the Department's efficiency programme in 1988-89 the MOD has consistently met the challenging targets it has been set, making improvements worth some £1·8 billion a year by 31 March 1993. We will continue to search for ways of reducing to a minimum the administrative and other costs of supporting our front line forces. To this end, we have set in hand the defence costs study, known as "Front Line First", to look into all aspects of defence support.

Mountain and Sea Rescue

21. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions over the past 12 months MOD personnel or equipment have been used in mountain or sea rescue operations.

Mr. Hanley: Between 1 November 1992 and 31 October 1993 United Kingdom military search and rescue helicopter flights and mountain rescue teams were called out on 2,049 occasions. A total of 724 of these callouts involved rescue operations.

Small Arms Ammunition

22. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of long-term procurement needs in connection with small arms ammunition.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, announced the award of a long term contract to Royal Ordnance in the Defence debate on 19 October last year at column 176. This contract covers over 90 per cent. by value of our small arms ammunition requirements in the period up to 1998.

European Fighter Aircraft

23. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: Eurofighter 2000 will be the cornerstone of the RAF's future capability. The manufacturers are now forecasting first flight for April this year. This delay is disappointing but there is no evidence of any major design problem and it should not be of any great significance in overall programme terms. We and our collaborative partners plan to take a decision on a commitment to production in 1995, which will still allow production aircraft for the RAF to be delivered in 2000.

Yugoslavia

24. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are currently serving in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: There are at present approximately 2,330 British troops in Bosnia. In addition to those on the ground, Royal Navy ships and RAF squadrons are providing support to United Nations operations, including the humanitarian airlift into Sarajevo.

Procurement Executive

25. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the total estimated costs, including new computer systems, of moving the Procurement Executive to Abbey Wood, near Bristol, and report on current progress of the project.

Mr. Aitken: The estimated works cost of the new Procurement Executive headquarters at Abbey Wood, North Bristol, inclusive of site acquisition, construction, fitting out, professional works management and VAT is £255 million at current prices with an additional £90 million for the non-works elements of the move. No decision has yet been taken on the future information technology system for the site. The construction programme is proceeding within budget and to the planned timescale.

Cyprus

26. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Nations presence in Cyprus.

Mr. Hanley: The United Nations force in Cyprus—UNFICYP—currently totals some 1,300 personnel from the United Kingdom, Argentina and Austria. The United Kingdom contingent of over 400 personnel comprises a contribution to the headquarters staff, two companies of a roulement regiment in the infantry role and various support elements, including a flight of Army Air Corps helicopters.

NATO

27. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what issues he expects to be discussed at the NATO summit concerning the relationship between the European members of the Alliance and north America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be making a statement concerning the issues discussed

at the NATO summit. The summit will undoubtedly reaffirm the continuing importance of the relationship between the European and North American members of the Alliance.

28. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his Hungarian counterpart to discuss the possible enlargement of NATO.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend has not had the opportunity to have discussions with the Hungarian Minister of Defence. However, I met Dr. Fur in Budapest on 13 October, when Hungary's relationship with NATO was amongst the topics discussed.

29. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the strengthening of links between NATO and the new democracies of eastern Europe.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be making a statement concerning the decisions taken at the NATO summit, including on the need to strengthen the links between NATO and the new democracies of eastern Europe.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to argue for the introduction of sanctions for breaches of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or withdrawal from the treaty.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom's policy on the non-proliferation treaty is to work towards its unconditional and indefinite extension in 1995. Questions of the imposition of mandatory United Nations sanctions are for the Security Council to decide in accordance with the United Nations charter, on a case by case basis.

Defence Establishments (Closure)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which Whitley Council agreed provisions have been observed in connection with the downgrading or closure of defence establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Great importance is attached to Whitley Council procedures and, bearing in mind that proposals covering some 1,000 establishments have been put to the trades unions over the past two and half years, we have a good record on consultation.

Hydrographic Office

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has had on the risks to the Hydrographic Office's operational capability if companies receiving contracted-out work go out of business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Other than in discussions between staff and management, no such representations have been received.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what targets for financial savings he envisages as a result of introducing market testing procedures into the Hydrographic Office.

Mr. Aitken: The agency's market testing programme is at the feasibility stage; it is too early to predict the level of savings which may arise.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has had regarding the future of long-term planning at the Hydrographic Office if market-tested functions go to tender every three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No such representations have been received other than in discussions between management and staff. Long term planning will continue to be the responsibility of the HO management board, and will be necessary in the context of its role as an integrated Government agency and the national centre of hydrographic expertise.

Porton Down

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the nature of the nerve agent which was transported to Porton Down, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *81*; and why this nerve agent was being transported;

(2) what was the specific nature of the trials which were observed and participated in by the four US Army liaison officers stationed at Porton Down from 1963 to 1973; and which chemical and biological agents were involved in these trials;

(3) in which year Porton Down stopped research on pyrroles; how many of each species of small animals were used; and when the United States of America was first informed of this research through the technical co-operation programme;

(4) when Porton Down first researched into Q fever;

(5) what was the nature of the information on binary chemical weapons passed between the United States of America and Britain to assist Britain in its evaluation of the potential hazards of binaries, referred to in his his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 20 July, *Official Report*, column *170*; when this information was passed; and under which defence agreement this information was passed;

(6) what tests and studies the chemical and biological establishment at Porton Down has carried out on the viral disease yellow fever; when these experiments took place; whether the experiments involved animals or service volunteers; what were the conclusions of these studies and tests; and under which defence agreement these results were exchanged with the United States of America;

(7) on what dates quantities of VX were transferred from Nancekuke to Porton Down; how the quantities were transported; what safety precautions were taken; which safety authorities and local councils were warned before the transfer; and what was the nature of each of the trials in which the transferred VX was used;

(8) how many scientific papers co-authored by scientists from Porton Down and their counterparts in the Australian military have been published since 1963; what were the dates of these papers; and in which scientific journal they were published;

(9) what was the nature of the chemical agent transferred from Britain to Canada in the early 1970s mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 20 July, *Official Report*, column *173*; what was the

quantity of agent transferred; on what dates this agent was transferred; why the agent was transferred; how the agent was transferred; and what safety precautions were taken;

(10) which United States military establishments and Government agencies took part in the information exchange and collaboration on VX other than those mentioned in his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *63*;

(11) how many service volunteers have been used for tests at Porton Down in each year since 1979; what is the purpose of these tests; and which chemical and biological agents have been used in these tests since 1979;

(12) which other nerve agents were involved in the research at Nancekuke referred to in his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, columns *717-18*, to determine whether they presented a hazard to British armed forces; and when research started and ended on each of the nerve agents involved;

(13) under which defence agreement VX was transferred from the United Kingdom to the United States of America; and whether any transfer of VX was made from the United Kingdom to the United States of America other than that referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 29 July, *Official Report*, column *172;*

(14) when the experiments on B staphylococcal enterotoxin, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 16 July, *Official Report*, columns *718-19*, began and ended; and if his Department has collaborated in experiments on this toxin with any other country;

(15) what workd Porton Down has done on evaluating tremorine as an incapacitating agent; when this work was carried out; how many tests and studies were carried out on animals and service volunteers; what was the conclusion of these tests and studies; when the results were shared with the United States of America; and through which defence agreement this scientific information was exchanged;

(16) what has been the nature of collaboration between Britain, Australia and the United States of America with regard to nerve gases, and CS gas and CR gas; when this work was started and finished; where the work was carried out; and under which defence agreement the work was arranged;

(17) what information arising from the transesterification study referred to in his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *712*, on QL, was shared with the United States of America, Canada and Australia; when this information was exchanged; and under which defence agreement it was exchanged;

(18) if he will list the dates, participating countries and locations of each of the 15 meetings of sub-group E on chemical and biological defence of the technical co-operation programme mentioned in his answer of 1 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *163;* which branches of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence have been attending these meetings; and if he will make a statement on the achievements of this sub-group;

(19) when chemical and biological agents and materials have been exchanged between Britain and Australia; what was the nature of these agents and materials; in what quantities they were exchanged; for what purposes they were exchanged and under which defence agreement or memorandum of understanding they were exchanged.

Mr. Hanley: These are matters for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment—CBDE—under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letters from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 11 January 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the nature of the nerve agent which was transported to Porton, referred to in his Answer to the honourable Member for Leyton on 19th July, Official Report, column 81; and why this nerve agent was being transported (Question 27, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to have available small quantities of the materials which may be used as chemical or biological warfare agents by a potential aggressor.

3. The nerve agent transported to Porton Down in May 1977 were small quantities of the iso-butyl and cyclopentyl analogues of VX. They were transported in order to be retained at CBDE as reference samples.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the specific nature of the trials which were observed and participated in by the four United States Army liaison officers stationed at Porton Down from 1963 to 1973; and which chemical and biological agents were involved in these trials (Question 28, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records do not provide information about which trials the four US Army liaison officers stationed at Porton Down from 1963 to 1973 are likely to have observed nor about which agents were involved although these are likely to have been mustard and nerve agents.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking in which year Porton Down stopped research on pyrroles; how many of each species of small animals were used; and when the United States of America was first informed of this research through the Technical Co-operation Programme (Question 29, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. Several classes of pyrroles were studied in the early 1960s to determine whether or not simple pyrrole derivatives might show pharmacological effects that might be used by an aggressor as an incapacitating agent and this area of research ceased round about 1963. Our records indicate that only rats were used for experimental purposes; they do not indicate the numbers involved which are likely to have been small.

4. The information arising from these studies was part of the chemical and biological defence programme and would therefore be part of the technical database drawn upon in cooperation with the United States of America during the 1960s under the Technical Cooperation Programme and its predecessors.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking when Porton Down first researched into Q fever (Question 30, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures

against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. Research at Porton Down into coxiella burnetii started in 1989 in work aimed at identification techniques for the organism based on gene probe and antibody technologies.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the nature of the information on binary chemical weapons passed between the United States of America and Britain to assist Britain in its evaluation of the potential hazard of binaries, referred to in his Answer to the honourable Member for Leyton on 20th July, Official Report, column 170; when this information was passed; and under which defence agreement this information was passed (Question 31, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records do not indicate the precise nature of the information on binary chemical weapons passed between the United States of America and Britain to assist Britain in its evaluation of the potential hazard to the UK Armed Forces from potential aggressors who may possess binary chemical weapons. The information gained would have been provided during information exchange and collaboration with the United States of America on a continuing basis. This information was exchange under the aegis of the Defence agreements referred to by the Rt Hon. Archie Hamilton, MP, in his reply of 21 May 1992, Official Report, columns 255-256.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what tests and studies the chemical and biological establishment at Porton Down has carried out on the viral disease yellow fever; when these experiments took place; whether the experiments involved animals or service volunteers; what were the conclusions of these studies and tests; and under which defence agreement these results were exchanged with the United States of America (Question 34, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. Work on yellow fever virus at Porton Down began in the early 1960s. Some work has been carried out to evaluate the vaccine strain as a simulant. Other work has addressed techniques for rapid identification. Some of the early work on antibodies for identification involved the use of mice and rabbits. No work has involved the use of service volunteers.

4. Preliminary conclusions are that appropriate techniques can be developed for rapid identification. The information arising from these studies is part of the chemical and biological defence programme and is part of the technical database drawn on the cooperation with the United States of America under the Technical Cooperation Programme and the Memorandum of Understanding on chemical and biological defence with the US and Canada.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking on what dates quantities of VX were transferred from Nancekuke to Porton; how the quantities were transported; what safety precautions were taken; which safety authorities and local council were warned before the transfer; and what was the nature of each of the trials in which the transferred VX was used (Question 35, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records do not provide information on the precise dates when quantities of VX were transferred from Nancekuke to Porton Down nor the nature of each of the trials in which the transferred VX was used but the transfers are likely to have taken place between 1957-1976. The transfers were carried out in accordance with the Report of the Working Party on the Transport of Nerve Agents from Nancekuke to Porton (Thompson Committee) published by HMSO in 1970. As indicated in the Report, the relevant police forces would have been notified and appropriate escorts and vehicles provided.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking how many scientific papers co-authored by scientists from Porton Down and their counterparts in the Australian military have been published since 1963; what were the dates of these papers; and in which scientific journal they were published (Question 36, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. I regret that our records do not provide this information in a readily accessible form. Nevertheless, I have consulted my senior staff and one scientific paper co-authored by scientists from the then Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down and their counterparts in the Australia has been identified. This paper on heat stress in NBC protective clothing was published in 1987 and appeared in Volume 125, pages 554-556 of Military Medicine.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the nature of the chemical agent transferred from Britain to Canada in the early 1970s mentioned in his Answer to the honourable Member for Leyton of 20th July, Official Report, column 173; what was the quantity of agent transferred; on what dates this agent was transferred; why the agent was transferred; how the agent was transferred; and what safety precautions were taken (Question 37, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The nature of the chemical agent transferred from Britain to Canada in the early 1970s was CR gas. Transfers took place in April 1970 (2 kg), August 1971 (10 kg), September 1972 (10 kg) and February 1976 (14·5 kg). Appropriate safety precautions were taken although as stated in the reply of 20th July (Official Report, column 173), our records do not indicate how the agent was used by Canada or on the precise defence agreement involved. The transfer of the agent probably took place under one of the agreements referred to by the Rt. Hon. Archie Hamilton, MP in his reply of 21 May 1992, Official Report, columns 255-6.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking which United States military establishment and government agencies took part in the information exchange and collaboration on VX other than those mentioned in his Answer of 15th February, Official Report, column 63 (Question 40, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records indicate that the only other United States military establishment or government agency that took part in the information exchange and collaboration on VX was the Newport Indiana factory which I referred to in my reply to the honourable member for Leyton of 20 July 1993, Official Report, columns 172-173.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking how many service volunteers have been used for tests at Porton Down in each year since 1979; what is the purpose of these tests; and which chemical and biological agents have been used in these tests since 1979 (Question 41, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work it is necessary to use service volunteers to:

(a) assess the ability of service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures,

(b) develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and,

(c) evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. The number of Service volunteers used for studies in each year since 1979 has been as follows:

	Numbers
1979	153
1980	340
1981	303
1982	161
1983	177
1984	131
1985	181
1986	96
1987	93
1988	136
1989	110
1990	83
1991	50
1992	112
1993	64

4. Only a proportion of these studies have involved the use of a chemical agent; the only chemical agent used in studies since 1979 has been GB (Sarin).

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking which other nerve agents were involved in the research at Nancekuke referred to in his Answer of 16 July, Official Report, columns 717-8, to determine whether they presented a hazard to British armed forces; and when research started and ended on each of the nerve agents involved (Question 42, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. The nerve agents involved in the research at Nancekuke and the approximate periods during which the research at Nancekuke was carried out were as follows:

a.	GB	1951-1976
b.	GE	1950s
c.	GF	1957-1976
d.	GD	1962-1980
e.	VX	1957-1976
f.	Other V series	1957-1980

Research into these nerve agents is also carried out at Porton Down as required by the chemical defence programme.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking under which defence agreement VX was transferred from the United Kingdom to the United States of America; and whether any transfer of VX was made from the United Kingdom to the United States of America other than that referred to in his Answer to the honourable Member for Leyton of 20th July, Official Report, column 172 (Question 43, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The only transfer of VX from the United Kingdom to the United States of America was the one referred to in my answer to the honourable member for Leyton of 20th July 1993, Official Report, column 172.

3. Our records do not reveal under which defence agreement VX was transferred from the United Kingdom to the United States of America. The transfer was probably under the Tripartite Toxicological Conferences which preceeded the Technical Cooperation Programme.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking when the experiments on staphylococcal enterotoxin B, referred to in his Answer to the honourable Member for Brent East on 16th July, Official Report, columns 718-9, began and ended; and if his Department has collaborated in experiments on this toxin with any other country (Question 45, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment has carried out studies on staphylococcal enterotoxin B since 1980 in order to assess the potential hazard to the United Kingdom Armed Forces and to provide appropriate protective measures. Experimental work on this toxin has not been carried out in collaboration with any other country although the results of this work form part of the technical database drawn on in cooperation with the United States, Canada and Australia under the Technical Cooperation Programme, with the United States and Canada under the Memorandum of Understanding on Chemical and Biological Defence and with France under the Anglo-French defence Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Research.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what work Porton Down has done on evaluating tremorine as an incapacitating agent; when this work was carried out; how many tests and studies were carried out on animals and service volunteers; what was the conclusion of these tests and studies; when the results were shared with the United States of America; and through which defence agreement this scientific information was exchanged (Question 46, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. Work has been carried out at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment since the early 1960s using oxo-tremorine as a pharmacological tool in order to examine the mechanisms of nerve agent poisoning and thus evaluate new drugs to treat such poisoning. This work has involved the use of small laboratory animals such as rats, mice and guinea pigs. This research is to develop effective therapeutic and pretreatment drugs. No studies or tests were carried out with service volunteers.

4. The information arising from these studies was part of the chemical and biological defence programme and would therefore be part of the technical database drawn upon in cooperation with the United States of America under the Technical Cooperation Programme and its predecessors.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what has been the nature of collaboration between Britain, Australia and the United States of America with regard to nerve gases, and CS gas and CR gas; when this work was started and finished; where the work was carried out; and under which defence agreement the work was arranged (Question 47, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out research to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. As part of this work it has been necessary to evaluate the potential hazards from nerve gases, CS gas and CR gas. Studies into CR gas were carried out between 1971-1976 and CS gas between 1957-early 1980s. The studies on nerve gases started after World War II and are continuing. These address both the potential hazard as well as research into new and improved medical countermeasures to nerve agent poisoning. The results of this work have formed part of the chemical and biological defence programme and is part of the technical database drawn upon in collaboration with the United States, Australia and Canada under the Technical Cooperation Programme and its predecessors and with the United States and Canada under the Memorandum of Understanding on Chemical and Biological Defence.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what information arising from the transesterfication study referred to his Answer of 16th July, Official Report, column 712, QL, was shared with the United States of America, Canada and Australia; when this information was exchanged; and under which defence agreement it was exchanged (Question 48, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records do not indicate what information arising from the transesterfication study was shared with the United States of America, Canada and Australia. The information gained formed part of the chemical and biological defence programme and is part of the technical database drawn on in information exchange and collaboration with the United States of America, Canada and Australia under the aegis of the defence agreements referred to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the Rt. Hon. Archie Hamilton, MP in his reply of 21 May 1992, Official Report, columns 255-256.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking if he will list the dates, participating countries and locations of each of the 15 meetings of sub-group E on chemical and biological defence of the Technical Co-operation Programme mentioned in his Answer of 1st December 1993, *Official Report*, column 163; which branches of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence have been attending these meetings; and if he will make a statement on the achievement of this sub-group (Question 50, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records indicate that the dates, participating countries and locations of each of the meetintgs of Sub-group E on Chemical and Biological Defence of the Technical Co-operation Programme since 1967 have been as follows:

	Month	*Year*	*Participating countries*	*Location*
1	Aug	67	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	Edgewood USA
2	Nov	67	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CDE and MRE UK
3	May	69	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	Pentagon USA
4	Mar	73	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	DRE Ottawa Canada
5	Jan	75	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CDE UK
6	Jan	77	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	Edgewood USA
7	Oct	78	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	DRE Suffield Canada
8	Apr	80	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	MRL Australia
9	Oct	81	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CDE UK
10	May	83	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CRDC and Fort McLellan USA
11	Oct	84	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	NDHQ and DRE Ottawa Canada
12	Apr	86	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	MRL Australia
13	Apr	88	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CDE UK
14	Apr	89	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CRDC USA
15	Apr	90	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	DRE Suffield Canada
16	Apr	91	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	MRL Australia
17	Jul	92	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	CBDE UK
18	Jun	93	UK, USA, Canada and Australia	Washington DC USA

3. The main participant from the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence has been the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment augmented as appropriate by representatives from Ministry of Defence headquarters.

4. The achievement of Sub-group E has been to promote successful collaboration in chemical and biological defence research between the UK, USA, Canada and Australia.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking when chemical and biological agents and materials have been exchanged between Britain and Australia; what was the nature of these agents and materials; in what quantities they were exchanged; for what purposes they were exchanged and under which defence agreement or memorandum of understanding they were exchanged (Question 54, Order Paper 15 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records indicate that the quantities of chemical and biological agents and materials provided for defence research collaboration by Britain to Australia are as follows:

a. November 1959	V agent intermediate	12 lbs
b. November 1972	Charcoal cloth	24 m roll
c. August 1977	G agent intermediate	20 lbs
	CR	3 lbs

3. Our records do not include information on how the agent or material was used by Australia or on the precise defence agreement involved. The transfer was probably under one of the defence agreements referred to in my reply to you of 16 July 1993, Official Report, column 716.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many legal actions have been taken against the Ministry of Defence since 1963 by service volunteers who have been tested with chemical and biological agents at the chemical defence establishment at Porton Down; and how these legal cases were settled.

Mr. Hanley: Our records show no such legal actions.

Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what fixed-wing tactical transport capability is required for the British contribution to the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps.

Mr. Hanley: We would expect to make maximum use of all of our fixed-wing air transport aircraft—Tristar, VC10 and Hercules—in tactical and strategic roles, supplemented as necessary by civil aircraft, to deploy the British elements of the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps.

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the aircraft observed by Skyguard radar since June 1989 were flying at medium level within the meaning of his answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 560.

Mr. Hanley: In my answer of 14 July—*Official Report*, column 560—medium level was intended to refer to aircraft operating at heights above 2,000 ft above ground level. Reports on Skyguard deployments prior to November 1992, during which 1,175 military aircraft were observed, do not distinguish between aircraft operating at low and at medium level. Of the 627 aircraft observed by Skyguard since that time, 243 were operating at medium level.

Knightsbridge Barracks

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the ownership, administration and use of Knightsbridge barracks now or in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The requirement for barracks in central London is being reviewed. Sites examined will include Knightsbridge barracks.

Civil Servants (Re-employment)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* retired officers and *(b)* retired civil servants have been re-employed by his Department (i) directly and (ii) as consultants in each of the past five years; what are the arrangements for their remuneration and for treatment of their pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The number of retired civil servants directly re-employed and that of ex-service personnel recruited to the civil service as retired officers in each of the past five years is:

	1993	*1992*	*1991*	*1990*	*1989*
Civil Servants	282	288	415	550	552
Retired Officers	250	205	187	189	160

There are no centrally maintained records for either retired service personnel or civil servants engaged as consultants and this information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Retired officers and re-employed civil servants are paid in accordance with nationally negotiated and agreed pay scales for the grade to which they are appointed.

In accordance with the principle that civil servants, when re-employed should not receive more, by way of salary and pension together, than was being paid in salary immediately prior to retirement, the civil service pension may be subject to abatement. Pensions received by service personnel under the armed forces pension scheme are not subject to abatement on re-employment, unless retirement was under one of the early release schemes.

The level of remuneration for conslutants is determined either by a set fee for employees of consultancy companies or by the personal worth of an individual consultant. This is constrained, overall, by the sponsors' available funds.

Jordan

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the British-Jordanian defence exports agreements were terminated; on what dates each of the agreements were suspended; and what were the reasons for each suspension and their termination.

Mr. Aitken: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the memorandum of understanding between the Governments of the United Kingdom and Jordan, signed on 19 September 1985 and supplemented on 9 June 1987. While the line of export credit for Jordan was effectively terminated in 1991, neither of these memoranda has been terminated or suspended.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who signed the defence sales agreements with Jordan on 19 September 1985 and 9 December 1987 on behalf of the British Government; and in what form Parliament was notified of the concluding of each agreement.

Mr. Aitken: Her Majesty's Ambassador to Jordan was the signatory for Her Majesty's Government. Under successive Governments it has not been general practice to inform Parliament of the signature of such memoranda. However, the memorandum of understanding signed on 19 September 1985 was referred to in written answer by the then Minister of State for Defence on 17 February 1986 at column 58.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the British-Jordanian defence sales agreements contained a cap on total expenditure; and on what dates that cap was reached.

Mr. Aitken: The memorandum of understanding concerning the supply of defence equipment to Jordan, signed on 19 September 1985, covered contracts to a total estimated value of £270 million. The supplement signed on 9 June 1987 covered additional contracts to a total estimated value of £40 million. Expenditure did not in fact reach these figures.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what income was generated by International Military Services in respect of fees on brokerage for administering the British-Jordanian defence sales agreements of 19 September 1985 and 9 June 1987.

Mr. Aitken: International Military Services is a private limited company. The information requested relates to the trading operations of the company and is commercially confidential. IMS publishes its accounts for public scrutiny in accordance with company law.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the information the Scott inquiry was given as to the quantities of items listed under the 60 projects relating to Jordan in his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column 295-6.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 13 December 1993 at column 528.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what Government to Government defence exports agreements were made with Jordan since 1979 other than those listed by the Minister on 3 November, *Official Report*, column 296; and what British Government agency was responsible for administering them.

Mr. Aitken: A memorandum of understanding with Jordan, covering the supply of Khalid main battle tanks, was signed on 28 November 1979. The contract which gave effect to the MOU was held by International Military Services. A further memorandum, covering a modification programme to the tank, was signed on 2 January 1989. This has been administered by my Department. We have no record of any other similar arrangements with Jordan being signed since 1979.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether information on the quantities and values of the items in the Jordan arms sales package have been supplied to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Mr. Aitken: Details of information provided to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry are a matter between the inquiry and my Department.

F3 Tornado

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column 529, what consultations he has had with the International Standards Organisation and the British Standards Institution concerning Airwork's ISO 9001 certification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We have had no such consultations.

Quangos

122. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could not be compiled without disproportionate cost. However, on 1 August 1993 six members of the House of Lords were holding positions on MOD public boards. They are as follows:

The Lord Bridges—Member of the Royal College of Defence Studies Advisory Board. Unsalaried.

The Baroness Platt of Writtle—Member of the Meteorological Committee. An honorarium of £250 per annum is payable.

The Earl of Swinton—Chairman of the Anglo American Community Relations Committee, Menwith Hill Station. Unsalaried.

The Baroness O'Cathain—Member of the National Employers' Liaison Committee. Unsalaried.

The Duke of Westminster—Member of the National Army Museum. Unsalaried.

The Lord Gregson—Chairman of the Royal Military College of Science Advisory Council. Unsalaried.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Companies (Dealings)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what dealings he, or any member of his Department, has had, whether for export promotion or for any other purposes, with *(a)* A.T.E. International Ltd., *(b)* Admincheck Ltd., *(c)* Advance Electronics Development Ltd., *(d)* Archin Centre I.C.E. Ltd., *(e)* Atlas Equipment Co. Ltd., *(f)* Atlas Air conditioning Co. Ltd., *(g)* Dominion International, *(h)* Endshire Export Marketing, *(i)* Falcon Systems, *(j)* Geodesigns, *(k)* Investacast Precision Castings Ltd., *(l)* Meed International Ltd., and *(m)* Rajbrook Ltd.; and what was the purpose of his dealings with each of these companies.

Mr. Aitken: My officials have found no record of any dealings with the companies listed.

Joint Analysis Centre, Molesworth

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many American citizens work at the joint analysis centre at Molesworth; how many British citizens work at the centre; whether GCHQ staff are employed at the centre; whether toxic chemicals are stored on or near the centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently 463 US military and civilian personnel, and four United Kingdom military personnel assigned to the joint analysis centre—JAC—at RAF Molesworth. No United Kingdom civilians are employed at the JAC. Additionally, there are United Kingdom and United States staff located at RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury who support the JAC. There is a hazardous waste storage facility at RAF Molesworth which stores items temporarily until they can be disposed of in accordance with regulations. Examples of hazardous items stored at this facility are petroleum, paint products and dry batteries.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what justification there is for the expansion of the joint analysis centre at Molesworth; what is the connection between this station and Menwith Hill station in North Yorkshire; how much the expansion of the joint analysis centre at Molesworth has cost; Who paid for the expansion of the centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No expansion of the joint analysis centre at RAF Molesworth is currently being undertaken. The decision to locate the JAC at RAF Molesworth, announced by my predecessor on 11 January 1990 at columns 691-92, has entailed construction work at the station. Use has also been made of existing facilities at RAF Molesworth although some modification work has been necessary. This work is ongoing and has been subject to normal planning procedures. The role of the centre is to process and analyse military information from a variety of sources.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of all letters from fire authorities relating to his Department's buildings and facilities received over the last 10 years following fires.

Mr. Hanley: As far as can be determined only five letters have been received from local fire authorities in the last 10 years. These relate to fires at MOD main building —27 April 1985—AWE Burghfield—2 December 1988 —RAF Coltishall—21 April 1990, Allenbrooke barracks, Larkhill—7 July 1991 and RAF Carlisle—23 March 1992. A copy of the letter of 3 May 1985 from the London fire brigade is already in the Library and copies of the others will now be placed therein.

Fraud

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of reported fraud in the Ministry of Defence in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Hanley: Latest estimated figures for loss to MOD arising from fraud for the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93 were as follows:

1990-91	53 cases valued at £984,000
1991-92	45 cases valued at £63,000
1992-93	54 cases valued at £205,000

These figures exclude "procurement fraud"—fraud perpetrated by contractors including corruption of officials by contractors and collusion between officials and contractors.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy for dealing with employees found guilty of fraud.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's policy is that civilian staff who commit fraud are liable to be dismissed. Mitigating considerations may affect the penalty in individual circumstances.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians were judged to be guilty of fraud in his Department in 1990, 1991 and 1992; and how many were dismissed.

Mr. Aitken: The number of civilian staff found guilty of fraud in the Ministry of Defence in 1990, 1991 and 1992 were 68, 140 and 88 respectively. The numbers dismissed in each of these years were 27, 52 and 44.

Irregular Expenditure

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken following the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Commons Public Accounts Committee published on 15 March 1993 to cut irregular expenditure in his Department.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minute on the "28th Report from the Committee of Public Accounts 1992-93"—Cm 2199.

Contracts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money was set aside in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992 to cover increased costs incurred through delay in producing contracts placed by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of contracts placed by his Department in the last five years show cost increases in excess of 25 per cent. by the time of completion.

Mr. Aitken: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department has taken to ensure that contracts with foreign companies do not cost more than originally planned.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's aim is to award contracts to United Kingdom and overseas suppliers at fixed or firm prices, against tight specifications.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the standard practice of his Department on indexing payments for inflation up until the scheduled delivery date only in contracts for the procurement of equipment.

Mr. Aitken: My Department would normally consider the indexing for inflation of payments to contractors in any contracts with a duration of over five years. Our standard practice is not to continue such indexing beyond the scheduled delivery date if contracts fail to achieve this.

Project Management

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what steps he has taken to rationalise the definition of in-service dates on individual projects to enhance comparability;

(2) what is his current definition for an in-service date in relation to the procurement of equipment;

Mr. Aitken: An equipment's in-service date is generally defined as the date by which the equipment, or a specified number of equipments will contribute to operational capability. The interpretation of this definition can vary because of the differing characteristics of equipment, and the ways in which they are used. My Department's current approval processes require that the basis for defining the in-service date should be explained at the start of procurement.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures he has implemented to improve project management in the light of his Department's "Learning from Experience" report.

Mr. Aitken: A directorate was established as a centre of expertise for project management to pursue the recommendations of the learning from experience report and provide support and guidance to all project office staff. The training available to project managers has been improved; structured risk management has been introduced for all projects and a help desk has been set up to which project managers can refer queries. A regular project managers newsletter is produced to disseminate new initiatives and best practices derived from the lessons learned from other projects.

Computer Theft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated value of computer theft in his Department in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The estimated value of the theft of computer hardware during the period in question is £94,000, which occurred in financial year 1990-91.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Hanley *[pursuant to his reply, 8 December 1993, column 741]:* The answer I gave the right hon. Member on 15 December at column *741* contained an error. The cost to the Defence budget of providing five vehicles for Defence Department Ministers in 1990-91 was some £200,000.

Defence Establishments (Shoeburyness)

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the defence establishments in the area of Shoeburyness, Essex.

Mr. Aitken: The proof and experimental establishment, Shoeburyness and the environment test centre, Foulness were included in my Department's recent review of test and evaluation facilities. I hope to be in a position to make an announcement on the outcome of this review shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Laboratory Agencies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total sum expended on consultancy advice centrally as part of the review of the laboratory agencies in the financial year 1992-93; and what amount is projected for 1993-94.

Mr. McLoughlin: The fees paid for consultancy advice for the review are confidential for commercial reasons.

Energy Advisory Panel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *254*, if he will now consider making public details of the discussions of his energy advisory panel.

Mr. Egg[illegible]r: No.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress his Department has made towards the ratification of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom signed the chemical weapons convention in January 1993. The Government continue to take a leading role in the preparatory commission which is working towards the establishment of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as envisaged by the chemical weapons convention—CWC. The DTI is working with the FCO and MoD to make preparations for the implementation of the CWC in the United Kingdom.

Deregulation Task Force

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will name the small business representatives on the task force looking into deregulation, and the businesses they operate.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The 14 task force members who represented small business and their businesses are:

Mr. Michael Everard	Everard & Son Ltd.
Mr. G. W. (William) Cotham	Yorkshire Rider Ltd.
Mr. Maurice Denyer	Fowler (Bros) Cowfold Ltd.
Mr. J. Roger Humber	House Builders Federation
Mr. Chris Drew	SORIS
Mr. A. E. H. (Alistair) Salvesen	Dawnfresh Seafoods Ltd.
Mr. Robin Bloomfield	Oakridge Farm Ltd.
Mr. John Gardner	VG Distributors Ltd.
Mr. Jonathan Swift	British Hardware Federation
Mr. Michael Ann	Drusilla's Park
Miss Sonia Elkin	former Small Firms Director, CBI
Ms Clare Spottiswoode	Euro Utility Systems Ltd.
Mr. Derek Cavalier	Eltham Group Ltd.
Mr. John Simpson	Kalme Prototype Ltd.

Company Failures

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in how many failures of limited liablity companies reports of unfit or criminal conduct have been made to him; and in how many cases disqualification orders or prosecutions have been undertaken.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Financial Year	*Disqualification reports*	*Disqualification orders*	*Number of: Prosecution reports*	*Prosecutions (convictions)*	*Warning letters*
1990-91	4,508	251	518	170	23
1991-92	6,156	326	689	203	26
1992-93	6,713	446	689	176	18
[1]1993-94	5,074	302		(not yet available)	

[1] 8 months.

Konver Programme

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what bids have been made under the Konver programme and what allocations have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 10 December, *Official Report*, column *430.*

Textiles

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the bids made under the Retex programme and the allocations made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: A list of all those Retex proposals which were put before the Retex programme monitoring committee, and those projects which have been approved, has been placed in the Library of the House.

Education and Training Targets

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to ensure that his Department is fully committed to the national education and training targets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department of Trade and Industry is wholly committed to the national targets. The Department encourages the spread of the Investors in People initiative in its "Winning in the '90s" business strategy roadshow. DTI Ministers also meet regularly with the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets to support their work in leading industry towards achieving the targets.

Newspaper Distribution

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to meet representatives of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents to discuss the Government's response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on national newspaper distribution.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Following publication on 9 December of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) report on the supply of national newspapers I announced that the Secretary of State had decided to prohibit by order certain restrictions on wholesale supply which the MMC had found to be against the public interest. A notice of the Secretary of State's intention to lay an order before Parliament was published on 21 December.

Written representations were invited from any persons whose interests are likely to be affected by the order. At this early stage of consultation no meetings with any individuals or organisations have been arranged.

Post Office Privatisation

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy on the privatisation of the Post Office, together with the timetable for its implementation.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are conducting a review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office. Continued public sector ownership, as well as private sector options, are being considered. The review is still continuing, and no decisions have been taken. An announcement will be made in due course.

Bank of Commerce and Credit International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the visit by Touche Ross the liquidators of BCCI to Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. This is a matter for the liquidators.

Utility Regulators

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will extend the power of the utility regulators to ensure that the rights of low-income consumers are protected.

Mr. McLoughlin: Each utility regulator already has a duty to protect the interests of all consumers in respect of prices and quality of service.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the citizens' advice bureaux report, "Out of Control", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will ask the utility regulators to investigate the CAB's findings.

Mr. McLoughlin: Ministers are considering the CAB report, as are the utility regulators, who also received copies.

Utilities (Consumers)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek discussions with the utility chairmen about the rights of low-income consumers.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for the regulators, who have a duty to protect consumers' interests.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ask the National Consumer Council and the utilities consumer committees to consider what improvements might be made in the rights of low-income consumers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The National Consumer Council and the utilities consumer committees have a duty to consider the interests of all consumers.

Extended Warranty Schemes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will consider if the practice of other high street retailers of promoting their extended warranty schemes rather than the ones offered cheaper by manufacturers may breach the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976;

(2) if he will refer extended warranty schemes operated by white goods retailers to the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the competition legislation responsibility for considering and, if appropriate, investigating allegations of restrictive trade practices, anti-competitive behaviour and abuse of market power lies with the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg. I am asking Sir Bryan to consider whether the practice identified by the hon. Member warrants investigation and to write to the hon. Member.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Export Credits Guarantee Department cover for trade with Vietnam will be restored; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Now that Vietnam has normalised its relationship with the International Monetary Fund and is making arrangements with its creditors to restructure its outstanding trade debts restoration of ECGD cover is under urgent consideration. I expect a decision to be taken in the next month or so.

Business Support Schemes

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money has been spent under each scheme available for supporting businesses from his Department in 1993-94 in each county of England, Wales and Northern Ireland and each region of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLouglin: A breakdown by county of the Department's schemes for business support is not available except at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows expenditure to the end of November 1993 for those schemes which give direct grant or support to business, broken down by region where that is possible. Schemes covering England often have counterparts funded by the territorial departments. A regional breakdown of expenditure on the Department's business support schemes under the Industrial Development Act 1982 is provided in the appendices to the Industrial Development Act 1982 annual reports.

Expenditure to end of November 1993

£'000

	NE	*NW*	*EM*	*WM*	*YH*	*SW*	*SE*
Schemes covering England only (Regional)							
Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Development Grants	23,570	11,934	798	9,500	11,533	3,600	—
Regional Enterprise Grants	946	797	446	303	1,739	464	18
Aid for small and medium sized enterprises	791	199	107	—	447	—	—

	£000
England only (Regional breakdown not available)	
Locally delivered business services through Business Links and Training and Enterprise Councils	7,997

	£000
Schemes covering Great Britain (Regional breakdown not available)	
Consultancy Initiatives	35,659
Locally delivered business services through Chambers of Commerce	140

	£000
Schemes covering United Kingdom (Regional breakdown not available)	
Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme	11,511

NE=North East Region, NW=North West Region
EM=East Midland Region, WM=West Midland Region
YH=Yorkshire and Humberside Region, SW=South West Region

London United Investments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to take any civil or criminal action against KPMG Peat Marwick following the criticisms of the firm's auditing practices by the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their report on London United Investments.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Copies of the inspector's report have been passed to the Serious Fraud Office and to the relevant supervisory bodies, the Institutes of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and in Scotland, for such further action as those bodies deem appropriate.

Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to investigate the electoral procedures of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the accountancy firms preparing the compilation reports for small companies are to be exempt from the monitoring requirements of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I shall be making a statement shortly on this and other details of the implementation of the proposed relaxation of the audit requirement for small companies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what oral or written discussions he or his Department has had with any official of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants about its internal democracy;

(2) what discussions he or his Department has held with any representative of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants in respect of its democracy.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has been told by the association that electoral reform will be one of a number of subjects which will feature in proposals for revisions to its bye-laws. These will be put to its council and members in a general meeting, in due course.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's policy in relation to the award of contracts to accountancy firms *(a)* against whom legal proceedings are being taken and *(b)* who have been criticised in the DTI inspectors report.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 27 October, *Official Report,* column *671.*

Professional Ethics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will provide a list of the reforms of professional ethics which he has urged recognised supervisory bodies to adopt.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It is my duty to satisfy myself that the ethical guidance provided by the recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors meet the requirements of paragraph 7 of schedule 11 to the Companies Act 1989. This is one of the matters covered in my Department's routine monitoring of and discussions with the supervisory bodies.

Defence Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) in which year a specific allocation of Export Credits Guarantee Department's cover was allocated for defence exports; what was the size of the provision; and how that decision was reported to Parliament;

(2) on what date it was agreed to allocate a sum within the Export Credits Guarantee Department for the offering of insurance cover on defence exports; what that sum was; and on what dates that sum was subsequently revised.

Mr. Needham: On 28 June 1988 the then Minister for Trade announced, in a written answer, that £1 billion of export credit support would be made available by the Export Credits Guarantee Department to support large contracts for the sale of United Kingdom defence equipment.

The sum of £1 billion was never revised and the unused balance was effectively withdrawn in August 1991.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the size of the Export Credits Guarantee Department cover for defence exports in each year since 1985-86, the take-up of the cover and the year-end total of the contribution in respect of this cover to the Export Credits Guarantee Department's cumulative reserves and provisions.

Mr. Needham: ECGD's annual report includes a table detailing the breakdown of its capital goods business by industry sector including defence. A copy of ECGD's last annual report is in the Library of the House, the 1992-93 report will be laid before the House late this month. ECGD's accounts are not put together on a basis which enables the contribution of different industry sectors to its cumulative reserves and provisions to be detailed separately.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Eggar: The table sets out the information available.

Name	*Post*	*Salary*	*Duration*
Sir Julian Ridsdale	Member of the Simpler Trade Procedures Board	Unpaid	27 October 1992—26 October 1994
Charles Longbottom	Non-executive director, of British Shipbuilders	£5,000	Since 1988 (renewed on a yearly basis)
John Corrie	Chairman of the Transport Users Consultative Committee for Scotland	£6,310	1 January 1989—31 December 1995
Robin Hodgson	Member of the West Midlands Industrial Development Board	Unpaid	1 January 1989—31 December 1994

Mr. Meale: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Eggar: No such appointments have been made since 1979.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which auditing guidelines, issued by the Auditing Practices Committee while his Department was represented on it, urged auditors to be passive.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I do not accept the premise on which the hon. Member's question is based.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the kind of auditing firms who will be exempt from monitoring by the recognised supervisory bodies as a result of the small company audit exemption proposals contained in the Chancellor's statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *934-35* does not affect the monitoring requirements for company auditors. Any individual or firm who chooses to remain a member of a recognised supervisory body and retain eligibility for appointment as a company auditor under the rules of that body will remain subject to the monitoring arrangements of that body.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a list of the minutes of meetings of the Auditing Practices Board received by his representatives on that board.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department's representative has received minutes of the meetings of the Auditing Practices Board which he attended on the following dates:

1991	*1992*	*1993*
3 July	14 January	12 January
9 September	11 February	9 February
15 October	10 March	9 March
3 December	13 April	19 April
	19 May	11 May
	30 June	8 June
	28 July	13 July
	8 September	21 September
	25 September	12 October
	15 October	16 November
	24 November	

Minutes of the board's meetings may be obtained from the board's secretary.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will seek to amend the regulation on non-audit fee disclosures so that companies will be required to give details of the non-audit services purchased from their auditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to do so. The regulations already require companies to disclose in their annual accounts the amount of fees paid to their auditors and their associates for non-audit work.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he takes upon receiving a complaint about the conduct of the bodies acting as recognised supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I would first consider whether the complaint concerned the statutory duties imposed on the supervisory bodies by the Companies Act 1989. If so, I would refer the complaint to the relevant supervisory body for it to consider. If the complaint concerned the complaints procedure established by the supervisory body to meet its statutory duty under the Companies Act 1989, I would consider whether the body had properly discharged that duty.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to take powers to provide that the recognised supervisory bodies do not threaten academic freedoms.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None. I have no evidence that the recognised supervisory bodies act in the way the hon. Member implies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will seek to introduce legislation under which auditors of public limited companies will be required to file audited information about their affairs with the appropriate recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assurances he has sought or will be seeking on democracy and openness from the organisations acting as recognised supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Each supervisory body for company auditors was required to satisfy the Secretary of State that it met the requirements for recognition set out under part II of the Companies Act 1989. Sections 35 and 36 of that Act, and the Companies Act 1989 (Register of Auditors and Information about Audit Firms) Regulations 1991 (SI 1991/1566), require those bodies to make certain information available to the public about those eligible for appointment as company auditor. Section 37 of the Companies Act 1989 requires them to submit an annual report on audit regulation to the Secretary of State, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the year-end cumulative surplus or deficit and the year-end total of provisions for the Export Credits Guarantee Department in each year from 31 March 1986.

Mr. Needham: This information is reported in ECGD's annual trading accounts copies of which are in the Library of the House; the 1992-93 accounts will be laid before the House later this month.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provision was made in the expenditure plans for 1993-94 of the Export Credits Guarantee Department for writing off irrecoverable debts from Iraq; and what provision was made for 1994-95 and 1995-96 in the public expenditure plans of November 1992 and those recently published.

Mr. Needham: ECGD's trading operations do not constitute a charge on public expenditure and as such there is no provision for any such costs in ECGD's public expenditure plans.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total exposure of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in respect of exports to Iraq *(a)* up to the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and *(b)* subsequently; how much of this exposure has so far been written off as irrecoverable; and in which financial years this was done.

Mr. Needham: ECGD's total exposure on Iraq is now estimated at £652 million of which £521 million relates to claims paid outstanding for recovery. ECGD's 1991-92 accounts included a provision for loss equivalent to 93 per cent. of exposure on Iraq; the 1992-93 accounts are still being audited.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if Export Credits Guarantee cover was obtained to support the financing of the British-Jordanian defence sales agreements; and how payments insurances cover was provided for.

Mr. Needham: ECGD provided support for two defence equipment lines of credit to Jordan which were signed in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

Companies (Exports)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what dealings he or any member of his Department has had, whether for export promotion or for any other purpose with *(a)* A.T.E. International Ltd., *(b)* Admincheck Ltd., *(c)* Advance Electronics Development Ltd., *(d)* Arctic Centre I.C.E. Ltd., *(e)* Atlas Equipment Co. Ltd., *(f)* Atlas Air Conditioning Co. Ltd., *(g)* Dominion International, *(h)* Endshire Export Marketing, *(i)* Falcon Systems, *(j)* Geodesigns, *(k)* Investacast Precision Castings Ltd., *(l)* Meed International Ltd., and *(m)* Rajbrook Ltd.; and if he will give the purpose of his dealings with each of these companies.

Mr. Needham: Some of the companies named have contacted the Department in connection with the publication by the United States treasury office of assets control of lists of specially designated nationals. Some have contacted the Department about export licences. It is not the practice of the Department to disclose details of such commercially confidential matters.

British Coal (Pensions)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what rates of growth net of contributions have been achieved by coal industry pension funds in each of the last 15 years; and in which of these a guarantee would have had to have been effected if his present proposals had been in operation.

Mr. Eggar: The performance of the British Coal pension funds and their record of deficiencies and surpluses are matters for the trustees of the pension schemes.

Nuclear Material

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *38*, if he will set out *(a)* those notifications of withdrawal of nuclear materials from safeguards that were temporary, giving the uses to which the material was put and *(b)* those notifications which were permanent.

Mr. Eggar: The majority of the withdrawal notifications referred to in my answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *38*, concerned the permanent withdrawal from safeguards of depleted uranium for sources shielding or small amounts of other nuclear materials for research and development or analytical purposes.

Safeguards Agreement

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions since the entering into force of tripartite safeguards agreement with EURATOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the safeguards authorities have been notified by Her Majesty's Government of intended withdrawals under clause 14 of the treaty.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with the provisions of article 14 of the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement, 571 advance notifications of the withdrawal of nuclear material from safeguards have been made since May 1979. The majority of these involved either the temporary withdrawal of material transferred to MOD sites for processing before being returned to safeguards at civil sites, or, in the case of permanent transfers to MOD sites, the withdrawal from safeguards of material such as depleted uranium for source shielding or small amounts of other nuclear materials for R & D or analytical purposes.

External Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the trade and commodity coverage of the 1980 weights given in table F2 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics"; and what were the corresponding weights in 1980, 1985 and 1990 in terms of United Kingdom exports and imports of manufactures.

Mr. Needham: The coverage of the weights is given in the footnote to table F2 in the" Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics".

The other information requested is shown in the table.

Weights based on total trade (exports plus imports) of manufactures with the United Kingdom

	1980	*1985*	*1990*
Belgium-Luxembourg	8·976	7·498	7·912
Canada	2·895	2·457	1·810
France	13·060	11·990	14·512
Germany (Federal Republic)	20·453	23·049	24·267
Italy	8·175	7·946	8·721
Japan	5·299	6·485	7·352
Netherlands	9·443	9·224	10·356
Sweden	5·373	4·662	4·371
Switzerland	8·628	4·556	3·821
United States	17·698	22·134	16·877

Note: Manufactures defined as sections 5-8 of the Standard International Trade Classification.

Magnox Reactors

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the publication date for the nuclear installations inspectorate's examination of generic safety issues in Magnox reactors in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the Health and Safety Executive is planning to publish the nuclear installations inspectorate's report reviewing the generic safety issues of the long term safety reviews of Magnox power plant by the end of April.

Trade Balance

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the net balance of trade with the other EC countries in 1972 and *(b)* the total balance of trade in the period since the United Kingdom joined the EC; and what were the figures in respect of manufacturing trade.

Mr. Needham: The available information is given in the table.

United Kingdom crude balance of trade[1] with the EC[2] (£ billion, current prices)

Year	*Total*	*[3]Manufactures*
1972	–0·6	
1973	–1·4	
1974	–2·4	
1975	–2·5	–0·5
1976	–2·4	–0·5
1977	–2·3	–0·6
1978	–3·0	–1·6
1979	–3·7	–2·7
1980	–0·0	–1·7
1981	–0·7	–3·0
1982	–2·2	–5·0
1983	–3·8	–7·9
1984	–4·4	–8·4
1985	–3·4	–9·0
1986	–9·7	–10·8
1987	–10·2	–11·1
1988	–14·9	–13·4
1989	–16·3	–14·6
1990	–10·9	–9·9
1991	–1·9	–1·6
1992	–5·1	–3·7

[1] The crude balance of trade is defined as exports (free on board) less imports (cost, insurance and freight).

[2] The EC is defined throughout as it was defined in 1992; that is, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany (including the former Democratic Republic), Italy, the Republic of Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Portugal and Spain.

[3] Manufactures are defined by sections 5 to 8 of the standard international trade classification.

Sources:

Total: Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, CSO.

Manufactures: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Defence Sales

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what rescheduling of payments on outstanding debts occurred in course of the British-Jordanian defence sales agreements; on what dates this occurred; and how this was reflected in public accounts.

Mr. Needham: ECGD-insured debts of £170 million due from Jordan have been rescheduled. These debts relate to payments of principal and interest due between 1989 and early 1994; a substantial proportion relates to the defence sales agreements. The debts are covered by two bilateral rescheduling agreements, the first signed in August 1991 and the second in January 1993. The reschedulings were concluded as part of general agreements reached between Jordan and its creditors in the Paris Club. To date payments under these agreements have been made on time.

The rescheduling of these debts is reflected in ECGD's annual trading accounts.

Plutonium

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the quantities of plutonium material unaccounted for for each of the last 10 years of Magnox reprocessing at Sellafield, and details of projections of MUF quantities of plutonium once the thermal oxide reprocessing plant is in operation.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1977, British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) and the AEA have issued annual press releases giving the difference between the book inventory of nuclear materials on each site and the measured physical inventory. This difference, known as 'material unaccounted for'—MUF—indicates an apparent gain of material

when positive and an apparent loss when negative. It is not normally evidence of an actual loss or gain of material but often reflects measurement error.

The figures published by BNFL and the AEA for the 10 years to 1991-92 were:

	Kg
1982-83	-0·5
1983-84	+4·2
1984-85	+9·1
1985-86	+4·0
1986-87	+2·2
1987-88	-1·5
1988-89	+4·0
1989-90	-1·0
1990-91	-11·5
1991-92	+9·8

Once the thermal oxide reprocessing plant comes into operation, its contribution to Sellafield MUF will be reflected in the site figures in the normal way. The impact on the total will depend on the plant's performance.

The safeguards system for THORP has been described in papers presented at the 15th European Safeguards Research and Development Association—ESARDA—symposium in Rome in May 1993 which make it clear that the tracking of nuclear material inventories is only part of an overall safeguards system covering a variety of arrangements.

EURATOM

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which United Kingdom representatives are members of the European Commission and EURATOM special scientists group on atomic energy questions; for how long they have been members of the group; and if he will set out the part played by Her Majesty's Government in the choice of United Kingdom members of the group.

Mr. Eggar: The last five-year mandate of EURATOM's Scientific and Technical Committee—STC—expired on 31 March 1993. A Council decision confirming the membership of the STC for the next period to March 1998 is expected shortly. Renewal of the mandate will be announced in the *Official Journal of the European Communities.*

Radioactive Waste Storage

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the proposed management strategy for the radioactive waste that will be stored at Sellafield following retention in the enhanced actinise removal plant, as referred to in paragraph 6 of his decision document on THORP, published on 15 December.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 18 February 1993, *Official Report,* column *319.*

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reliability calculations his Department had conducted, or contracted to consultants, to evaluate the safety of the high level radioactive waste storage tanks at Sellafield using the EC computer program PC Cosyma.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc, subject to the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate's views as to safety.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 12 January 1994

DEFENCE

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give direction to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Hanley: No such powers are held by my right hon. and learned Friend under existing legislation.

Tornado

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when an order for further thermal imaging airborne laser designator pods for the Tornado aircraft will be placed.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that a contract for further thermal imaging airborne laser designator—TIALD—pods for the ground attack Tornado was agreed with GEC Marconi Avionics on 11 January 1994. The order, worth around £50 million, will provide more than two years' work for the company's Edinburgh factories and its suppliers around the country.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proposals he has to make the provision of the sixth European VAT directive retrospective to 1 January 1990; and what he estimates will be the effect on local authority capital expenditure since that date;

(2) what proposals he has to refund VAT to golf clubs and other golf course operators as a result of implementation of the sixth European Community VAT directive;

(3) what estimate he has made of the effect of implementation of the sixth European Community VAT directive on the 5 per cent. de minimis exemptions for local authorities for trading activities;

(4) what estimate he has made of the administrative costs to local authorities of the implementation of the sixth European Community VAT directive;

(5) what is the position in the United Kingdom in relation to the implementation of the EC sixth VAT directive; what advice has been issued by Customs and Excise to local authorities on the implementation of this directive; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I assume the hon. Member is referring to my announcement to the House of 22 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *303*, about the prospective VAT exemption for sporting services supplied by non-profit-making sports bodies and local authorities. This will be introduced by Treasury order to implement article 13(A)1(m) of the EC sixth VAT directive with effect from 1 January 1990. At this stage it is not possible to estimate the likely consequences for local authorities. The precise scope and effect of the exemption are at present under consideration in the light of responses from local authorities and others to the consultation paper issued by Customs and Excise. I hope to make a further announcement shortly.

Taxes and Incomes

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *472*, if he will provide the information on tax and income by region.

Mr. Dorrell: Readily available estimates for English regions based on the survey of personal incomes are in the tables. For 1980-81 and 1989-90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation in 1990-91, husbands and wives are counted separately. The estimates of total income relate to income subject to income tax and exclude non-taxable income such as certain social security benefits. The quantile groups of taxpayers are defined by reference to the number of taxpayers in each region in each year.

Information on Quantile groups of taxpayers within each region of England

	1980-81	
Quantile group of tax units	*Total income*	*Income tax liability*
Per cent.	*£ million*	*£ million*
North		
Top 1	273	93
Top 5	925	243
Top 10	1,570	380
Bottom 50	1,920	239
All taxpayers	6,780	1,250
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Top 1	519	184
Top 5	1,600	437
Top 10	2,630	652
Bottom 50	3,280	409
All taxpayers	11,200	2,020
North West		
Top 1	652	228
Top 5	2,140	580
Top 10	3,490	867
Bottom 50	4,230	540
All taxpayers	14,700	2,730
East Midlands		
Top 1	419	159
Top 5	1,240	351
Top 10	2,020	513
Bottom 50	2,470	308
All taxpayers	8,470	1,560
West Midlands		
Top 1	566	203
Top 5	1,740	487
Top 10	2,770	697

Quantile group of tax units	1980-81 Total income	Income tax liability
Per cent.	£ million	£ million
Bottom 50	3,490	453
All taxpayers	11,600	2,130
East Anglia		
Top 1	217	85
Top 5	670	213
Top 10	1,080	302
Bottom 50	1,200	160
All taxpayers	4,120	814
South East		
Top 1	2,950	1,200
Top 5	8,230	2,620
Top 10	12,900	3,640
Bottom 50	13,300	1,760
All taxpayers	48,900	9,850
South West		
Top 1	589	257
Top 5	1,630	517
Top 10	2,600	720
Bottom 50	2,790	316
All taxpayers	10,000	1,900

Information on quantile groups of taxpayers within each region of England

Quantile group of tax units	1989-90 Total income	Income tax liability
Per cent.	£ million	£ million
North		
Top 1	693	200
Top 5	2,080	489
Top 10	3,400	730
Bottom 50	3,930	462
All taxpayers	14,000	2,300
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Top 1	1,550	500
Top 5	4,310	1,140
Top 10	6,680	1,590
Bottom 50	6,700	762
All taxpayers	24,800	4,260
North West		
Top 1	2,170	694
Top 5	5,670	1,510
Top 10	8,670	2,080
Bottom 50	8,050	899
All taxpayers	31,000	5,390
East Midlands		
Top 1	1,450	465
Top 5	3,870	1,050
Top 10	5,920	1,460
Bottom 50	5,560	641
All taxpayers	21,300	3,750
West Midlands		
Top 1	1,660	519
Top 5	4,650	1,220
Top 10	7,240	1,720
Bottom 50	7,210	855
All taxpayers	26,700	4,630
East Anglia		
Top 1	906	302
Top 5	2,270	627

Quantile group of tax units	1989-90 Total income	Income tax liability
Per cent.	£ million	£ million
Top 10	3,430	858
Bottom 50	3,180	370
All taxpayers	12,000	2,140
South East		
Top 1	10,100	3,470
Top 5	25,300	7,660
Top 10	37,900	10,500
Bottom 50	29,000	3,760
All taxpayers	120,000	24,100
South West		
Top 1	2,150	726
Top 5	4,930	1,390
Top 10	7,320	1,860
Bottom 50	6,410	742
All taxpayers	24,700	4,460

Information on Quantile Groups of Taxpayers within each region of England

Quantile group of tax units	1990-91 Total income	Income tax liability
Per cent.	£ million	£ million
North		
Top 1	896	278
Top 5	2,410	624
Top 10	3,870	909
Bottom 50	4,260	474
All taxpayers	15,400	2,640
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Top 1	1,930	614
Top 5	4,780	1,300
Top 10	7,320	1,800
Bottom 50	7,020	759
All taxpayers	26,500	4,640
North West		
Top 1	2,460	808
Top 5	6,240	1,710
Top 10	9,530	2,350
Bottom 50	9,250	994
All taxpayers	34,900	6,130
East Midlands		
Top 1	1,470	474
Top 5	4,060	1,090
Top 10	6,320	1,530
Bottom 50	6,240	668
All taxpayers	23,600	4,100
West Midlands		
Top 1	2,100	693
Top 5	5,330	1,490
Top 10	8,120	2,030
Bottom 50	8,000	880
All taxpayers	29,600	5,250
East Anglia		
Top 1	1,080	366
Top 5	2,590	757
Top 10	3,860	1,020
Bottom 50	3,390	364
All taxpayers	13,200	2,410
South East		
Top 1	12,600	4,370
Top 5	29,400	9,090
Top 10	42,900	12,200
Bottom 50	33,100	4,060
All taxpayers	138,000	27,800

Quantile group of tax units Per cent.	1990-91 Total income £ million	Income tax liability £ million
South West		
Top 1	2,240	696
Top 5	45,450	1,480
Top 10	8,280	2,040
Bottom 50	7,960	862
All taxpayers	30,000	5,290

Information on quantile groups of taxpayers within each region of England

Quantile group of tax units Per cent.	1991-92 Total income £ million	Income tax liability £ million
North		
Top 1	922	285
Top 5	2,610	659
Top 10	4,170	960
Bottom 50	4,360	444
All taxpayers	16,200	2,710
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Top 1	2,000	635
Top 5	5,090	1,350
Top 10	7,760	1,880
Bottom 50	7,410	757
All taxpayers	28,100	4,840
North West		
Top 1	2,980	994
Top 5	6,880	1,890
Top 10	10,300	2,560
Bottom 50	9,600	984
All taxpayers	36,300	6,360
East Midlands		
Top 1	1,800	587
Top 5	4,390	1,190
Top 10	6,730	1,640
Bottom 50	6,680	710
All taxpayers	24,700	4,300
West Midlands		
Top 1	2,140	696
Top 5	5,340	1,440
Top 10	8,110	1,980
Bottom 50	8,290	902
All taxpayers	29,900	5,210
East Anglia		
Top 1	1,100	371
Top 5	2,690	758
Top 10	4,050	1,030
Bottom 50	3,830	409
All taxpayers	14,300	2,560
South East		
Top 1	14,100	4,880
Top 5	31,700	9,780
Top 10	45,900	12,900
Bottom 50	34,200	4,120
All taxpayers	143,000	28,800
South West		
Top 1	2,100	675
Top 5	5,500	1,480
Top 10	8,400	2,050
Bottom 50	8,150	847
All taxpayers	30,400	5,280

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to end the avoidance of tax by payment in vintage wine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Measures announced in the Budget, and now published in the Finance Bill, will stop employers avoiding the operation of PAYE—pay as you earn—by paying their staff in assets which can then swiftly be turned into cash. This will include payment in the form of vintage wines, when arrangements exist for the employee to sell those wines. Such payments have always been taxable: the new rules simply remove the ability to defer the tax liability until after the end of the year.

Privatisation Publicity

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent on publicity for (i) the Northern Ireland Electricity privatisation and (ii) the British Telecom third privatisation.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of offer advertising was £2·3 million, excluding VAT, for the Northern Ireland Electricity—NIE—share offer and £13·5 million, excluding VAT, for the BT3 share offer. The NIE costs were equally split between the company and the Department of Economic Development.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury has a number of powers to regulate borrowing and lending by local authorities. In addition, the exercise of some of the relevant powers of other Government Departments is subject to formal Treasury consent.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Since 1979 three former hon. Members have held appointments on quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations for which I have responsibility. These were to the Securities and Investments Board (SIB):

Mr. Robin Hodgson: non-executive director; duration of appointment four years from 1985; salary £8,000 per annum in 1985 to £10,500 per annum in 1989.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald: non-executive director; duration of appointment two years from 1993; salary £13,500 per annum.

Lord Stewartby: non-executive director; duration of appointment two years from 1993; salary £13,500 per annum.

Counterfeit Coins

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the circulation within the United Kingdom of counterfeit pound coins; what action is being taken against those making such coins; what advice is given to those in business warning of the circulation of such coins; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I have received no formal representation about the circulation within the United Kingdom of counterfeit £1 coins and, although there are some in circulation, the numbers are believed to be extremely small in relation to the total number of £1 coins in circulation.

Under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981, it is a criminal offence to make a counterfeit of a coin or to pass it on to another person. Where sufficient evidence of such activities exists, it is for the police to take action against those responsible.

No specific advice has been given to those in business warning of the circulation of counterfeit £1 coins.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no such powers.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons without accommodation claimed income support in the Newbury constituency in each month between December 1992 and November 1993.

Mr. Burt: I am informed by Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pensioners

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider including in the pension book information on help available to pensioners through the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Hague: The administration of retirement pension is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Andrew Bowden, dated 11 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking if he will consider including information in pension order books about the help available to pensioners through the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme.

The Benefits Agency receives numerous requests from within the Agency, other Agencies, Government Departments, Local Authorities and commercial interests to include material in the pension order book.

The purpose of the notes is to provide customers with information relating to payment of pensions and regular reviews are undertaken to ensure that the notes are easy to understand and concise and to the point, as it has been found that many pensioners are deterred from reading notes that are too lengthy or complex.

If we were to accede to these requests to include additional information, not only would there be operational difficulties in complying with the volume of such requests but the amount of written material may once again deter pensioners from reading the essential notes.

The Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA) are responsible for administering the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) and already have arrangements in place to promote HEES. EAGA supply leaflets on HEES free of charge to local authorities, housing benefit offices, housing associations, Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Benefits Agency, job centres, Age Concern and other organisations which have contact with the HEES client group. EAGA also encourage installers to promote HEES locally by means of advertising, press publicity and distribution of their leaflets.

I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners opt to receive their state pension by automated credit transfer.

Mr. Hague: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Andrew Bowden, dated 11 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the proportion of pensioners receiving payment of Retirement Pension (RP) by automated credit transfer (ACT).

I am able to tell you that as of 3 October 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 2,623,378 pensioners were having their RP paid by ACT. This represented 26·53% of the total caseload.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Parliamentary Questions

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the oral answer of 9 December 1993 to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston), *Official Report*, column 494, if he will now make a statement in regard to the information sought by the hon. Member.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Member for Bristol, East suggested in her intervention on 9 December that at a meeting on 2 December with departmental officials and the head of the government statistical service, she had been told that information on low income statistics could be made available to her which had been previously refused in a series of replies to her questions, on grounds of disproportionate cost or incompatibility with this Department's statistical practice; and she intimated that this information had been wrongly withheld from the House. This is not so.

It continues to be the case that the results in question are either not available at all, could be made available only at disproportionate cost to public funds, or require the use of conventions which DSS statistical advisers consider unsound in the particular context. However, as I have repeatedly said in correspondence with the hon. Member, this Department makes available to bona fide researchers

the base data set from which the households below average income statistics are obtained, to enable them to undertake what further analyses they choose under the conventions they prefer. This is entirely compatible with the principles of open government.

At the meeting to which she referred, the hon. Member was not offered replies to questions previously refused on grounds of disproportionate cost, non-availability or unreliability. She was, however, reminded that the base data set could be made available to her research advisers for their own use in the computer readable form of their choice. This repeated an offer first made some months ago, which I understand her researchers have now taken up. This Department's practice continues to be to provide reliable information within normal parliamentary conventions.

I have repeatedly offered the hon. Member for Bristol, East a meeting to discuss the issues about which she is concerned, but she has chosen not to take this up.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may generally give directions to local authorities, among others, or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, in their capacity as employers, as qualifying mortgage lenders and as bodies which may be required to provide information or evidence under the Child Support Act 1991.

More specifically, the majority of his powers to give directions to local authorities, or to otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, relate to the administration of housing benefit and council tax benefit. These powers are to be found in:

Sections 5, 6, 75 to 77, 127, 128 and part VIII of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (as amended) and

Sections 130 to 137 of part VII of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (as amended).

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may also specifically direct local authorities to provide such relevant information about a person's housing benefit or council tax benefit entitlement in accordance with paragraph 2 of schedule 2 to the Child Support Act 1991.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of people who would be eligible for housing benefit were they not protected tenants; what the cost of giving benefit to these people would be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

HEALTH

Racal Healthlink

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts, *(c)* trusts, *(d)* family health service authorities and *(e)* general practitioners use the Racal healthlink.

Mr. Sackville: Information to the end of November shows that six regions use the Racal healthlink, together with 98 family health services authorities, 932 general medical practitioners and 1,656 dental practices. Precise figures are not available for districts or trusts. However, figures are estimated to be five to 10 and 40 to 50 respectively.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of setting up the Racal data network to *(a)* the Department of Health, *(b)* health regions and *(c)* health districts.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of setting up the infrastructure required to operate the healthlink service was met entirely by Racal Network Services Ltd.—RNSL.

Costs attributable to the Department were those relating to the employment of civil servants and consultants between November 1987 and November 1991 when the healthlink service was being planned and implemented. These costs are estimated to be £450,000.

The only costs payable by health regions and districts are those generated by usage of the healthlink service and records of these transactions are not available centrally.

General Practitioners

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what machinery exists to safeguard general practitioner fundholders' choice of hospital;

(2) what representations she has received from fundholding general practitioners about choice of hospital for their patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have frequent contact with general practitioner fundholding practices. General practitioner fundholders are able to purchase the best possible care for their patients from whichever hospital they judge best.

Dental Handpieces (Sterilisation)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it mandatory for manufacturers to include information on the method of sterilisation of dental handpieces.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 17 December 1993, at column *1007*.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which European countries it is mandatory for manufacturers to include information on the method of sterilisation of dental handpieces.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the powers she has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise to require them to act in a way which she prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which she may exercise these powers.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a number of such powers. They could be listed comprehensively only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member has a specific function in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Public Appointments

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of *(a)* the Labour party, *(b)* the Conservative party and *(c)* other political parties who are (i) chairs and (ii) non-executive directors of (1) regional health authorities, (2) district health authorities, (3) trusts and (4) family health services authorities; and if he will give the party breakdown for each authority and trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

We do not seek details of political affiliation. People are appointed for their personal qualities, and for the skills they bring to the leadership and strategic direction of the national health service.

South Birmingham Health Authority.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what request she has received from the West Midlands regional health authority for advice as to the suitability of Jane Slowey as a potential non-executive director of South Birmingham health authority;

(2) what advice she or any member of her Department gave the West Midlands regional health authority as to the suitability of Jane Slowey as a potential non-executive director of South Birmingham health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

The Attorney-General: I have no such powers.

WALES

Waiting Lists

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the most recent waiting list figures are for each district health authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information on waiting lists for Welsh hospitals is for March 1993, published in "Welsh Hospital Waiting List Bulletin 1993", No. 2. A copy of this publication is held in the Library of the House.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the names of the individuals undertaking the review of city challenge;

(2) if the review of city challenge was put out to tender;

(3) for what reasons consultants have been asked to review city challenge;

(4) which consultancy firm is undertaking the review of city challenge;

(5) what is the cost of the review of city challenge.

Mr. Baldry: Consultants have been asked to undertake an interim evaluation of city challenge as part of the usual monitoring and assessment of Government programmes.

Six companies were invited to tender for the contract. All six responded. The European Institute of Urban Affairs, Liverpool—John Moores—university, led by Professor Michael Parkinson, was awarded the contract. For commercial reasons, the Department does not disclose the cost of individual contracts.

The Department has also carried out an internal management review of city challenge procedures. The review made a number of recommendations to streamline procedures and further reduce bureaucracy. City challenge chief executives were represented on the review group. Many of the recommendations have already been implemented and much of what it was considering has already been overtaken by developments on the single regeneration budget and integrated regional offices.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Curry: The information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on the export of hazardous wastes to developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Below is the text of a statement which I have sent to the secretariat of the UNEP Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal.

"The United Kingdom restates its intention not to permit the export of wastes to developing countries for final disposal. However, the United Kingdom remains of the view that recycling of wastes offers environmental benefits provided that adequate environmental standards are maintained. Movement of wastes across international boundaries for that purpose does not detract from the environmental benefits, even though there is more difficulty in ensuring that the required standards are being maintained. The control mechanisms provided for under the Basel Convention are designed to overcome those difficulties. The United Kingdom, therefore, does not intend, for the time being, to prohibit the export of any waste moving towards environmentally sound recovery processes within developing countries, provided that the requirements of the Basel Convention

are met. The United Kingdom is taking an active role in the work proceeding in the Technical Working Group to draw up guidelines for environmentally sound recovery operations. These guidelines will assist the United Kingdom in deciding which operations are environmentally sound and which are not.

Shipments of hazardous waste from the United Kingdom to developing countries will be investigated over the coming months so that the United Kingdom can meet its obligations under the Basel Convention and the EC Waste Shipments Regulation: any shipments which are not moving towards environmentally sound recovery operations will be prohibited. If, following this investigation, we find that, in general, wastes exported from the United Kingdom to developing countries are not being recovered to adequate environmental standards, then the United Kingdom will consider again the question of imposing a general ban on the movements of hazardous wastes to all or selected developing countries. We will report on our progress in this investigation".

Travellers

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish guidance on the planning aspects of gipsy sites.

Mr. Baldry: My Department and the Welsh Office issued a joint circular on 5 January giving guidance to local planning authorities on the planning aspects of gipsy sites. The guidance forms part of our measures to reduce unauthorised camping, including our proposals to reform the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

The guidance should help local planning authorities to decide where gipsy caravan sites are best located and provide for them in development plans. Our objective is that gipsies should find, develop and run sites for themselves, as many of them wish to do.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which costs relating to accommodation of the occupied royal palaces are borne by his Department and which by the occupants of *(a)* grace and favour accommodation and *(b)* accommodation for members of the royal family no longer on the Civil List.

Mr. Sproat: I have been asked to reply.

My Department meets the landlord's costs of grace and favour accommodation in the occupied royal palaces in England, including that of members of the royal family no longer on the Civil List. These costs include maintenance of the structure and exterior of the building, painting or wall-papering of internal walls and surfaces, permanent fixtures in bathrooms and kitchens and the provision and maintenance of hot water, heating and electrical services. Occupants meet the costs of carpets, curtains, other soft furnishings and moveable equipment and day-to-day minor maintenance and pay for light, heat, water, telephones and council tax. There are slightly different arrangements for the Queen's house, Edinburgh for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible and where his Department pays for all maintenance costs including minor maintenance. The occupants are responsible for paying for the costs of utilities, council tax, soft furnishings and moveable equipment.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the £250,000 spent on refurbishment of apartments in St. James's palace was spent on royal apartments; and how much was spent on each apartment.

Mr. Sproat: I have been asked to reply.

The sum of £40,000 was spent on royal apartments at St. James's palace in 1992-93, of which £38,000 was on an apartment for His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales when he moved from Kensington palace. The remaining £2,000 was spent on minor items of maintenance in other royal apartments.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to give permission to British Nuclear Fuels plc for the operation of its waste treatment facility for the encapsulation of plutonium-contaminated material located at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Operation of this facility is a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc, subject to meeting the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sensitive Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries included on the restricted list for sensitive technologies or military exports *(a)* in 1979, and *(b)* currently; and if he will indicate the reasons for the changes in the list since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992 imposes restrictions on the export of sensitive technologies and military goods. Unless otherwise specified, the export of goods listed in this order is controlled to all destinations.

A list of destinations subject to special export licensing procedures was first announced to Parliament on 19 December 1991, *Official Report,* columns *230-31,* and subsequently published.

Since then, the following changes to that list have been publicised:

the deletion of Hungary as a result of its deproscription by COCOM;

the deletion of the Soviet Union and replacement by individual identification of all territories formerly part of the Soviet Union;

the deletion of Czechoslovakia and replacement by individual identification of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic following their separation into individual countries on 1 January 1993;

the addition of all territories formerly part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were deproscribed by COCOM on 1 January 1994 and this will be reflected in the next published list.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response was received from the Government of Saudi Arabia to the official protests following the breaking up of a concert at the international school at Yambu by Saudi police.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Saudi Arabian authorities were very concerned about the interruption of the winter concert at Yanbu international school on 29 November 1993. They have told Her Majesty's embassy in Riyadh that the incident will be investigated.

Ben Needham

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to discover the whereabouts of the toddler Ben Needham following his abduction in Greece in 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since they were informed of Ben Needham's disappearance, consular officials have been in regular contact with the Greek authorities in Athens and Kos, and also with the United Kingdom police. The Greeks have conducted several searches for Ben on Kos. The Greek police and police in several other countries continue to investigate every reported sighting. Ben has not been forgotten.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons he declined the request for a spokesman for the BBC Radio 4 programme "File on Four" on 21 December 1993 relating to Lockerbie.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy on the Lockerbie bombing has been made clear on numerous occasions.

COCOM

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the matters discussed and decisions taken at the meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls held in The Hague on 16 November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Representatives of the Governments participating in COCOM met in The Hague on 16 November. They agreed that COCOM should be terminated as soon as possible, but no later than 31 March 1994. There was also broad agreement that, at the same time, new arrangements should be established to promote transparency and responsibility in the transfer of armaments and related dual-use goods: the details of the new arrangements remain to be decided.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Goodlad: There are many ministerial statutory powers in relation to local authorities in the United Kingdom. However, none of them, so far as I am aware, specifies that it is the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who is to exercise the power. As regards those powers expressed to be exercisable by "the Secretary of State", it would be most unusual for my right hon. Friend to be the appropriate Secretary of State to do so.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Tim Smith: Under the present constitutional arrangements for Northern Ireland I have no powers of direction which are specific and exclusive to the local authorities in the Province. Government Departments do, however, have powers under a wide range of legislative provisions to direct and to prescribe by regulations and by other means what action should be taken by district councils. This information is not readily available, however, and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

EDUCATION

Student Awards

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out for each local authority in rank order the expenditure on major discretionary awards per head of adult population in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Boswell: The available information on discretionary awards made at between 50 per cent. and 100 per cent. of the mandatory rate is given in the table.

Total expenditure on full value[1] discretionary awards per head of the adult population[2]

Local authority	*1991-92 (£)*
Cumbria	16·02
North Yorkshire	14·27
Walsall	9·84
Knowsley	9·79
Cheshire	8·94
Powys	8·92
Leicestershire	8·15
Wirral	7·65
Westminster	7·52
Dorset	7·42
Hackney	7·37
Devon	7·10
Corporation of London	7·08
Richmond upon Thames	7·02
Liverpool	7·00
Durham	6·76
Lancashire	6·70
Islington	6·42
Suffolk	6·28
Shropshire	6·15
Humberside	6·11
Kirklees	5·79
Kingston upon Thames	5·68
Gloucestershire	5·62
Kensington and Chelsea	5·41
Barnsley	5·27
Clwyd	5·21
Cleveland	5·04
Brent	5·01
Avon[3]	4·96
Camden	4·92
Ealing	4·79
Hampshire	4·72
Sunderland	4·71

Local authority	1991-92 (£)
Bradford	4·68
Newham	4·49
Lewisham	4·47
North Tyneside	4·46
West Glamorgan	4·45
Bromley	4·42
Southwark	4·41
Tower Hamlets	4·39
Norfolk	4·31
Sefton	4·31
South Tyneside	4·26
Kent	4·09
South Glamorgan	4·06
Barking	3·96
Bury	3·80
Waltham Forest	3·72
Lincolnshire	3·66
Wakefield	3·51
Redbridge	3·43
Cornwall and Scilly Isles[4]	3·35
Isle of Wight	3·32
Greenwich	3·31
Berkshire	3·29
Hereford and Worcester	3·22
Gateshead	3·20
Bexley	3·14
Leeds	3·11
Wiltshire	3·08
Gwent	3·08
Cambridgeshire	3·05
Somerset	3·04
Hertfordshire	3·04
Trafford	2·90
Sutton	2·83
Lambeth	2·75
Nottinghamshire	2·68
Oxfordshire	2·65
Northumberland	2·57
Northamptonshire	2·55
Rotherham	2·36
Mid-Glamorgan	2·26
Essex	2·21
Birmingham	2·21
Bedfordshire	1·96
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·95
Barnet	1·94
Croydon	1·93
St. Helens	1·92
Staffordshire	1·89
Sandwell	1·87
Surrey	1·85
Hillingdon	1·84
Havering	1·80
Buckinghamshire	1·70
Oldham	1·70
Solihull	1·67
Bolton	1·67
Doncaster	1·62
Rochdale	1·61
Derbyshire	1·55
Merton	1·54
Enfield	1·51
Dudley	1·44
East Sussex	1·37
Dyfed	1·32
West Sussex	1·17
Tameside	1·10
Newcastle upon Tyne	1·05
Stockport	1·01
Manchester	1·00
Coventry	0·99
Harrow	0·85
Wolverhampton	0·76
Wigan	0·66
Hounslow	0·64
Warwickshire	0·63
Sheffield	0·57
Salford	0·42
Gwynedd	0·26
Haringey[5]	0·00
Wandsworth[6]	n/a

Notes:

[1] Full value awards are those paid at between 50 per cent. and 100 per cent. of the mandatory rate.

[2] 1992 mid-year population estimates of age 16+ based on 1991 census.

[3] Expenditure on sandwich students not available.

[4] Cornwall and Isles of Scilly combined because separate population data are not available—Isles of Scilly made no full value awards in 1991-92.

[5] Haringey made no full value awards in 1991-92.

[6] LEA unable to supply appropriate information.

No information is available in respect of awards made by the London residuary body.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expenditure on supplementary allowances to students in receipt of a mandatory award in respect of their dependants; and if he will give a breakdown of such allowances by age group of students and gender of students.

Mr. Boswell: In the 1991-92 academic year, the latest year for which data are available on mandatory awards made by local education authorities, the gross value of the supplementary allowances made in respect of students' dependants was £29·2 million. Supplementary allowances are not payable separately: they form part of the student's total maintenance requirement which may be reduced according to the other resources available to him before his net grant is calculated. Information on the age group and gender of students eligible for dependants' allowances is not collected centrally.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what help is available to assist with the cost of school meals and transport for mature students in receipt of a mandatory award who have children of school age.

Mr. Boswell: Since the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 in 1988, only children whose parents are in receipt of income support and those children who are themselves eligible for income support, are entitled to receive free school meals. Although most full-time students are not entitled to social security benefits, including income support, certain students in vulnerable groups, including lone parents and disabled students, may be able to claim benefits. Students' partners are able to claim benefits in their own right.

Local education authorities must provide free transport if they consider it necessary to facilitate a pupil's school attendance, and may help other pupils with their fares. Authorities are not required to make special arrangements for children whose parents are in receipt of a mandatory award.

Nursery Education

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will reply to the petition on nursery education presented to the House on 19 November 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has noted this petition. It calls for a statutory duty to be laid on local education authorities to provide nursery education on

demand. We have repeatedly made clear that the Government's policy is to promote choice and diversity in pre-school provision and to extend access as resources allow. Universal state nursery education would be neither consistent with that policy nor affordable at present.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The former Members of the House of Commons who have been appointed since April 1992 to the bodies for which the Department of National Heritage is responsible, are set out.

Information about the appointment of former Members to bodies which are now the responsibility of the Department of National Heritage before the creation of the Department is not held centrally.

No salaries—as distinct from expenses—are paid except where otherwise indicated.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Barnett—Trustee, Victoria and Albert Museum, September 1992 for three years; member, board of the National Film and Television School, July 1993 for 18 months —£2,030.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Cocks of Hartcliffe—vice chairman, British Broadcasting Corporation, August 1993 for five years—£15,140.

Mr. John Lee—chairman, board of the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, October 1992 for three years; member, board of the English tourist board, November 1992 for two years.

Mr. Bryan Magee—member, Arts Council of Great Britain, January 1993 for four years.

Mr. Matthew Parris—member, Broadcasting Standards Council, January 1993 for five years—£10,900.

Mr. Alf Dubs—member, Broadcasting Standards Council, May 1992 for 10 months—£10,900.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Rees—commissioner, Museums and Galleries Commission, February 1993 for four years—reappointment.

The Rt. Hon. the Lord St. John of Fawsley—chairman, Royal Fine Art Commission, November 1992 for four years—reappointment.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the names of all former British representative members of the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The only former British representative member in the European Parliament who has been appointed since April 1992 to the bodies for which the Department of National Heritage is responsible, is:

The Baroness Hooper—trustee, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, April 1993 for five years.

Information about the appointment of former MEPs to bodies which are now the responsibility of the Department of National Heritage before the creation of the Department is not held centrally.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1992 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The members of the House of Lords who since 1992 have been appointed to bodies for which the Department of National Heritage has responsibility for the appointment or has responsibility for the body to which the appointment is made by Her Majesty the Queen or the Prime Minister are set out.

No salaries—as distinct from expenses—are paid, except where otherwise indicated.

The Lord Armstrong of Ilminster—chairman of the trustees, Victoria and Albert museum, May 1993 for five years—reappointment; trustee, National Music Day Foundation, July 1992, for a maximum period of six years.

The Right Hon. Lord Barnett—trustee, Victoria and Albert museum, September 1992 for three years; member, board of the National Film and Television School, July 1993 for 18 months —£2,030.

The Baroness Birk—trustee, Theatres Trust, April 1993 for three years.

The Baroness Blackstone—trustee, Natural History museum, March 1992 for five years.

The Lord Brabourne—trustee, Science museum, September 1993 for one year—reappointment; member, board of the National Film and Television School, December 1992 for two years, 10 months—reappointment.

The Baroness Brigstocke—chairman of trustees, Geffrye museum, November 1993 for three years—reappointment; commissioner, Museums and Galleries Commission, February 1992 for five years

The Lord Cavendish of Furness—commissioner, English Heritage, October 1992 for three years—£2,420

The Right Hon. Lord Cocks of Hartcliffe—vice-chairman, British Broadcasting Corporation, August 1993 for five years—£15,140

The Lord Crathorne—trustee, National Heritage Memorial Fund, August 1992 for three years

The Baroness Dean—member, Broadcasting Complaints Commission, August 1993 for 5 years—£12,265.

The Viscount Downe—trustee, Science museum, September 1993 for three years—reappointment

HRH The Duke of Gloucester—trustee, British museum, September 1993 for five years—reappointment; commissioner, English Heritage—October 1992 for three years—reappointment

The Right Hon. the Earl of Gowrie—chairman designate, Arts Council of England, appointment takes effect 1 April 1994, for five years

The Baroness Hooper—trustee, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, April 1993 for five years

The Lord MacFarlane of Bearsden—trustee, National Heritage Memorial Fund, September 1993 for three years—reappointment

The Lord O'Neill—commissioner, Museums and Galleries Commission, January 1992 for five years—reappointment

The Rt Hon. Lord Rees—commissioner, Museums and Galleries Commission, February 1993 for four years—reappointment

The Lord Rothschild—chairman, National Heritage Memorial Fund, April 1992 for three years

The Right Hon. the Lord St. John of Fawsley—chairman, the Royal Fine Art Commission, November 1992 for four years—reappointment

The Duke of Wellington—trustee, the board of the Royal Armouries, October 1992 for three years—reappointment

Civil Servants

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil servants are employed at his Department to deal with tourism issues; and what is the total annual cost of their salaries.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) on Monday 13 December, *Official Report,* column *458.*

Playing Fields Register

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will arrange for the national register of playing fields to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council is providing a copy of the register's database on diskette to the Library of the House.

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the total number of women employed.

Mr. Sproat: The total number of staff by grade and the number of women in each grade within the Department of National Heritage excluding its two executive agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Parks, are listed in the table.

DNH Staff as at 22 November 1993

Grade	*Total number in Grade*	*Of which female*
1A	1	—
G3	4	1
G4	1	—
G5	15	4
G6	5	4
G7	42	11
SEO	17	6
HEOD	2	1
AT	3	3
HEO	46	20
EO	55	23
AO	54	28
AA	27	15
SPS	5	5
PS	17	17
Typist	7	7
SGB1	1	1
SGB2	10	7
SIO	5	—
IO	4	1
CUR E	2	2
CUR G	3	—
Assistant Librarian	1	1
TOTALS	327	156

Regional Conferences

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will provide a list of the *(a)* dates, *(b)* locations and *(c)* invitees for his current programme of regional conferences with groups involved in Department of National Heritage subjects.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage is holding a series of regional conferences throughout England for bodies involved in DNH subjects in order to support networks and help create new ones, and to identify examples of best practice and innovation for dissemination throughout the country.

The first conference took place on 3 December 1993 for the northern region at St. James's park, Newcastle United Football Club. The next four conferences will take place in 1994 as follows—venues have not all be identified:

18 February
South-west: Rougemont hotel, Exeter
15 April
West Midlands
10 June
Eastern region
22 July
North-west

There will be four more conferences for the south-east, east midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and London, but the order and timing of those conferences are yet to be established. I would expect the conference series to be completed in spring 1995.

The invitation list will vary from region to region. I attach an illustrative list of organisations likely to be invited. We envisage each conference to be attended by about 100 delegates.

Regional Conferences: The Audience

DNH Regional Agencies
Regional Arts Board
English Heritage Regional Groups
Regional Tourist Board
Area Museum Council
Regional Library Service
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England

Other Agencies
Council for Protection of Rural England
Agricultural Development Advisory Service
National Parks
City Action Teams
English Nature
Rural Development Commission
Countryside Commission
Development Agency/Company
National Trust
Local radio
BBC
Channel 3 regions
Forestry Commission
National Parks
Historic Houses Association
TECs
British Waterways
Regional Health Authority

Others
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts
Library and Information Services Council
Voluntary agencies

DNH National Agencies
Arts Council
English Heritage
English Tourist Board
Museum and Galleries Commission
Sports Council
Independent Television Commission

Local Authorities
County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Any regional grouping
(eg North of England Assembly)

Other Government Departments
Employment—training
Employment—Employment Service
Environment
MAFF
Transport

Trade and Industry

Private Sector
CBI
Chambers of Commerce
Major heritage/sporting attractions
(eg Longleat, Beaulieu, museums, theatres)
Trade associations
TUC

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Escort Service

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of escorting all prisoners in the Metropolitan police district in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 12 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of escorting prisoners in the Metropolitan Police area in each of the last five years.

This information is not readily available in the form which you require and could only be obtained in that form at disproportionate cost. In preparation for the contracting out of the court escort and custody service in the Metropolitan Police District, however, estimates were made, in a special exercise, of the costs for the financial years 1994-95; 1995-96 and 1996-97. These estimated costs were £28·468 million for 1994-95; £29·283 million for 1995-96 and £29·816 million for 1996-97. These figures include the cost of custody of prisoners at court, but exclude the costs of escorting and of court custody of category A prisoners.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of escorting category A prisoners in the Metropolitan police district in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 12 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of escorting Category A prisoners in the Metropolitan Police district in each of the last five years.

Information in the form requested is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Home Leave)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the operation by the Prison Service of grants of home leave for prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 12 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the review of the operation of home leave for prisoners.

The information you request is contained in my letter to the Member for Brecon and Radnor on 17 December (Col. 946).

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Howard: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Doncaster Prison

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a contract has been let for the management of Doncaster prison.

Mr. Howard: On 1 February 1993 it was announced that from 1 April 1993 the Prison Service agency would assume full responsibility for taking forward Government policy on the involvement of the private sector in the management of prisons.

In accordance with EC services directive 92/50 EEC, a notice advertising the requirement for service provision for the operation of Doncaster prison was placed in the supplement to the *Official Journal* of the European Community.

Following the issue of this notice, invitations to tender were issued to eight bidders on 16 July 1993.

After careful consideration of the proposals submitted, the prisons board has decided to award the contract to Premier Prison Services Ltd. A contract will be signed in the next few days, subject to the agreement of satisfactory terms and conditions.

Premier Prison Services Ltd. is a joint venture company owned by Serco Ltd. and Wackenhut Corrections Corporation. Wackenhut Corrections Corporation has experience of running penal establishments in the USA and Australia.

Doncaster is a category B local prison and is due to take its first prisoners by July this year.

Deportation

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the outcome of the joint Home Office/Metropolitan police review of deportation procedures.

Mr. Howard: Following the tragic death of Mrs. Joy Gardner, I put in hand a joint review, with the Metropolitan police, of procedures in cases where the force assists the immigration service in the removal of people from this country under immigration powers. A representative of the Association of Chief Police Officers has also been involved in the review.

Police involvement is required in only a small minority of removal cases. Wherever possible, the departure of people voluntarily or under the supervision of the immigration service is the preferred option. Compulsion is used only as a last resort.

The review is now complete. I am placing a copy of its report in the Library. I have accepted its recommendations as a sensible basis for continued co-operation in this sensitive area.

As a result of the review, in cases involving the removal of someone from the United Kingdom, there will be systematic arrangements for consultation between the immigration service and the police before visits are made to private premises. These will include more informative requests for police assistance, to a standard format; joint planning meetings in potentially difficult cases; and an expectation that the need for a planning meeting will be addressed in every case.

The review addressed the use of special restraint equipment in cases where the person being removed behaves violently or disruptively. The conclusions were that handcuffs should be available where necessary in accordance with ordinary police practice; that the use of additional arm and leg restraints, under strictly controlled conditions, is justified in those cases where the detainee cannot be adequately restrained with handcuffs; but that the use of mouth restraints—which was suspended in August 1993—should not be resumed. I accept these conclusions.

The report of the review also contains recommendations for enhanced training of police officers who act as escorts in such cases.

The police have an important role in assisting the immigration service to remove people in breach of the immigration laws, especially where it proves necessary to arrest such people in the community for detention pending removal. The review found that there was also a proportion of cases where the violent or disorderly nature of the person being removed, or his criminal record, warranted a police escort, but that otherwise trained escorts from suitable private contractors could continue to be used.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what purpose his Department employs the private security firm of Norwest Holst in connection with the M11 link road.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The Home Office does not employ the private security firm of Norwest Holst in connection with the M11 link road.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to his question by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), on Tuesday 14 December, *Official Report*, column *589*.

Police and Local Communities

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to improve liaison between the police and local communities in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Under proposals that I expect shortly to bring before Parliament, each police authority will have a duty to consult local people and to publish a local policing plan reflecting local and national goals. In addition, the parish constable scheme, which is being introduced on a pilot basis, will also improve the liaison between the police and the community.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff years have been expended on the Health and Safety Executive's market-testing programme since 1 January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive expects its market-testing programme to produce significant savings. However, the initiative is at an early stage and, to date, the number of staff years spent on market testing, net of savings, is 14·5.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will instruct the Health and Safety Executive to place in the Library a copy of the publication "The Cost to the British Economy of Work Accidents and Work-Related Ill Health".

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Yes, copies will be made available when it is published.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Health and Safety Commission's review of regulations has so far highlighted any of the sets of regulations identified by the Secretary of State as early candidates for revocation in his press notice of 20 July 1993 as the source of substantial undue costs to business.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The set of regulations referred to in the press notice were identified by the Health and Safety Executive as seeming to have outlived their usefulness in their contribution to maintaining health and safety standards.

The Government share the Health and Safety Commission's view that allowing outdated and unnecessary legislation to remain on the statute book adds to the complexity and uncertainty faced by business and others, distracts attention from essential requirements and thus reduces the effectiveness of the regulatory regime in maintaining necessary standards of health and safety.

Workstart

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job placements have been achieved by each of the workstart pilot schemes; and in what categories of employment these placements have been found.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 7 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *210-11*.

The participants are working in a range of employment categories including factory operatives; drivers; sales assistants; clerical assistants; hotel and catering assistants; and labourers.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what anti-displacement measures have been incorporated into the operating procedures of workstart pilots; and how successful they have been.

Miss Widdecombe: All the pilots require employers to sign a declaration stating that they have not dismissed or made redundant any employees directly or indirectly for the purposes of employing the subsidised employee. Each pilot monitors the position of participating employers.

Initial evaluation of Workstart has found no evidence of displacement.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following relevant powers have been identified in the main legislation governing the Department's activities:

Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1958, section 3(1): power to direct local authorities to provide sheltered employment pursuant to section 15 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Employment and Training Act 1973, section 10(2)—as amended by section 45 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993: power to direct local education authorities—in Scotland, education authorities—to provide, or arrange for the provision of, a careers service.

Employment and Training Act 1973, section 10(7)—as amended by section 45 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993: power to direct LEAs to transfer relevant records to providers of the services.

Employment and Training Act 1973, section 12(2): duty of LEAs to provide specified information in such form and at such times as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may direct.

Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, section 18(2): power, by regulations, to make local authorities responsible for the enforcement of the relevant statutory provisions.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The following noble Lords hold or held positions to which they were appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment:

The Baroness Turner of Camden
Member: Central Arbitration Committee
Fee: £141 per day when sitting
Duration: Not exceeding five years, but can be reappointed

Also—
Part-time commissioner: Equal Opportunities Commission —EOC—from 1983 to 1988
Fee: Daily rate of £85 in 1988
Duration: Four years plus reappointment for a further year.

The Lord Wedderburn
Member: Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal—CSAT
Fee: £141 per day when sitting
Duration: Three years; can be renewed.

The Lord McCarthy
Member: CSAT
Fee: £141 per day when sitting
Duration: Three years; can be renewed.

The Baroness Dean of Thornton le Fylde
Member: Employment Appeal Tribunal—EAT
Fee: £177 when sitting
Duration: Three years; eligible for reappointment up to age 70.

The Baroness Gardner of Parkes
Lay Member: Industrial Tribunal
Fee: £113 per day when sitting
Duration: Three years; eligible for reappointment up to age 69.

The Baroness Platt of Writtle
Chairman: EOC
Salary: £35,066 in 1988
Duration: Three years, plus a further two years from 1983 to 1988.

The Baroness Lockwood of Dewsbury
Chairman: EOC
Salary: £25,455 in 1980
Duration: Three years, plus a further two years from 1975 to 1980.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I regret that it is not possible on the grounds of disproportionate cost to identify any former members of the European Parliament who may have been or who are members of the quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations sponsored by the Employment Department.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The following two appointments have been made:

Christopher Chope—Health and Safety Commissioner. Annual fee of £1,060 plus an attendance allowance of £105 for each fortnightly meeting attended. Appointed for three years from 1 April 1993. Former Conservative MP.

William S. Hilton—Employer member to the Construction Industry Training Board—CITB; also a member of the CITB administration committee. Eligible for allowance for loss of remunerative time. Appointment for the period November 1984 to April 1990—re-appointed in July 1988. Former Labour MP.

It is not possible on the grounds of disproportionate cost to include details of any appointments to the committees for the employment with people with disabilities, the industrial tribunals, and the employment appeals tribunal, with a total of over 2,250 appointees.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will calculate the appropriate daily volume of natural gas consumption for generation of electricity which is equivalent to the employment of each person employed above or underground in a coal mine of comparable performance to those recently closed as being uneconomic.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Estimated daily production per person, based on the overall average output per manshift in British Coal's mines for the period January to October 1993, was 7·85 tonnes of coal. Assuming an energy content of 237 therms per tonne,

and average efficiencies of coal and gas fired power stations of 34 per cent. and 45 per cent. respectively, the equivalent quantity of gas for use in electricity generation would be 1,400 therms or 41 MWh.

Data on output specifically relating to recently closed mines are not held centrally.

TRANSPORT

Lorry Ban, London

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received about the operation of the London night-time lorry ban;

(2) what consultation his Department has undertaken with representatives of the public about the future of the London lorry ban;

(3) if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions in respect of the London lorry ban.

Mr. Norris: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members, from London borough councils and from the Freight Transport Association. Many of these related to the cost of administering the ban and the problems created by the operation of the system of exemption permits. I am considering proposals aimed at reducing the bureaucracy associated with the administration of the ban while maintaining the environmental protection it offers. These will be published shortly. I am arranging to meet the London Boroughs Transport Committee, the Freight Transport Association and the Association of London Authorities shortly.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his plans for the future procurement of trunk road and motorway maintenance work.

Mr. Key: We have no plans to change the current arrangements in the run-up to the establishment of the Highways Agency in April 1994. From then on, it will be one of the tasks of the chief executive to keep the arrangements under review, with a presumption in favour of increasing the opportunities for the private sector to participate in this work.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. MacGregor: This information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Motorway Charges

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates his Department has made of the impact of motorway charges on serious injuries and fatalities to vehicle occupants, cyclists and pedestrians.

Mr. Key: Motorways are among our safest roads. A key objective of motorway charging is to provide another source of finance to expand the network more quickly. This will reduce the diversion to other roads which would otherwise occur as the motorway network became more congested.

The Green Paper "Paying For Better Motorways"—Cm. 2200—considered in some detail the extent to which charging might of itself cause diversion to other roads. The research summarised in the document suggested that charging at levels well below those used in other countries—as was suggested in the Green Paper—would cause only modest diversion.

The overall effects of charging on road safety would depend on a number of factors. These include the timing of introduction; the overall charge levels and any variations in charging between different roads and at different times of day; and the practical effects of charging in terms of facilitating quicker expansion of the motorway network. Such issues require further exploration. In the meantime, there is no basis for assessing in detail the likely effects of charging on road safety.

London Underground (Power Failure)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that there is no repetition of the power failure affecting the London Underground on 24 November.

Mr. Norris: I have asked London Transport for an urgent, full report on the circumstances of the power failure, to include what actions it proposes to ensure that there is no recurrence.

SCOTLAND

Health Board Staff

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff who had been sacked but who were threatening legal action were re-employed on the same salary in each of the last 10 years in each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many non-executive members of each NHS trust, which has such members, have a background in health care.

Mr. Stewart: The number of non-executive members, including chairmen, of each NHS trust, who have a background in health care, is as shown in the table:

	number
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust	3
Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare NHS Trust	2
Caithness and Sutherland Hospitals NHS Trust	4
Dundee Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	3
Grampian Healthcare NHS Trust	2
Monklands and Bellshill Hospitals NHS Trust	3
Moray Health Services NHS Trust	2
North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust	2
Raigmore Hospital NHS Trust	4
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	4
Royal Scottish National Hospital and Community NHS Trust	2
South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust	3

	number
Southern General Hospital NHS Trust	3
Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust	2
Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust	4
West Lothian NHS Trust	1
Yorkhill NHS Trust	3

Prisons

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many disciplinary offences were committed in each Scottish prison in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have asked Mr. E. W. Frizzell, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to arrange for a reply to be given to the hon. Member.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 12January 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of disciplinary offences committed in each Scottish prison in each of the last five years.

Data on the number of disciplinary offences were first collated on a financial year basis in 1989-90 and information for the four years since then is given in the table.

Differences between establishments and over time should be treated with caution, as there may be variations in the way in which some establishments record disciplinary offences, and in the prisoner mix at certain establishments during the period concerned. It should be noted also that in 1992-93 the average daily prisoner population was 5,395 compared with 4,886 in 1989-90.

Number of Disciplinary Offences Recorded in Scottish Penal Establishments

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Prisons				
Aberdeen	876	775	826	1,370
Barlinnie (inc. Special Unit)	1,846	1,830	1,184	957
Cornton Vale	334	352	368	333
Dungavel	47	58	67	108
Edinburgh	1,041	965	1,152	1,270
Friarton	147	93	181	80
Glenochil	1,041	935	715	905
Greenock	602	361	543	479
Inverness	136	159	157	261
Low Moss	865	765	786	803
Noranside	67	64	71	68
Penninghame	92	93	90	104
Peterhead	671	436	546	286
Perth	1,043	1,219	859	1,079
Shotts (inc. Special Unit)	915	1,020	1,374	1,246
Young Offenders Institutions				
Castle Huntly	691	821	729	733
Cornton Vale	228	132	106	48
Dumfries[1]	1,504	1,732	1,679	1,693
Glenochil	2,157	2,905	2,767	2,509
Polmont	1,828	1,367	1,545	1,954
Remand Institution				
Longriggend	1,457	1,223	895	884
TOTAL	17,588	17,305	16,640	17,170

[1] Includes disciplinary offences in respect of adult remand prisoners.

Cancer

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the trend of death from cancer; what assessment he has made as to its causes; and if he will increase funding for cancer research programmes.

Mr. Stewart: The table shows the number of deaths from cancer for the zero to 64 age group and for persons of all ages in the period 1975 to 1992.

	Age 0-64		All ages	
Year	Males	Females	Males	Females
1975	2,572	2,249	7,056	6,011
1976	2,579	2,305	7,165	6,250
1977	2,546	2,272	6,902	6,286
1978	2,573	2,385	7,158	6,566
1979	2,450	2,350	7,357	6,550
1980	2,374	2,248	7,194	6,501
1981	2,324	2,213	7,298	6,639
1982	2,455	2,249	7,315	6,762
1983	2,476	2,274	7,325	6,885
1984	2,386	2,398	7,376	6,923
1985	2,417	2,247	7,420	7,035
1986	2,345	2,199	7,443	7,091
1987	2,349	2,158	7,563	7,087
1988	2,332	2,156	7,518	7,202
1989	2,179	2,220	7,593	7,324
1990	2,219	2,163	7,608	7,349
1991	2,205	2,040	7,589	7,287
1992	2,133	2,115	7,796	7,336

Although there has been an increase in the number of deaths of both men and women of all ages, the trend in relation to the under-65s is downwards. This is encouraging in view of the target of a 15 per cent. reduction in cancer mortality in that age group between 1986 and the year 2000.

Mortality rates associated with some childhood and young adult cancers have declined substantially as a result of advances in chemotherapy. There has also been a modest decline in mortality associated with those cancers which are amenable to treatment. Mortality rates for cancers which become symptomatic only at an advanced stage have remained constant. The main increase in cancer-related mortality in women is lung cancer. In men, the most significant increase has been in the incidence of cancer of the prostate. The causes of all types of cancer are however constantly monitored, primarily through the Scottish cancer registration system.

Funding of cancer research remains high on our list of priorities, and has been increased significantly by the establishment of the Scottish cancer therapy network, which aims to ensure that all patients suffering from cancer in Scotland receive the best and most up-to-date treatment available.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by what date he estimates hospital waiting lists will be *(a)* one year or less and *(b)* six months or less.

Mr. Stewart: At 30 September 1993 less than 9 per cent. of those on in-patient and day case waiting lists had waited more than 12 months—down from 15 per cent. in 1991. All health boards are working to ensure that no one waits longer than 12 months by April 1997, and some are on course to achieve this significantly sooner.

Pain Relief Clinics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many pain relief clinics there are in each health board area;

(2) what is the greatest travelling distance that a patient could have in order to attend a pain relief clinic;

(3) what is the current average waiting time for a first appointment at each pain relief clinic;

(4) what is his policy on the provision of pain relief clinics;

(5) what plans he has to reduce waiting times for first appointment at pain relief clinics;

(6) how many specialists are employed in pain relief clinics in 1988 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Stewart: The table identifies, within health board areas, those hospitals which hold pain relief clinics—which are recorded as anaesthetic clinics. The table also lists the average waiting times experienced by those patients who had a first appointment at these clinics during the six months to 30 September 1993.

It is for health boards as purchasers of care to secure from provider units or trusts an appropriate level of pain relief services based on assessment of local need. It is for health boards too to take suitable action on waiting times in light of their own targets. Information on the number of specialists employed in pain relief clinics, and on distances travelled by patients to these clinics, is not held centrally.

Hospitals with pain relief clinics[1]
Mean wait where first out-patient appointment recorded during period 1 April 1993 to 30 September 1993

Health board area/hospital	*Mean wait (days)*
Argyll and Clyde	
Inverclyde royal hospital	63
Ayrshire and Arran	
Crosshouse hospital	47
Ayr hospital	52
Borders	
Borders general	—
Dumfries and Galloway	
Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary	95
Fife	
Victoria hospital, Kirkcaldy	109
West Fife DGM (Queen Margaret hospital)[2]	139
Dunfermline and West Fife hospital[3]	75
Forth Valley	
Falkirk and District royal infirmary	67
Stirling royal infirmary	29
Grampian	
Aberdeen royal infirmary	31
Greater Glasgow	
Royal infirmary	75
Stobhill hospital	92
Victoria infirmary, Glasgow	102
Southern general hospital	97
Gartnavel general hospital	148
Highland	
Belford hospital, Fort William	—
Caithness general hospital	39
Raigmore hospital, Inverness	—
Lanarkshire	
Monklands district general hospital	82
Law hospital	35
Lothian	
Edinburgh royal infirmary	72
Western general hospital	—
Tayside	
Dundee royal infirmary	160
Perth royal infirmary	53
Ninewells hospital, Dundee	—
Western Isles	
Western Isles hospital	—
All clinics	84

[1] Pain relief clinics are recorded as "Anaesthetics".
[2] Hospital opened in period.
[3] Hospital closed in period.

Prescriptions

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prescription items in Scotland have been prescribed per person since February 1993.

Mr. Stewart: The available information from February to October 1993 is set out in the table:

Month	*Number of prescriptions*	*Number of items prescribed per person on general practitioner list as at 1 April 1993*
February	3,882,295	0·72
March	4,505,745	0·84
April	4,027,044	0·75
May	4,032,892	0·75
June	4,310,893	0·80
July	4,125,123	0·77
August	4,017,407	0·75
September	4,096,030	0·76
October	4,266,755	0·80

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *888*, on the dismissal of Laurence Peterken; whether officials of the Scottish Office were consulted by Greater Glasgow health board, or its chairman, at any stage before 2 November.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Officials held discussions with representatives of the health

board on a number of occasions about the board's proposals for a severance package for Mr. Peterken but were not consulted by the board about the proposal to dismiss him.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the reason for the time taken between his views being sought on 5 November 1993, on the appointment of Mr. Peterken to the post of special project director and his being offered the post on 12 November 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* There were a number of exchanges between the Department's lawyers and lawyers acting for Mr. Peterken as to the form and content of the contract of employment.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions officers of the central legal office of the Scottish Office had discussions with Mr. W. S. Fyfe concering the proposed removal of Mr. Laurence Peterken from his post.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Central Legal Office, which exists to provide independent legal advice to the national health service in Scotland, is part of the Common Services Agency, not of the Scottish Office. I understand officers of the Central Legal Office had frequent discussions with Mr. Fyfe concerning Mr. Peterken's position.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which persons were involved in the appraisal of performance of Mr. Laurence Peterken for the year to 31 March 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Mr Peterken's performance for the year to 31 March 1993 was appraised by the former chairman of Greater Glasgow health board, Sir Thomas Thomson, who was in office for the period under review. This appraisal was supplemented slightly by the then chairman, Mr. W. S. Fyfe, who took up office on 1 April 1993 and submitted by him to the management executive for the NHS in Scotland. The appraisal was reviewed by the acting chief executive for the NHS in Scotland following discussions with the former NHS chief executive.

Common Services Agency

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has sought an estimate of the cost of commissioning external consultants to review the operation of the Common Services Agency.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* No.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Costs

Mr. Gapes: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the cost in terms of *(a)* staff, *(b)* lighting, *(c)* heating, *(d)* catering and *(e)* other costs of operating Parliament on its current hours; and what would be the estimated cost should the recommendations of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House relating to hours of sitting be implementing in full.

Mr. Beith: The costs of the House of Commons on the present basis of operations are set out in the 15th annual report of the House of Commons Commission—House of Commons Paper No. 820 of Session 1992-93. It is not practicable to provide an estimate of changes in these costs if the recommendations of the Jopling report were to be implemented in full. However, an indication of the additional staff costs of sittings after 10.30 pm was given in response to a question by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 22 October 1993, *Official Report,* column *347.*

Mr. Luff: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the cost per hour of the House sitting beyond midnight.

Mr. Beith: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 22 October 1993, *Official Report,* column *347.* The rate at which additional costs are incurred when the House sits after midnight is broadly the same as the rate at which costs are incurred when the House sits after 10.30 pm.

Posting Boxes

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many posting boxes there are *(a)* within that part of the Palace of Westminster under House of Commons control and *(b)* in the outbuildings in the parliamentary estates; how many have been replaced in the last five years; why this has been necessary; and what was the cost (i) within the Palace of Westminster and (ii) in the other buildings.

Mr. Ray Powell: There are 18 posting boxes within that part of the Palace of Westminster occupied by the House of Commons and nine boxes in the parliamentary outbuildings. During the past five years 14 of the boxes within the palace have been replaced, having become unserviceable through age, and inadequate for the volume of letters and packages they were required to accommodate. The new boxes, produced to designs approved by the appropriate Committees of the House, were provided by the Post Office in 1992 at no cost to the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Quota Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she proposes introducing to ensure that sheep do not die of malnutrition in any part of the United Kingdom as a direct result of loss of subsidy eligibility arising from the sheep quota scheme; and if she will immediately announce an emergency aid package to assist all farmers caught in such a dilemma.

Mr. Jack: There is no evidence that the introduction of quotas will result in farmers keeping animals that they will be unable to feed. We have already allocated some 18·7 million sheep quota units. In addition, some 780,000 quota units will be available for distribution from the 1993 national reserve and a special "pool" of quota set up for those who claimed premium for the first time under the 1992 sheep annual premium scheme. These are very substantial levels of quota allocations and will ensure, in

general, that producers have access to the premium payments they need. Sheep producers also receive aid from other sources. For example, those in less favoured areas are eligible under the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme. Producers wishing to acquire extra quota can do so under the flexible transfer and lease arrangements we have negotiated. They can also sell any stock which is surplus to their requirements.

Diseased Cattle

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will instigate immediate checks on the health of all cattle and sheep entering the United Kingdom from whatever source.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 1 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *590-91*, about checks on imported cattle. Similar measures are applied to imported sheep.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will raise with the European Council of Ministers the resurgence in the United Kingdom of brucellosis from warble fly infested cattle, the risk to human health and necessary measures to eliminate such diseases.

Mr. Soames: The incidence of warble fly in imported cattle has been taken up vigorously with the veterinary authorities of the countries of origin concerned and notified to the EC Commission. Although the cases of brucellosis last autumn affected imported cattle as well as indigenous animals, investigations have not revealed conclusive evidence to confirm that the primary source of infection was an imported animal.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will take action to bar the free movement of cattle and sheep into the United Kingdom from any country reporting warble fly infestation.

Mr. Soames: No. All cattle imported into the United Kingdom, with the exception of those imported direct to a slaughterhouse for immediate slaughter, must be treated with an approved warble fly preparation within 24 hours of arrival at the premises of destination. Sheep are not susceptible to warble fly infestation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers govern the restriction of free movement within the European Community of animals which are a danger to public health.

Mr. Soames: Controls to prevent the spread of disease, including diseases transmissible to humans, as a result of trade in live animals within the Community are laid down in the following EC directives:

Council directive 64/432/EEC on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine;

Council directive 90/426/EEC on health problems governing the movement of equidae and their import from third countries;

Council directive 90/539/EEC on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in, and imports from third countries of, poultry and hatching eggs;

Council directive 91/68/EEC on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in ovine and caprine animals;

Council directive 92/65/EEC laying down animal health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of animals, semen, ova and embryos not subject to animal health requirements laid down in specific Community rules referred to in annex A(1) to directive 90/425/EEC;

Council diretive 92/117/EEC concerning measures for protection against specified zoonoses and specified zoonotic agents in animals and products of animal origin in order to prevent outbreaks of food-borne infections and intoxications.

Rabies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to ensure that Britain remains free of rabies.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) on 16 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *455-56*.

Milk

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of whether the national interest and that of milk producers would be better served by the bulk of our milk being handled by processors who have a proven track record in the development of new products instead of by Milk Marque, the successor of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales will have to have regard to all the circumstances when deciding whether to approve the Milk Marketing Board's reorganisation scheme. One of the main purposes of ending the milk marketing scheme is to allow producers to decide to whom and on what terms to sell their milk. I look forward to when they will be free to do so.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the December Fisheries Council meeting.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Fisheries Council of 20 and 21 December, indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Jack: I represented the United Kingdom together with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

The December Fisheries Council is the one at which total allowable catches—TACs—for the EC, and member states' quota shares of those TACs, are settled for the forthcoming year. Stocks are generally under pressure and efforts against them need to be reduced. However, within that overall strategy, on which decisions were reached by the Council without a vote, we obtained the best possible outcome compatible with the scientific advice. For some stocks, fishermen will have better prospects in 1994. In particular, they should be pleased with the large share of the North Sea nephrops TAC allocated to the United Kingdom; a significant increase in the availability of haddock in the North sea and of flatfish in the Irish sea; agreement to "mackerel flexibility" so that our fishermen can catch this species in the North sea between October and December at the same level as last year; the 40 per cent. increase in the United Kingdom's quota for cod at north Norway. In the light of the scientific advice, it would have

been damaging to the stocks, and therefore not in the long-term interest of the fishermen themselves, to maintain the previous quotas for all stocks, but I negotiated the best obtainable outcome.

The Council also considered adjustments to the rules under which the Spanish and Portuguese vessels fish in Community waters. As a result of the strong line which we and others have been taking in the negotiation, the presidency produced a compromise document in an endeavour to find a way forward to an agreement. This document replaced the Commission's "blank cheque" approach under which we would have released the Iberians from all constraints without knowing what would go in their place. It represented a workmanlike first step in reflecting our key interest in ensuring satisfactory safeguards for all the areas around our shores and provides a useful basis for considering the detailed arrangements which will apply after 1995. I pressed for a decision to be reached quickly on the basis of the presidency's document so that the uncertainty facing our fishermen could be removed. However, agreement was not possible at this meeting. The Council agreed to continue work, on the basis of the Belgian presidency's proposal, under the forthcoming Greek presidency.

At my request, the Council considered, and adopted unanimously, an EC-Canada fisheries agreement which establishes satisfactory arrangements for managing complicated and sensitive fisheries.

There were two issues before the Council that have been concerning fishermen and environmentalists. The first was industrial fishing. In response to pressure that I have been applying for several months, the Commission will establish a working group. This will bring together marine ecologists and fisheries biologists to study the implications for the marine ecosystem of fishing in general and industrial fishing in particular. The group will also set priorities for future research work on the effect these have on the marine ecosystem, sea birds and cetaceans. There will be a report to the Council before the end of April 1994. The second issue concerns drift nets. There was no proposal before the Council for an extension of the derogation allowing limited use of long drift nets and no decision on this was taken. However, the Council asked the Commission to prepare a report on drift netting in the light of the best scientific advice available. A proposal could be made only if it were possible to demonstrate scientifically the absence of any ecological risk.

On the market situation, the Council noted that minimum import prices could not form a permanent instrument of market management. They could apply only in exceptional circumstances and the general range of minimum import prices would expire at the end of December. However, for salmon the Commission agreed to review the situation during January to see whether the minimum import prices for salmon should continue beyond 31 January 1994.

The Council agreed a regulation to implement the financial instrument for fisheries guidance, which amalgamates, with some amendments, the regulations dealing with fisheries structures and with marketing and processing. I voted against this new measure because some of its provisions did not provide value for money. The Government will carefully consider which provisions to implement in the United Kingdom bearing in mind the need to maintain an efficient industry while balancing fishing capacity and resources.

A Council decision concerning the objectives and detailed rules for restructuring the Community fisheries sector was adopted. This formalises the Council's endorsement in 1992 of the horizontal targets for reducing fishing effort contained in the 1993-96 multi-annual guidance programmes. I abstained, since the introduction of more binding targets goes beyond the requirement in the basic regulation for the Council to set objectives. The Netherlands also abstained; Greece voted against.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the powers she has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which she prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which she may exercise these powers.

Mr. Jack: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Set-aside

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the conditions that can be placed on land that has been set aside under the arable area payments scheme to improve or protect the environment and improve recreational opportunities; what plans she has to impose new conditions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The conditions for the management of set-aside under the arable area payments scheme are given in the explanatory guide to the scheme for 1993-94. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. Farmers can obtain further advice on how to manage their set-aside land for specific environmental objectives from the arable area payments leaflet AR14, a copy of which has also been placed in the Library. In addition free advice on environmental matters is available to farmers through the ADAS agency.

The proposed countryside access scheme, which we plan to introduce later this year, should increase the recreational potential of set-aside by offering farmers incentive payments for providing public access to suitable non-rotational set-aside land. In addition, following pressure from the United Kingdom, the Agriculture Council has asked the Commission to undertake a study of the relationship between set-aside and arable land withdrawn from production under EC forestry and agri-environment regulations. We will continue to press for such land to be allowed to qualify as set-aside under the arable area payments scheme.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many press officers her Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The number of press officers, including the chief press officer, employed by MAFF in each year since 1983 is as follows:

Year		*Year*	
1983	6	1989	17
1984	6	1990	28
1985	6	1991	17

Year		Year	
1986	6	1992	[1]7
1987	6	1993	7
1988	[1]7		

[1] not including two press officers working specifically for ADAS.
[2] (as [1]above) and including an extra press officer to cover the introduction and implementation of the Food Safety Act 1990.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Power (Privatisation)

15. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next intends to discuss privatisation with the chairman of Nuclear Power.

25. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the chairman of Nuclear Power to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman of Nuclear Electric regularly to discuss a range of issues.

Aerospace Industry

16. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will visit the aerospace industry in Lancashire to discuss the implications of the Budget.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a visit.

Payment of Debt

17. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to bring forward proposals to deal with the late payment of debts.

Mr. McLoughin: On 30 November my Department published the consultation paper; it considers possible measures to address late payment including legislation for a statutory right to interest and a British standard on prompt payment as well as inviting other ideas. Responses to the consultation paper are invited by 31 March 1994.

Any measures arising from the consultation process will be implemented as soon as practicable after that date. In the meantime, the Government will continue to address the problem of late payment through the range of initiatives which have already been introduced.

20. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on proposals to tackle late payment of commercial debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Representations have been received from individual small businesses and from other interested organisations seeking action to reduce the incidence of late payment. They have proposed a variety of possible measures, all of which have received careful consideration.

My Department is currently consulting on possible new measures to address the problem of late payment through the consultation paper "Late Payment of Commercial Debt". Responses are invited by 31 March 1994. In the meantime, the Government will continue to address the problem of late payment through the range of initiatives which have already been introduced.

Pit Closures

18. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met representatives of the mining supplies industry to discuss the impact of the colliery closure programme.

Mr. Eggar: I met the Association of British Mining Equipment Companies—ABMEC—in May 1993 and I have had frequent contact with individual companies in the industry since then. An increasing number of mining equipment companies are in contact with the Department to take advantage of the mining equipment company scheme which I announced in August.

Recycled Materials

19. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action has been taken over the past year to encourage industry to make greater use of recycled materials.

Mr. McLoughlin: The main reason manufacturers use recycled materials is to gain competitive advantage.

We have seen levels of United Kingdom recycling increase in recent years. Between 1991 and 1992 the tonnages of recycled plastics rose by almost 20 per cent., of glass containers by almost 20 per cent. and of waste and paper board by 5 per cent.

We are looking to industry's response to the producer responsibility challenge to increase the use of recycled materials.

Investment Fund Companies (Insurance Policies)

21. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to monitor the performance of investment fund companies related to life, pension and endowment policies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department undertakes the prudential supervision of companies providing life, pension and endowment policies in accordance with the Insurance Companies Act 1982 and associated regulations. Responsibility for regulating the marketing of such products rests with the Securities and Investments Board and the relevant self-regulatory organisations under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Interbuild

22. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many officials from the ECGD were in attendance at the overseas trade services stand at Interbuild to advise on export strategy.

Mr. Needham: The Government were represented at this private sector exhibition by officials from DTI's overseas trade services and the Department of the Environment. ECGD was not present. The exhibition was geared primarily to goods and services sold on short terms of payment. These would be covered by private insurers rather than ECGD.

Technology Transfer

23. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to establish a mechanism for technology transfer to help small and medium-sized enterprises increase their competitiveness.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department operates a number of technology transfer programmes whose main aim is to improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Ferranti International

24. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what meetings he has had with the receivers of Ferranti International about the assistance his Department can offer to preserve the high skill and high technological capacity of the company.

Mr. Sainsbury: Officials of my Department have had a number of meetings with the receivers.

Electrical Appliances (Plugs)

26. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects legislation to be implemented requiring all new electrical appliances to be sold with a plug.

Mr. McLoughlin: The European Commission is still seeking clarification on a number of points which is delaying the progress of the proposed regulations. I am hopeful that these matters will be resolved shortly.

Small Businesses

27. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on measures he plans to assist small businesses.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government will continue to encourage small businesses by fostering a stable economic climate at home and by encouraging and promoting competition in world markets. Both directly and through the training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies, the Government will continue to make available a wide range of high-quality support and assistance which will be further enhanced by the development of a national network of business links.

38. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met representatives of small businesses to discuss their future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade met representatives of the Institute of Directors when he spoke at their annual dinner on 23 November 1993.

My noble Friend the Minister with responsibility for small firms has regular meetings with all the major small firms organisations to discuss a range of issues.

Foam Filling

28. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further representations he has received from firms manufacturing foam and foam-filled furniture about the dangers of low-quality imports.

Mr. McLoughlin: Three identifiable businesses responding to the recent consultation on the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended, as part of my Department's deregulation initiative review alleged that some imported foam-filled furniture does not comply with the regulations. The regulations apply to all domestic upholstered furniture intended for supply to the United Kingdom market, and, accordingly, local authority trading standards officers, who have a day-to-day responsibility for enforcement of the legislation, have powers to deal with any non-complying furniture, whatever its country of manufacture.

32. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to protect United Kingdom consumers from dangerous foreign foam-filled furniture.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to protect United Kingdom consumers from dangers arising from imported foam-filled furniture.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Furniture and Furnishings Regulations (Fire) (Safety) 1988 ban the use of standard polyurethane foam and cite a series of flammability tests designed to increase the fire resistence of upholstered furniture. These regulations apply to all domestic upholstered furniture intended for supply to the United Kingdom market and, accordingly, local authority trading standards officers, who have day-to-day responsibility for enforcement of the legislation, have powers to deal with any non-complying furniture, whatever its country of manufacture.

Manufacturing

29. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in manufacturing investment in real terms since 1978-79.

Mr. Heseltine: In the latest financial year—1992-93—manufacturing investment was 8 per cent. lower than in 1978-79 but 23 per cent. higher than in 1981-82, a similar point in the economic cycle.

31. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he intends to introduce to expand the manufacturing base of the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Sainsbury: All the Government's policies are focused on improving the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry, both manufacturing and services.

Chief Scientist

30. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement explaining the circumstances surrounding the departure of the chief scientist on 1 December.

Mr. Heseltine: The DTI's chief adviser on science and technology will be leaving the Department at the end of February 1994 for career reasons. He has done an excellent job, including making a major contribution to the refocusing of the DTI's innovation policy, and to the White Paper on science, engineering and techology published last May.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee

33. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many loans have been made between April and December 1993 under the small firms loan guarantee

scheme; what was the total grant involved; and what are the comparable figures for the corresponding period in 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number and value of loans guaranteed under the small firms loan guarantee scheme in the period April to September 1993 was 1,384 loans to a value of £55·33 million. In the same period in 1992, the figures were 1,266 loans and £27·74 million.

Figures for October to December 1993 are not currently available.

Scientific Research

34. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he proposes to make in his Department's support for scientific research.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not envisage any further changes to my Department's recently refocused science and technology policy. We will be concentrating resources on improving the climate for innovation and facilitating access to technology and best practice while reducing support for technology development. Assistance for research and development in small and medium-sized firms will continue through the small firms merit award for research and technology and the support for products under research programmes, as will support for collaborations between industry and acadamia through the LINK scheme and for European collaborations, including EUREKA.

Telecommunications

35. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the European Community to deregulate telecommunications.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Telecommunications Council agreed on 16 June 1993 that voice telephony services will be liberalised by 1 January 1998, with an additional derogation period of no more than five years for Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland and, if justified, no more than two years for Luxembourg. The Commission will produce, by 1995, a green paper on the liberalisation of network infrastructure. The Commission presented on 7 December its proposals for the liberalisation of telecommunications services provided over satellites.

39. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he has taken to help the British telecommunications industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government's policies on telecommunications remain as set out in the 1991 White Paper "Competition and Choice: Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s" Cm 1461. These policies have already brought great benefits to domestic and business subscribers, and are already developing a healthy and competitive telecoms industry in Britain able to take on the best in the world.

Latin America

36. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on Government support for exports to Latin America.

Mr. Needham: Latin America offers major trading opportunities for the United Kingdom, as the performance of United Kingdom companies with the support of DTI export services has shown. United Kingdom exports to Latin America have increased by 26 per cent. during the past 12 months. Ministers are reinforcing these efforts by visiting Latin American countries with teams of business men. The President of the Board of Trade, for example, visited Mexico and Argentina in June 1993 with senior businessmen. In addition, export promoters are being appointed to cover each of the key Latin American markets and additional resources have been put into the DTI market branch.

Gas Pipelines

37. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the proliferation of offshore gas pipelines.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's policy on proliferation of offshore oil and gas pipelines is summarised in paragraph 3.2. of "Guidance Notes on Procedures for Regulating Oil and Gas Field Developments" published last December. I have arranged for a copy of the document to be placed in the Library of the House.

Gas Industry

40. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will make an announcement on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the gas industry.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Decisions on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas were announced on 21 December. The two main decisions taken are that:

(i) British Gas should separate fully the operation of its trading and transportation businesses, but will not be required to divest trading;

(ii) British Gas's tariff monopoly will end in April 1996, and competition will be phased in over the two years to April 1998.

A copy of the full text of the announcement has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number and proportion of homes connected to gas mains supply for all standard regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: British Gas has estimated that the number and proportion of households using gas for each British Gas region in 1992 was as follows:

Households using Gas in 1992

Region	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage of all households*
Scotland	1,270	67
Northern	960	81
North Western	2,330	91
North Eastern	1,130	87
East Midlands	1,820	83
West Midlands	1,720	83
Wales	820	74
East Anglia	1,440	74
North Thames	2,020	92
South Eastern	2,090	86
South	1,300	81
South Western	1,080	67
Great Britain	17,980	81
Northern Ireland	[1]—	[1]—

Region	Number (thousands)	Percentage of all households
United Kingdom	17,980	79

[1] No public gas mains supply.
Source: Monopolies and Mergers Commission report: "Gas and British Gas plc", volume 2. Table 2.10 (British Gas Estimates).

Deregulation Task Forces

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who were the members of his Department's deregulation task forces; and what criteria determined their selection to participate in the deregulation review.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A complete list of deregulation task force members has been placed in the Library of the House. There were no formal selection criteria. The chairmen were invited to participate as people of standing within their sector and they chose members who represented various groups within those sectors.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report and the recommendations of the deregulation task forces will be published.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The recommendations of the deregulation task forces will be published shortly. The task forces will not be publishing a formal report.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of his Department's deregulation task forces investigation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The salaries of the civil servants in the task force support unit and related administrative costs amounted to £165,000.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who advised the deregulation task forces on matters relating to health and safety at work during the course of their investigation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Matters relating to health and safety at work were considered by a cross-sectoral group of task force members which invited and received submissions from a wide range of interested parties including individual companies, trade associations, consultants, voluntary organisations and schools. The group also had extensive discussions with the Health and Safety Executive.

Objective 2 Status

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the areas included in the Government's application to the EC for objective 2 status.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) on 28 October, *Official Report,* columns *723-24.*

Export Credit Guarantees (Iraq)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what export credit guarantees were made available to Iraq for each year since 1979; and if there were changes of policy covering the export credit guarantees to Iraq over this time period.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom credit facilities for Iraq prior to 1983 were limited to basic credit insurance for cash or short-term credit transactions. From 1983 to 1988, under a series of inter-governmental financial protocols, the Export Credits Guarantee Department also supported the financing of United Kingdom contracts on medium-term credit involving the sale of capital goods, services, pharmaceuticals and humanitarian products. From 1985 onwards, of the overall protocol amounts, a limit of 20 per cent. was applied to medium-term credit for defence-related goods. ECGD came off cover for all types of transaction with Iraq in 1990.

The value of business with Iraq conducted on cash or short credit terms supported by ECGD since 1979 was:

	£ million
1979	113
1980	170
1981	292
1982	589
1983	461
1984	140
1985	161
1986	208
1987	55
1988	48
1989	97
1990	156

The amount of medium-term finance available under the protocol arrangements was:

	£ million
1983	[1]250
1984	[1]250
	[2]25
1985	[2]50
1986	[2]50
1987	[3]100
	[2]75
1988	[3]280
	[2]60

[1] Capital Goods and Projects
[2] Pharmaceuticals and Humanitarian Products
[3] Capital Goods, Services and Projects

The finance available under these protocols was not fully taken up by Iraq. ECGD's actual exposure was therefore less than the figures given above.

Departmental Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a list of the individuals who since 1985 have acted as inspectors for his Department but whose conduct has been criticised by their professional bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As far as I am aware disciplinary proceedings by a professional body have only been brought against two former inspectors, Mr. B. R. Addison, FCA and Mr. B. Worth, FCA. The proceedings, brought by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, were commenced after the inspectors were appointed. Those against Mr. Worth have not yet been concluded.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the earliest date that the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield can begin stage 5 commissioning.

Mr. Eggar: The authorisations granted pursuant to the decision of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will come into force on 17 January. Progress in commissioning the thermal oxide reprocessing plant beyond that date is a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc, subject to meeting the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he will take to ensure that the successor body to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation will receive sufficient funding to continue the protection of the social welfare of miners and ex-miners and their families after privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is consulting British Coal and the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation about the future provision of miners' social welfare services.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the number of collieries that will be privatised on the restructuring date specified in the Coal Industry Bill.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* It is intended to offer to the private sector all British Coal collieries which are currently operational.

Life Funds

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what monitoring his Department undertakes of the life funds of any insurance companies beyond the annual returns made by such companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department has powers, under the Insurance Companies Act 1982, to require insurance companies to furnish it, at specified times and intervals, with information about specified matters. These powers are used, as appropriate, in the light of the circumstances in individual cases. In addition, the Department maintains contact with companies through a programme of visits.

Newspaper Distribution

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect on newsagents of proposals to allow non-traditional outlets to supply and sell national newspapers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In deciding on the appropriate action to take following pubication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—MMC—report on the supply of national newspapers and the Director General of Fair Trading's advice on the report, I considered carefully the potential impact of my proposed action on existing retailers. I concluded that it was in the overall public interest to increase the level of competition and availability of newspapers, whether from traditional or non-traditional outlets.

I therefore announced on 9 December my intention to lay an order before the House to prohibit certain restrictions on the supply of newspapers which the MMC found to be against the public interest. A notice of my intention to lay this order was published on 21 December. It indicated the nature of the provisions the order is to contain and invited written representations from interested parties likely to be affected by the order. These will include existing newsagents and their representative organisations.

Company Directors

Mr. Loyden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many unfit company directors were disqualified in 1992-93.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: During 1992-93 651 unfit directors were disqualified under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Ministerial Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the powers he has under public legislation to give directions to local authorities or otherwise require them to act in a way which he prescribes, giving in each case the legislative authority under which he may exercise these powers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Post Offices

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post offices in built-up areas *(a)* do and *(b)* do not have collection points for undelivered mail; how many such points have been closed in the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that post offices in built up areas do not have collection points for undelivered mail. Such collection points are, however, provided in built-up areas at Royal Mail delivery offices which all have either a morning or an all-day facility for collecting mail which it has not been possible to deliver.

Trade (South-East Asia)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what specific steps he is taking to encourage the growth of trade between the United Kingdom and the countries of south-east Asia and the Pacific area.

Mr. Needham: As part of my export initiative, we are recruiting 20 export promoters from industry to spearhead our drive to identify business opportunities in the Asia Pacific region and to work with United Kingdom businesses to follow them up. I expect all to be in place by the end of this financial year; those who have been working with us for several months are already producing business for Britain.

We are developing strategic country market plans for 14 of our main markets in the region. These will help us to

focus all of our resources—including the export promoters, additional desk officers in DTI, staff in our posts in the region, and our business advisers—towards those areas where we have identified the most promising opportunities for British firms.

We are undertaking a vigorous, proactive programme of ministerial visits—usually with accompanying businessmen—inward and outward missions, seminars and meetings with individual firms in order to develop our links with Governments and commercial organisations in the Asia Pacific region; identify market opportunities for trade and investment; and bring these to the notice of British industry and commerce.

We have also increased the export credit cover available for exports to the region, and we are providing financial support under the aid and trade provision to help firms bidding for major projects in eligible countries in the region.

The result of this programme of activities in what is probably the most rapidly developing area of the world has been an increase in British exports in the period January to September 1993 of 26 per cent.[1] over the corresponding period in 1992. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to build on this encouraging performance and I am confident that the measures I have introduced will lead to British firms winning still more business in the Asia Pacific region in the future.

[1] United Kingdom exports to Japan, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, South-East Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

Konver Grants

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of jobs which will be created by projects supported with Konver grants.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* Konver grants fund feasibility studies to help firms diversify, encourage the development of SMEs, provided for some rehabilitation of military sites and grants for training for people directly affected by changes in defence activity.

It is not possible to give an estimate of the number of jobs which will be created by Konver grants.

Honduras (Armaments Trade)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what restrictions are planned on trade in armaments with Honduras; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The export of armaments to Honduras is prohibited without a licence issued under the Export of Goods (Order) 1992. I have no plans to alter this restriction. Each application for an export licence is considered on its merits, with particular regard being paid to the criteria for arms exports agreed at the Luxembourg and Lisbon European Councils in June 1991 and June 1992.

Landmines

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy on the export of landmines.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The Government supported the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly urging a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines that pose grave dangers to civilian populations. Licences for the export of such mines will not be issued. We do not, however, consider that self-destructing or self-neutralising mines and mines used in accordance with protocol II of the 1981 weaponry convention pose such dangers. Applications for licences to export these forms of mine are subject to close scrutiny.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the Government's responses to European Commission green paper "The Future of Community Initiatives under the Structural Funds".

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* Yes.

Health and Safety

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evidence there is for the assertion that health and safety consultants are promoting bogus goods and services, in paragraph 44 of the efficiency scrutiny report commissioned by the President of the Board of Trade, "Review of the Implementation and Enforcement of EC Law in the UK: Health and Safety"; and what action he proposes to take to prevent this practice in future.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Consultants may have a role to play where companies are unable to cope from within their existing resources. I have received, however, a number of letters from individuals and organisations indicating that some consultants, for their own commercial reasons, may have misled companies about the complexity of regulations or their requirements. In many such cases, companies could have carried out the work themselves or sought free advice from the HSE or other enforcement agents. Where HSE becomes aware of consultants making misleading claims, it has been raising the matter directly with those concerned.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many letters complaining about the burden of health and safety legislation he received between 1 June and 31 December 1992;

(2) what evidence his Department had prior to setting up the deregulation task forces that health and safety legislation constituted an unnecessary burden on business.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Actual figures are not readily available. But I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I received a significant number of representations between July and December 1992, prior to the creation of the task forces. These were from various organisations and individuals complaining about the burdens of specific areas of health and safety legislation on business. Such complaints have increased considerably in recent months.

It is not the Government view that all health and safety legislation constitutes an unnecessary burden on business. The current review of legislation is concerned with examining whether scope exists for improving the efficiency of the existing regulatory regime without impairing necessary safety standards.

EC Industry Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Industry Council of 17 December, indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Industry Council on 17 December agreed a package of six steel state aid proposals in four member states—Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal—under article 95 of the ECSC treaty. These involve capacity reductions of 4·6 million tonnes and state aid of some 7 becu, and at the United Kingdom's insistence incorporate significant improvements to the original proposals. These include a tightening up of the detailed requirements for four of the cases—EKO Stahl, ILVA, CSI, Sidenor—more rigorous monitoring to ensure that conditions built into the individual cases are met—with a role for the Council as well as the Commission—and that the aid is used solely to facilitate restructuring and not to allow unfair pricing. There is explicit recognition that no further aid will be provided to these companies if viability is not achieved. A number of the proposals agreed involve privatisation of the companies concerned, which should help to ensure that future operations are carried out on a proper commercial basis.

This package of proposals was agreed unanimously as required under article 95 ECSC. This requirement for unanimity enabled us to secure significant improvements to the proposals discussed, but not agreed, at the 18 November Council.

EC Internal Market Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Internal Market Council of 16 December, indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I attended the third Internal Market Council of the Belgian presidency in Brussels on 16 December 1993.

The following were adopted as "A" points: regulations opening and providing for the administration of community tariff quotas; regulations temporarily suspending totally or partially the autonomous duties of the common customs tariff for certain fishery products; a resolution by the Council on young drivers; and an aid to shipbuilding.

There was a debate on the Commission's strategic programme for the internal market. The United Kingdom, France and Germany stressed the importance of deregulation and subsidiarity. The Council agreed brief operational conclusions looking to the Commission to produce practical proposals to be considered by the Internal Market Council in 1994.

No agreement was reached on the proposed pension fund or the insurance winding-up directives. There was a short inconclusive debate on the proposed European company statute.

The Council heard progress reports on negotiations on a proposal for a European co-operative society statute and a proposed regulation on counterfeit goods.

Political agreement was reached on legal protection of biotechnological inventions by qualified majority with Spain, Denmark and Luxembourg voting against. The United Kingdom maintained its parliamentary scrutiny reserve.

A common position was agreed on a recreational craft directive. France voted against. The United Kingdom abstained because of the coverage of second-hand boats imported from third countries.

A common position was agreed on the 14th amendment to the regulations relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substance and preparations, dealing with nickel. Entry into force will be delayed until six months after agreement on test methods by the European standards organisation, CEN. Nickel spectacle frames and buttons were excluded. Italy voted against.

Political agreement was reached by qualified majority on the food additives other than colours and sweeteners directive. Italy abstained.

There was agreement on a Council decision for the development and promotion of new systems for the interchange of commercial data. The budget for the programme was set at 20 mecu over two years. The legal base was amended to article 235 in accordance with United Kingdom wishes. The United Kingdom abstained considering that a lower budget was more appropriate.

The Commission presented a proposal for a directive on hallmarking, designed to remove barriers to trade and protect consumers. The Council agreed to work towards a common position as quickly as possible.

The next meeting of the Council is planned for 10 March 1994.

LORD CHANCELLOR

Bowbelle-Marchioness Collision

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the names of witnesses to the collision between the Bowbelle and Marchioness who gave evidence in court or at an inquest together with the nature of each hearing and dates; whether the evidence was oral or in writing; and whether any cross-examination was given together with the name and interest of those conducting the cross-examination.

Mr. John Taylor *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 13 January 1994

ENVIRONMENT

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday 14 December 1993 at column *561*.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who, other than Ministers, have individually allocated cars from the Government car service; and at what cost for each person.

Mr. Baldry: The Government car service currently provides some 30 cars which are made available to Departments for first call use by individuals, in addition to the cars on which Ministers have first call. A number of these cars are provided for security reasons, but the majority are used by senior officials of Permanent Secretary or equivalent rank.

The cost per car varies according to the level of service provided. The average annual cost per standard car and driver is some £47,000.

Water Mains

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of water mains are planned to be replaced by each of the water companies in England in 1994 because of poor water quality.

Mr. Atkins: The length of water mains which water companies plan to replace for water quality reasons in England during 1994 is estimated to be 1,100 miles. In addition, companies plan to reline approximately 1,380 miles. Replacement or relining may be carried out for reasons other than improvement in water quality, such as the structural condition of mains and to improve water pressure; replacement for those reasons usually also results in an improvement in water quality.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on local government finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend announced his proposals for the local government finance settlement for 1994-95 on 2 December. During the consultation period on those proposals, which ended on 10 January, we received representations from 134 local authorities and their associations and from 18 hon. Members. In addition, we have met some 30 local authorities to discuss the settlement and will be seeing further authorities this week. My right hon. Friend will present his final decisions shortly.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration was given to the option of permanent monitored dry storage of spent nuclear fuel as a nuclear waste management option in arriving at his judgment on THORP.

Mr. Atkins: The dry storage of spent nuclear fuel was addressed in the waste management section (paragraphs 98-108) of the decision by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of an application from British Nuclear Fuels for authorisations to discharge radioactive wastes from the Sellafield site. Copies of the decision document are in the House Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the basis for his conclusion set out at paragraph 131 of his decision document on THORP of 15 December that the increase in costs of the Nirex waste repository would not jeopardise the economic viability of THORP.

Mr. Atkins: An estimate of the impact of a 10-year delay to the Nirex repository is given in section 6 of appendix 3 to the BNFL document, "The Economic and Commercial Justification for THORP", which was made available for public consultation. It is evident that such a sum would not jeopardise the commercial gains shown in that appendix.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the advice notes and other information made available to his Department, along with interdepartmental correspondence, by *(a)* the Department of Transport, *(b)* the Department of Trade and Industry, *(c)* the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *(d)* the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and *(e)* the National Radiological Protection Board as part of the consultation process on THORP referred to at paragraph 20 of his decision document on THORP of 15 December.

Mr. Atkins: No, other than copies of the advice from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and the National Radiological Protection Board which have already been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, when British Nuclear Fuels made available to his Department or to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, a full version of the Touche Ross accountants report on the projected profitability of THORP; and what assessment was made of the robustness of the report in coming to the conclusion on the economic prospects for THORP as set out as paragraph 133 of his decision document on THORP of 15 December.

Mr. Atkins: No such report is, or has been, in our possession.

Council Tax

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against council tax valuations in each district council area in North Yorkshire have been *(a)* received and *(b)* settled; and of those settled how many resulted in a reduced council tax valuation.

Mr. Baldry: As at 31 December 1993, receipts and settlements of proposals to alter the valuation list for each billing authority in North Yorkshire are as follows:

Billing authority	*Received*	*Settled*
Craven	2,621	374
Hambleton	2,724	496
Harrogate	4,745	872
Richmondshire	1,613	210
Ryedale	2,980	509
Scarborough	2,775	488
Selby	2,702	498
York	1,425	484

Statistics relating to settlements which have resulted in a lower council tax banding are not available centrally.

Hedgerows

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will introduce legislation to protect hedgerows.

Mr. Atkins: When parliamentary time permits.

Sweetloves Reservoir

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to investigate whether North West Water Ltd. is acting in accordance with its statutory duties in relation to Sweetloves reservoir.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 Janaury 1994]:* North West Water does not consider that its plans for the redevolopment of Sweetloves reservoir are in conflict with its statutory duties in respect of conservation and recreation. I will write to my hon. Friend about the case.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Budget Contributions

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of member states' net contributions to the EC Budget, after the United Kingdom rebate, in respect of the calendar year 1993; and what is his best estimate, in respect of calendar year 1994, of member states' net contributions to the European Union budget for that year, on the basis of the latest draft proposed EU budget, after taking account of the latest estimate of the United Kingdom's rebate for 1994.

Mr. Nelson: EC budgets provide estimates of member states' gross contributions including the abatement of the United Kingdom's contributions. They do not, however, give a breakdown of each member state's expected receipts from that budget: this information becomes available only after the year in question, in the annual Court of Auditors' report on the implementation of the budget. The latest report, covering 1992, was published on 16 November 1993.

Civil Service (Management Functions) Act

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what delegations have been made since the Civil Service (Management Functions) Act received royal assent on 17 December 1992; to whom those delegations were made; and what were the main conditions that were attached to them.

Mr. Dorrell: The table lists delegations made under the Civil Service (Management Functions) Act 1992 to date. In some cases, for staff appointed by statutory office holders, Ministers were statutorily required to give consent to terms and conditions of service. For such staff, delegation has been effected by waiving that requirement, subject to the conditions attached to the delegation.

The first five delegations in the list apply generally across the civil service. The delegations relating to pay apply only to particular departments and agencies as shown in the table.

In total, Departments and agencies employing over half of all civil servants will have assumed responsibility for their own pay and grading by April 1994. I expect other such delegations to follow in 1995 as further Government agencies and Departments bring forward proposals for their own pay and grading arrangements.

List of Delegations made under the Civil Service (Management Functions) Act 1992

Delegation	*Nature of Delegation*	*Recipients*	*Main Conditions*
1. Delegation of Minimum Recruitment Criteria	Authority to set appropriate eligibility criteria (so far as they relate to knowledge, ability, professional attainment, aptitude or potential) for recruitment to non-scheduled grades in respect of members of the Home Civil Service.	Ministers in charge of departments and statutory and certain other office holders.[1]	Managers must: (i) ensure that their recruitment systems consistently deliver recruits who are appropriate to their needs and who are able to do the work required in the grade to which they are appointed; (ii) maintain and make use of adequate records of their recruitment activities and the performance of successful candidates to demonstrate that (i) continues to be met; and (iii) observe Civil Service Management Code rules on age limits.
2. Delegation of Personnel Management: Travel	Authority to determine in respect of Home Civil Servants: *(a)* the class of travel that may be given to staff travelling on official business in the United Kingdom and overseas, and to staff and members of their household where departments have discretion to offer concessionary travel in the United Kingdom and overseas; and *(b)* the conditions under which financial assistance with overseas journeys is given in respect of staff and members of their household.	Ministers in charge of departments and statutory and certain other office holders.[1]	Departments must ensure that the most efficient and economic means of travel is used, taking into account the cost of travel and the cost of subsistence and savings in official time. All costs arising from the exercise of this delegation must be met from within agreed resources.
3. Overseas Accountable Entertainment Allowance	Authority for determining the hospitality allowances to assist members of the Home Civil Service serving overseas.	Ministers in charge of departments and statutory and certain other office holders.[1]	All costs arising from the exercise of this delegation must be found from within existing cash and running costs limits.
4. Delegation of United Kingdom Relocation Expenses.	Authority to determine the rules on the expenses that may be paid to members of the Home Civil Service who permanently transfer to another office (or move on appointment) within the United Kingdom and who move their homes, or who incur additional travelling costs, as a result.	Ministers in charge of departments and statutory and certain other office holders.[1]	The terms offered in exercising this delegation must be cost effective compared with the alternatives and the expenditure must be found from within existing running costs and cash limits. The expenses must be based on reimbursement, must not provide for betterment and must not go beyond what is provided by other employers. There are limits on advances of salary and equity loss compensation.
5. Delegation of Rent for key staff who occupy government owned residential properties.	Authority to determine a departmental/agency rent.	Ministers in charge of departments and statutory and certain other office holders.[1]	The rent must be consistent with the market rent that the key member of staff and his or her family would reasonably be expected to pay at the same or similar location for accommodation which met their normal requirements. The rent may be adjusted if it is necessary to encourage staff to transfer to a key post, or attract new staff to a key post, or to retain existing staff. Any additional expenditure which results from exercising this delegation must be found from within existing running costs and cash limits.

Delegation	Nature of Delegation	Recipients	Main Conditions
6. Delegation of pay and certain pay-related conditions of service.	Authority to determine pay and certain pay-related conditions of service of civil servants below the Senior Open Structure (with the exception of retirement and redundancy, the reinstatement and re-employment of persons in the service and the redeployment of staff between departments). Agency Chief Executives are also excluded from the scope of the delegations.	Ministers in charge of departments and statutory office holders,[1] as appropriate, for the following organisations: Employment Service Fire Service College Inland Revenue Ordnance Survey Valuation Office Agency	(i) The recipient must continue to comply with certain sections of the Civil Service Management Code. (ii) Changes made to terms and conditions must provide value for money and be made in a way which does not jeopardise essential public expenditure safeguards.

[1] The statutory and certain other office holders are:
First Parliamentary Counsel
Government Actuary
Director General of Fair Trading
Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies
National Debt Commissioners/National Public Works Loan Commissioners
Director General of Telecommunications
First Crown Estate Commissioner
Director, Office of Gas Supply
Director, Office of Electricity Regulation
Director, Office of Water Services
Director, Serious Fraud Office
Chief Inspector, Office for standards in Education
Director, Intervention Board
Commissioners for the Board of the Inland Revenue
Commissioners for Customs and Excise
Director of Public Prosecutions
Registrar General, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys*
Chief Charity Commissioner, Charity Commission*
Registrar General, General Register office (Scotland)*
Executive, Health and Safety
The Service, Advisory and Conciliation
Those marked with a * received only the delegation in respect of Minimum Recruitment Criteria.

Enterprise Zone Buildings

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about schemes which enable investors to get up-front tax relief on investments in enterprise zone buildings which they can subsequently sell without any clawback of that relief.

Mr. Dorrell: Capital allowances are available to the owners of buildings in enterprise zones and of industrial buildings elsewhere. Where a building is sold within the first twenty-five years of its life, a balancing adjustment is made which brings the tax relief into line with the actual depreciation. In this way any excess tax relief given can be recovered. There is, however, a defect in the capital allowances legislation which enables the owner of a building effectively to dispose of his interest through the granting of a long lease without triggering any recovery of excess allowances. This is a weakness of which some taxpayers are aiming to take advantage.

We propose to bring forward legislation at Committee stage of the Finance Bill which will rectify this defect by imposing a balancing charge when a building on which capital allowances have already been claimed is leased for a capital sum. The new rules will apply to capital sums received by a taxpayer in respect of a relevant interest in a building which he has acquired on or after today.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Government guarantees loans received by the private sector from the European investment bank.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The Government do not operate a guarantee scheme for private sector borrowers from the EIB. However, the Government do have a residual responsibility in respect of guarantees which it provided under a former scheme, which was discontinued in 1985. The residual contingent liability resulting from this scheme is now diminishing, and will ultimately disappear, as the loans guaranteed are progressively repaid.

WALES

District Elections

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in which areas elections will take place during 1994 for those district councils in Wales which hold elections by thirds.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Elections will take place in Swansea, Newport, Port Talbot and Rhondda on Thursday 5 May 1994.

Domestic Gas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the estimated number and proportion of homes in Wales connected to gas mains supply.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information provided by British Gas, Wales, is published in table 5.13 of the Digest of Welsh Statistics No. 39, 1993. The number of domestic customers was estimated as 807,300 at December 1991. This represented 68 per cent. of dwellings in Wales.

Housing Revenue

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make his housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1994-95.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I made the determinations on 12 January and have placed copies in the Library of the House.

I have confirmed an average guideline rent increase of 7·5 per cent. (3·5 per cent. in real terms), with a minimum increase of £1·50 and a maximum of £2·90 per week. I estimate that the average guideline rent increase will be £2·19 per week and the resulting average weekly guideline rent £31·30.

For management and maintenance allowances, I have confirmed an average increase of 4 per cent. per dwelling overall, which will continue to be distributed through a system of targets reflecting authorities' relative need to spend. I estimate that this will raise the average allowance to £824 per dwelling, an increase of £31.

The rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowances are the assumptions to be made for subsidy purposes. It is for councils themselves to set their rents and decide how much to spend on management and maintenance within their legal obligations.

I have placed in the Library of the House estimates of the rent guidelines and management and maintenance allowance for each authority.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to include provisions within the prospective legislation on deregulation which would alter the current powers available to local authorities to impose restrictions on the night-time movement of heavy goods vehicles within their area.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Details of the contents of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will be made available in the usual way when the Bill is introduced later this month. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has been considering whether restrictions on the night-time movement of heavy goods vehicles can be administered in a less bureaucratic way without reducing the environmental protection the restrictions offer.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what basic technical characteristics of the THORP reprocessing line and associated facilities have been submitted to EURATOM; what particular safeguards provisions for the THORP reprocessing line and its asssociated facilities have been agreed with EURATOM; and on what dates in each case *(a)* information was first provided to EURATOM and *(b)* those agreements entered into force.

Mr. Eggar: Such documents on safeguards arrangements are confidential to the parties concerned. A general description of the interaction between BNFL and Euratom in agreeing safeguards arrangements for THORP was given in the paper, "THORP: The Route to a Safeguardable Plant", presented at the 15th European Safeguards Research and Development Association (ESARDA) symposium in Rome in May 1993.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the methodology adopted, including reference to any expert sources outside his Department, by which he came to the conclusion to offer the departmental advice on the economics of THORP to the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, referred to at paragraph 128 of the decision document on THORP of 15 December.

Mr. Eggar: The advice given by my Department to my right hon. Friends was prepared by reference to materials contained in the publicly available consultation documents.

Superconductivity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research into superconductivity is currently being sponsored by his Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department is currently supporting four collaborative industrial research projects in high temperature superconductivity. Total costs are £3,215,231 and grant of up to £1,607,615 has been offered.

Structural Funds

Mr. Streeter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he is yet able to inform the House of the final outcome of the negotiations with the European Communities on the designation under the structural funds of objective 2 and 5(b) areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Commission announced on 21 December its proposed list of areas for objective 2 and the proposed population ceilings for objective 5(b).

For objective 5(b) areas, the Commission proposes to designate areas with a population coverage of 2·816 million in the United Kingdom. The precise geographical boundaries are expected to be finally determined by the Commission by the end of next week, but will certainly include large parts of South West England, East Anglia, Northern England, Wales and Scotland. Once the Commission's final decision is known I will provide the House with a list of the areas.

For objective 2 areas, the Commission announced a proposed initial list of areas. The United Kingdom area on this list are listed at the end of this answer. The Commission will announce its final decision shortly, but it is unlikely to differ from the initial list. The definitive list will be published in the *Official Journal* and will give a fully detailed breakdown of the eligible areas, down to ward level where necessary.

The Commission's decisions mean that more areas of the United Kingdom than before will now be eligible for European funding. More than 24 million people live in areas that will be able to claim under objectives 1, 2 and 5(b) of the structural funds and the United Kingdom continues to have the highest population coverage under objective 2. Despite this advance, however, the Government regret the Commission's failure fully to reflect our national priorities in its final decisions for objective 2 areas—in particular, the case for much greater coverage of urban areas.

United Kingdom areas on Commission's list for objective 2

County/Region and Eligible travel-to-work area (TTWA)

Central
- Alloa (part)
- Falkirk (part)
- Glasgow (part)
- Stirling (part[1])

Cheshire
- Liverpool (part)
- Widnes and Runcorn
- Wirral and Chester (part[1])

Cleveland
- Whole county

Cumbria
- Barrow-in-Furness
- Whitehaven
- Workington

Derbyshire
- Chesterfield
- Mansfield (part)
- Worksop (part)

Devon
- Plymouth (part[1])

Durham
- Bishop Aukland
- Darlington (part[1])
- Durham
- Hartlepool (part)
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne (part)
- Sunderland (part)

Dyfed
- Llanelli
- Swansea (part)

Fife
- Alloa (part)
- Dundee (part)
- Dunfermline (part)
- Kirkaldy

Gibraltar
- Whole territory

Greater London
- London (parts of the Boroughs of Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest)

Greater Manchester
- Bolton and Bury (part)
- Manchester (part[1])
- Oldham
- Rochdale (part)
- Wigan and St. Helens (part)

Gwent
- Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenney (part)
- Merthyr and Rhymney (part)
- Newport
- Pontypool and Cwmbran

Humberside
- Doncaster (part)
- Grimsby (part)
- Hull (part[1])
- Scunthorpe (part)

Kent
- Thanet

Lancashire
- Accrington and Rossendale
- Blackburn
- Bolton and Bury (part)
- Burnley (part[1])
- Liverpool (part[1])
- Pendle (part[1])
- Rochdale (part)
- Wigan and St. Helens (part[1])

Lothian
- Bathgate
- Edinburgh (part[1])
- Falkirk (part)

Mid Glamorgan
- whole county

Northumberland
- Alnwick and Amble (part[1])
- Morpeth and Ashington
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne (part[1])

Nottinghamshire
- Mansfield (part)
- Nottingham (part[1])
- Worksop (part)

Powys
- Aberdare (part)
- Swansea (part)

Shropshire
- Telford and Bridgnorth (part[1])
- Wolverhampton (part)

South Glamorgan
- Cardiff (part[1])

South Yorkshire
- whole county

Staffordshire
- Birmingham (part[1])
- Burton-on-Trent (part[1])
- Stafford (part[1])
- Stoke (part[1])
- Walsall (part[1])
- Wolverhampton (part[1])

Strathclyde
- Ayr
- Cumnock and Sanquhar (part)
- Dumbarton
- Girvan
- Glasgow (part)
- Greenock
- Irvine (part[1])
- Kilmarnock
- Lanarkshire

Tayside
- Arbroath
- Dundee (part)
- Dunfermline (part)

Tyne and Wear
- whole county

Warwickshire
- Birmingham (part[1])
- Coventry and Hinckley (part[1])

West Glamorgan
- whole county

West Midlands
- Birmingham (part[1])
- Coventry and Hinckley (part)
- Dudley and Sandwell (part)
- Walsall (part)
- Wolverhampton (part)

West Yorkshire
- Bradford (part[1])
- Castleford and Pontefract (part)
- Wakefield and Dewsbury

[1] Denotes those areas where only part of the TTWA within the county-region is designated. Elsewhere the designation of part of a TTWA refers to the whole of the part of the TTWA falling within that county-region. Note that many TTWAs straddle county-region boundaries.

PRIME MINISTER

GCHQ

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meeting with trade union leaders on 20 December 1993 regarding trade union recognition of GCHQ

The Prime Minister: I met representatives of the civil service unions to discuss trade union membership at GCHQ at their request, following a series of discussions they had held with officials. I explained that the Government's overriding objective remained to ensure the maintenance of continuous operations at GCHQ necessary for the protection of national security. In that context it was necessary also to ensure that the staff were not subject to potential conflicts of loyalty.

Against that background, however, I indicated that the Government were prepared to enable the Government Communications Staff Federation, the registered trade union for GCHQ staff, to affiliate to the Council of Civil Service Unions, subject to conditions to guarantee its continuing independence. This would have allowed the staff of GCHQ to be represented in discussions between the Government and the unions on matters affecting the civil service generally in a way in which they are not at present. The national trade unions have indicated that they do not regard this as acceptable. There are no plans for further meetings, but the Government remain willing to discuss any further proposals that the unions may wish to put forward.

Engagements

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what were his official engagements for Wednesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, in addition to my duties in this House.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 13 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Petitions

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of responses to parliamentary petitions; and if he will review current practice.

The Prime Minister: Individual Departments respond as they see fit to parliamentary petitions. I have no plans to review current practice.

TRANSPORT

Worcester Parkway Station

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail or Railtrack about the possibility of establishing a Worcester Parkway station in the light of the decision to run additional Birmingham to Cardiff trains without stopping at Worcester, Shrub Hill.

Mr. Freeman: I am aware of the idea of a Parkway station for Worcester but I have had no direct discussions with British Rail or Railtrack on the subject. This is a matter for those organisations to consider and any detailed proposals should be sent direct to them.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the information provided to the Secretary of State for the Environment assessing the criticisms made of the safety of nuclear transport, indicated at paragraph 135 of the decision document on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, published on 15 December.

Mr. Key: It is not Government practice to publish such inter-departmental correspondence.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes that British Rail's accumulated debt due to the construction of Waterloo international station and the other infrastructure works carried out to provide for the operation of international rail services through the channel tunnel should be paid off.

Mr. Freeman: We are at present considering how British Rail's existing debt liabilities should be allocated to the successor bodies which are to be created in the restructuring of the railway.

MOT Test

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the date on which he intends to re-introduce the smoke emission test as part of the annual MOT test for motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the ways in which the new test differs from the previous one.

Mr. Key: The metered check of smoke is to be reintroduced into the MOT test on 1 February 1994. The procedure has been revised slightly to reduce the number of test cycles to which each engine is subject, and to reduce the amount of time that an engine spends at maximum revolutions.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Exhibitions

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what consideration he has given to an application relating to an exhibition on "A Voice For Laryngectomees," to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 7 March to Friday 11 March.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Globe theatre to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall, during the week commencing 7 February.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 7 February to Friday 11 February.

HEALTH

Referrals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances it is permissible for a trust hospital to give general practitioner fundholders a discount on NHS prices in return for private patient referrals.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the target percentage for registered disabled employees within the Department of Health and NHS management executive; and what is the actual percentage of registered disabled employees.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service, in common with other employers, is subject to the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts of 1944 and 1958. No specific target has been imposed on NHS employers supplementary to the provisions of these acts.

The latest figures, relating to June 1992, are in the April 1993 edition of the *Employment Gazette,* a copy of which is available in the Library.

NHS Communications Network

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to establish a new NHS national communications network service; and what costings have been made.

Mr. Sackville: In March 1993 the national health service management executive and regional general managers agreed a strategy for implementing NHS-wide electronic networking facilities. Up to 1996 this comprises a common policy for the management of data exchange between computers, telecommunications in the NHS and the rationalisation of mobile radio communications, principally those used by the ambulance services. From 1996 it is expected there will be increasing technical integration of all apsects of NHS-wide electronic communications.

The business case for implementing a national spine to connect regional data networks has been approved. Work is in hand to connect all regionwide data networks by late 1994.

Agreements have been made with Mercury Communications and British Telecom which will provide immediate multi-million pound savings to their NHS customers. Further analysis of telephone usage and requirements locally in the NHS is planned for 1994. Preliminary work indicates this should lead to additional significant savings.

A study examining the business case for the provision of mobile communications in the NHS is planned to report in April 1994.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the schemes of water fluoridation that have resulted from Government encouragement; and what forms that encouragement took in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. Since 1985 the Government have provided financial assistance for fluoridation schemes to the regions shown in the table.

Central Fund—Expenditure on Fluoridation 1985-86 to 1992-93

Regional Health Authority	*Financial Year—Figures are in £'000s*							
	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Northern	—	3	38	—	55	—	—	113
Trent	—	105	—	8	—	245	54	535
North West Thames	—	—	—	—	75	—	—	—
Oxford	—	14	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	251	385	936	300	—	—	135
North Western	20	—	10	10	—	—	42	11
Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	—
Mersey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	102

Note: Figures include funding towards feasibility studies, reports and or capital costs of schemes.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those water companies that have no fluoridated potable water supplies within their geographical boundary.

Dr. Mawhinney: All water supplies contain some natural fluoride.

Air Pollution

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she received the report of the departmental advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes; when and how she expects it to be published; what requests for it have been declined; and if she will place a copy of it in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 15 December 1993 at column *720.* No requests for the report have been declined.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Injuries at Work

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reconsider the rules on repayments to his Department by workers in receipt of injuries at work awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The compensation recovery scheme will be amended to take account of the statutory sick pay changes announced on 1 December. No other amendments to the scheme are planned.

Occupational Diseases

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the Government propose to respond to the European Commission recommendation of 22 May 1990 concerning the adoption of a European schedule of occupational diseases.

Mr. Scott: The Government's response to the recommendation was sent to the Commission recently.

Copies have been placed in the Library. We are pleased to take the opportunity to explain arrangements for compensating, reporting and preventing occupational disease.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce how housing benefit transitional payments will be treated in April.

Mr. Burt: We have always made it clear that housing benefit transitional payments, which were introduced in 1988, will be reduced as increases in other benefits make them less necessary. We have therefore decided on a flat rate reduction of £1·00 per week in these payments for the year from April 1994. As a result, the vast majority of recipients will still gain overall in cash terms from the April uprating of other social security benefits.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the additional amounts payable in housing benefit resulting from the reductions in planned spending under the heading "DOE Housing" in table 5B.3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95".

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* Expenditure on housing benefit is influenced by a wide range of factors not all in the control of the Government. Owing to this, no estimate has been made of the effect on housing benefit expenditure arising specifically from the changes in planned spending under the heading "DOE Housing" in tale 5B.3 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95, although there is expected to be an overall reduction in housing provision of £250 million and £100 million in the years 1994, 1995 and 1996.

SCOTLAND

Perinatal Mortality

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of perinatal mortality in each of the last 10 years; and what plans he has to commission research into reasons for variations.

Mr. Stewart: Perinatal mortality figures for the years 1983-1992 are as follows:

	Number	*Rate per 1,000 births (live and still)*
1983	696	10·6
1984	718	11·0
1985	656	9·8
1986	673	10·2
1987	594	8·9
1988	594	8·9
1989	553	8·7
1990	574	8·7
1991	582	8·6
1992	597	9·0

The introduction of the Stillbirth (Definition) Act 1992 on 1 October 1992 reduced from 28 to 24 weeks the gestational age at which a baby is officially recognised as stillborn. Early terminations of pregnancy between 24 and 28 weeks, which were formerly treated as "miscarriages" for statistical purposes, are now being classed as stillbirths and have been included in the statistics for 1992.

Compiled on the same basis as the figures for 1983 to 1991 the number of stillbirths in 1992 would have been 562, representing a rate of 8·5 per 1,000 births and demonstrating a continuing downward trend.

Research into the causes of perinatal deaths has been continuous since 1977 when the Scottish perinatal mortality survey was set up. In 1982 the Scottish perinatal mortality review advisory group was established to look into the causes of perinatal deaths on an ongoing basis and to offer advice on ways in which the incidence might be reduced further. Its work will be enhanced shortly with the appointment of a professional co-ordinator.

Patients

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland of the in-patients discharged in 1992-93, how many went straight into *(a)* nursing homes, *(b)* supervised residential accommodation, or *(c)* were looked after by a member of their family.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not centrally held. During the period between April 1992 and March 1993 there were 788,857 discharges from NHS care in Scotland. Of that number 644,105 were home discharges. This figure includes transfers to sheltered housing, eventide homes, residential and nursing homes for which no separate figures are available.

Housing

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much from *(a)* grant, *(b)* consent to borrow and *(c)* capital receipts, will be devoted next financial year to the eradication of dampness and condensation in (i) council housing stock, (ii) owner-occupied stock and (iii) housing association/Scottish Homes stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the housing plan system introduced earlier this year central resource planning assumptions totalling £400 million on the housing revenue account and £123 million on the non-HRA were advised to local housing authorities to assist them in planning their capital programmes for investment in public and private sector housing in 1994-95. Authorities were asked to give priority to tackling condensation and dampness, as well as below tolerable standard housing and homelessness, within their capital programmes. These capital programmes are currently under consideration. Scottish Homes is also giving priority to tackling condensation and dampness in both housing association and their own stock. It is for local authorities and Scottish Homes to determine how to allocate the resources made available to them.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how long it will take at the current rate of funding of district councils' housing revenue account and non-housing revenue account of capital programmes to *(a)* eradicate dampness and condensation and *(b)* refurbish to modern standards housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All local housing authorities have been asked in preparing their housing plans and housing capital programmes for 1994-95 and

beyond, to develop a strategy for tackling damp housing in their areas, including setting quantified targets which can be used as a basis for assessing progress. The resource planning assumptions advised to local authorities provide them with a framework within which to plan for tackling dampness, condensation and refurbishment.

However, housing capital allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities themselves to decide how best to deploy the resources available to them to meet local housing needs, including the need to deal with dampness and condensation and to refurbish houses to modern standards.

Acute Services Strategy, Tayside

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has completed his consideration of Tayside health board's acute services strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Like other health boards in Scotland, Tayside has had to review its long-term requirements and pattern of future service provision in the light of new developments in clinical techniques and technology and of improvements in efficiency.

An estimated £30 million will be needed to achieve the changes proposed by the board for the extension of Ninewells, new community hospitals in Forfar on the Whitehills site to replace the outdated facilities at Forfar infirmary, and Montrose to replace Montrose infirmary.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has considered the proposed changes for services in Tayside and has approved the health board's proposals in total.

In Dundee, trauma services are currently split between the Ninewells and Dundee Royal infirmary sites and people are transferred between the sites. By extending Ninewells hospital it will be possible to accommodate all services on one site and replace the functionally unsuitable accommodation at Dundee Royal infirmary. The transfer of services to Ninewells and the subsequent closure of Dundee Royal infirmary is supported by all medical staff, and is an opportunity to allow all trauma services to be provided on one site, alongside the support specialty and diagnostic services that are required by trauma patients, therefore avoiding the need for individuals to be transferred between the two hospitals to receive appropriate care. The Dundee General Hospital Trust is currently examining the level of capital investment which will be required to effect this change. My right hon. Friend expects to be able to approve the required capital investment in the near future.

In Perth and Kinross, Tayside health board has sought approval to close Meigle cottage hospital. In this case my right hon. Friend has listened carefully to the arguments put forward by Tayside health board and others who have commented. The board has argued that by concentrating resources in this area at Blairgowrie, which has a larger site and wider range of facilities, it will be able to offer an enhanced level of patient care than it can at present. Local concerns focus on accessibility and loss of a valued local service.

It will, however, be possible to maintain local services and improve their integration by transferring services from Meigle cottage hospital to the Blairgowrie site. Moreover the transfer of services from Meigle to Blairgowrie will allow the health board to apply resources more effectively to enhance patient care.

The boards proposals for Angus focus on the establishment of new community hospitals in Forfar and Montrose. In Forfar the proposed hospital is on the Whitehills site and would allow the centralisation of services in Forfar on one site. Services currently at Forfar infirmary and the Fyfe Jamieson maternity home would transfer to Whitehills and these hospitals would close. In Montrose the new hospital would replace services currently at Montrose infirmary.

My right hon. Friend supports these proposals and has therefore asked the health board and Angus Trust to prepare proposals for a community hospital at Whitehills to replace the outdated facilities at Forfar infirmary; together with proposals for a new Montrose infirmary. In the meantime Tayside health board has sought approval to transfer maternity services from Fyfe Jamieson maternity home to Whitehills with immediate effect; and to close Fyfe Jamieson. The service available to women will be the same as that available currently at Fyfe Jamieson. It will however operate from fewer beds because current occupancy rates are lower and will be staffed mainly by community rather than hospital midwives; 24-hour midwife care will continue to be available when required.

My right hon. Friend will announce his final decisions on the proposed new hospitals at Forfar and Montrose, and on the capital investment to be made at Ninewells, once detailed costings are available. Taken together these developments represent a major investment in health care in Tayside and an opportunity to ensure that the future pattern of care is appropriate to new developments in clinical techniques and technology.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of all former hon. Members who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* No former Members of Parliament who ceased to be Members of the House in 1987 and 1992 currently hold appointments on bodies for which my Department has responsibility. The information held centrally by my Department does not show whether appointees were Members of this House during earlier Parliaments.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of all former British representative members in the European Parliament who since 1979 have been appointed to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The information held centrally by my Department does not show whether appointees were former Members of the European Parliament.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were

members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The information covers the Scottish Office bodies listed in the Cabinet Office publication, "Public Bodies". The information is at 1 September 1993 and does not include appointments as justices of the peace, appointments to children's panels or appointments which expired before that date, details of which are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information covers appointments held by present Members of the House of Lords. The following members of the House of Lords hold appointments on Scottish Office bodies: Lord Macfarlane of Bearsden is a member of the board of trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland; his appointment runs from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1994. The right hon. the Lord Cameron of Lochbroom is the Chairman of the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee; his appointment runs from 1 February 1991 to 31 January 1996. Lord Goold is a member of the Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust; his appointment runs from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1996. Viscount Thurso is a member of the Central Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace (Scotland); his appointment runs from 30 May 1991 to 15 May 1995. The Earl of Crawford and Balcarres is chairman of the board of trustees of the National Library of Scotland. The appointment runs from 14 November 1990. All these appointments are unsalaried.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, on how many occasions the solicitor to the Secretary of State for Scotland was present at meetings involving Greater Glasgow health board or its chairman and the NHS Scottish Executive when the subject of Mr. Laurence Peterken was discussed.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The solicitor to the Secretary of State for Scotland or a representative from his office was present at three such meetings.

EMPLOYMENT

Access to Work

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the estimated first year budget set aside by his Department for authorising the new access to work scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The 1994-95 budget allocated to the first year of access to work is £12,600,000.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the proportions of full-time male manual workers, full-time male non-manual workers and all full-time male workers with earnings, excluding overtime, of less than £203·07 per week in (i) the West Midlands metropolitan county, (ii) Hereford and Worcester, (iii) Shropshire, (iv) Staffordshire and (v) Warwickshire for 1993;

(2) if he will list the proportions of full-time adult manual workers, full-time adult non-manual workers and all full-time adult workers with earnings, including overtime, of less than £203·07 per week in (i) the West Midlands metropolitan county, (ii) Hereford and Worcester, (iii) Shropshire, (iv) Staffordshire and (v) Warwickshire for 1993;

(3) if he will list the proportions of full-time male manual workers, full-time male non-manual workers and all full-time male workers with earnings, including overtime, of less than £203·07 per week in (i) the West Midlands metropolitan county, (ii) Hereford and Worcester, (iii) Shropshire, (iv) Staffordshire and (v) Warwickshire for 1993;

(4) if he will list the proportions of full-time female manual workers, full-time female non-manual workers and all full-time female workers with earnings, excluding overtime, of less than £203·07 per week in (i) the West Midlands metropolitan county, (ii) Hereford and Worcester, (iii) Shropshire, (iv) Staffordshire and (v) Warwickshire for 1993;

(5) if he will list the proportions of full-time female manual workers, full-time female non-manual workers and all full-time female workers with earnings, including overtime, of less than £203·07 per week in (i) the West Midlands metropolitan county, (ii) Hereford and Worcester, (iii) Shropshire, (iv) Staffordshire and (v) Warwickshire for 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is as follows:

Full-time employees on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence
Proportion with gross weekly earnings below £203·07 at April 1993

	Including overtime (per cent.)	*Excluding overtime (per cent.)*
Manual men		
West Midlands MC	21·9	34·7
Hereford and Worcester	36·8	51·2
Shropshire	30·2	49·8
Staffordshire	31·1	46·3
Warwickshire	24·0	35·1
Non-manual men		
West Midlands MC	12·9	14·2
Hereford and Worcester	13·2	14·8
Shropshire	15·8	18·5
Staffordshire	17·5	20·7
Warwickshire	13·0	16·8
All men		
West Midlands MC	17·4	24·4
Hereford and Worcester	25·4	33·7
Shropshire	23·9	36·1
Staffordshire	25·0	34·7
Warwickshire	18·1	25·4
Manual women		
West Midlands MC	76·9	80·9
Hereford and Worcester	78·7	87·2
Shropshire	81·5	86·2
Staffordshire	74·0	79·6
Warwickshire	77·0	85·1
Non-manual women		
West Midlands MC	40·4	42·6
Hereford and Worcester	44·5	46·0
Shropshire	54·9	56·3
Staffordshire	51·2	52·4
Warwickshire	44·4	46·7

	Including overtime (per cent.)	Excluding overtime (per cent.)
All women		
West Midlands MC	47·2	49·7
Hereford and Worcester	52·0	55·0
Shropshire	61·3	63·5
Staffordshire	57·7	60·1
Warwickshire	51·7	55·3
Manual adults		
West Midlands MC	30·8	42·2
Hereford and Worcester	44·6	58·0
Shropshire	39·7	56·6
Staffordshire	40·5	53·6
Warwickshire	34·6	45·1
Non-manual adults		
West Midlands MC	25·4	27·1
Hereford and Worcester	27·9	29·5
Shropshire	34·6	36·7
Staffordshire	33·1	35·3
Warwickshire	26·5	29·7
All adults		
West Midlands MC	27·5	33·0
Hereford and Worcester	34·8	41·2
Shropshire	36·8	45·6
Staffordshire	36·4	43·7
Warwickshire	29·6	35·6

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he will list for the United Kingdom and by standard region, including Greater London, the number of households and the proportion of all households claiming unemployment benefit for each year since 1989.

Miss Widdecombe: It is individuals who claim unemployment benefits. Estimates from the Labour Force Survey of the number and proportion of households where the head of household or their spouse is claiming unemployment related benefits are given in the table, for each spring since 1989. Those claiming unemployment-related benefits consist of those claiming unemployment benefit, income support on account of being unemployed, or national insurance credits.

Households where the head of household or their wife is claiming unemployment related benefits[1]

Standard regions	Spring 1989		Spring 1990		Spring 1991		Spring 1992		Spring 1993	
	Thousands	Per cent.	Thousands	Per cent.	Thousands	Per cent.	Thousands	Per cent.	Thousands	Per cent.
South East	225	3·3	202	2·9	297	4·3	452	6·4	508	7·0
Greater London	131	4·8	115	4·2	155	5·7	214	7·7	250	8·8
Rest of South East	94	2·3	87	2·1	142	3·3	238	5·5	258	5·8
East Anglia	20	2·5	23	2·9	33	3·9	36	4·2	51	5·8
South West	57	3·0	48	2·6	82	4·3	116	5·9	134	6·7
West Midlands	115	5·6	80	3·9	137	6·6	162	7·8	170	8·2
East Midlands	81	5·2	62	3·9	88	5·5	96	5·9	94	5·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	120	6·1	93	4·7	110	5·5	140	6·9	128	6·3
North West	166	6·6	139	5·4	150	5·9	178	6·9	175	6·7
North	98	7·9	83	6·6	84	6·6	83	6·6	89	7·1
Wales	65	5·7	55	4·8	64	5·6	70	6·0	68	5·7
Scotland	137	6·9	109	5·3	124	6·0	128	6·2	125	6·0
Northern Ireland	62	11·8	65	12·4	57	10·8	58	11·0	58	10·3
United Kingdom	1,147	5·1	960	4·2	1,226	5·3	1,519	6·5	1,599	6·8

[1] Not seasonally adjusted.
Source: Labour Force Survey.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he will list for each London borough the number of households and the proportion of all households claiming unemployment benefit for each year since 1989.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available since, the only source able to provide this information at household level would be the Labour Force Survey, and this is unable to provide estimates for London boroughs due to its sample size.

Start-up Scheme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of entrants to the business start-up scheme who were receiving income support immediately previous to entry remained in business for at least 18 months.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 16 December at column *858*.

Retail Staff (Violence)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive guidance on violence to staff in the retail sector will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The expected date of publication is June 1994. This date is dependent on the result of an external consultation exercise which is shortly to be undertaken.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the reasons for the Health and Safety Executive's failure to produce guidance on risk assessment and other publications on electricity at work in hotels, violence to staff in the retail sector and the cost to the British economy of work accidents and work-related ill health.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Health and Safety Executive has produced

considerable guidance on the principles and practice of risk assessment. General guidance on testing of portable electrical equipment has been available for some time and specific guidance for the hotel industry is due to be published shortly. Guidance on violence to staff in the retail sector is due to be published in June and a detailed report on "The Costs to the British Economy of Work Accidents and Work Related Ill-health" will be published in February 1994.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated total cost to the Health and Safety Executive of the review of health and safety regulations being conducted by the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Estimates of the total cost could only be provided at disproportionate cost, but the costs are being met from within the Health and Safety Executive's overall resources within the context of the Health and Safety Commission's role in rationalising and modernising health and safety legislation.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many letters have been received from businesses complaining about the cost of complying with health and safety legislation, in response to the open invitation issued by the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission on 28 October.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Health and Safety Commission has issued an open invitation, primarily through the trade press, for evidence on both the benefits and costs of health and safety regulations to be submitted by the end of January 1994. The Commission had by 11 January 1994, received 70 contacts from businesses. Businesses and other organisations are also playing an active role in the review of regulation by taking part in case studies and surveys.

Workstart

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of how positive outcomes under the workstart pilot schemes compare with those achieved by TECs.

Miss Widdecombe: Evaluation of the workstart pilot schemes is continuing. It is however already clear that those pilots run by training and enterprise councils need to work closely with the local employment service to maximise positive outcomes under workstart.

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to begin a survey of the ethnic origins of members of the reserve forces.

Mr. Hanley: There are no firm plans, at present, to survey the ethnic origins of members of the reserve forces. In the light of experience gained from the present survey of members of the regular forces, the possibility of extending ethnic monitoring to members of the volunteer reserve forces will be considered.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints of racial discrimination have been made by armed services personnel in respect of service in the armed forces in each year since 1976; and how many of those complaints were upheld.

Mr. Hanley: Information about complaints of racial discrimination by Army and Royal Air Force personnel is available from central records only from 1988 and is given in the table. Complaints of racial discrimination by naval personnel are not recorded centrally at present, but the Royal Navy plans to introduce a recording system early this year.

	Complaints made	*Complaints substantiated*
1988	4	1
1989	4	1
1990	3	0
1991	3	0
1992	8	2
[1]1993	[2]7	1

[1] 1 January 1993 to 20 December 1993.
[2] Four complaints remain under investigation.

Equipment Contracts

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take to cancel contracts with Gebrüder Junghans of Germany, AS Raufoss of Norway and Fratelli Borletti of Italy, following the evidence given at the trial of Mr. Gordon Foxley.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 24 November 1993]:* As I announced on 23 November at column 309-10, no new contracts will be placed with the companies implicated in the Foxley case until all the facts have been investigated. The scope for recovering money paid by the firms to Foxley is also under investigation. We do not propose to terminate the small number of existing contracts with the companies, which were all placed some years after Foxley's retirement from the Ministry of Defence.

Orders

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of orders placed by his Department in the last 10 years with *(a)* the firm Fratelli Borletti, *(b)* the firm Gebrüder Junghans and *(c)* the firm AS Raufoss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 26 November 1993]:* The value of orders placed by MOD in the last 10 years with the companies concerned is:

	£ million
Fratelli Borletti	2·1
Gebrüder Junghans	16·7
AS Raufoss	15·0
Total	33·8

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Support

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much the EC plans to spend in the current financial year on its agricultural policy; and by what percentage this has changed over the past five and 10 years.

Mr. Jack: The 1994 budget for the common agricultural policy (EAGGF guarantee) has been set at 36,465 mecu (£27,703 million), some 53 per cent. of the EC budget as a whole. This represents increases of 41 per cent. and 99 per cent. over expenditure in 1989 and 1984, respectively. As a proportion of total EC expenditure in 1989 and 1984, the CAP (EAGGF guarantee) represented 63 per cent. and 67 per cent. respectively.

Allergic Reactions

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the operation of the regulations for the labelling of food products containing peanuts and other foodstuffs known to be capable of causing fatal allergic reactions.

Mr. Soames: I am, of course, aware of the tragic circumstances that lie behind my hon. Friend's question and would like to express my sympathies to the family concerned in his constituency and to all other families who have suffered accidents of a similar nature.

People who are affected by allergies or are intolerant to certain foods know what to avoid and generally do so successfully. In this, the food labelling rules help them since pre-packed foodstuffs have to carry a list of ingredients on the label which they can consult. But for very real practical reasons the detailed labelling rules do not apply in catering outlets. A simple tightening of the application of the labelling rules is therefore not the real solution to this problem and we must seek other answers.

I have therefore today written to the chairmen of the principal trade associations involved in the manufacture and retailing of foodstuffs containing nuts, including the caterers, to ask them to meet urgently with my officials to discuss practical ways of ensuring that all involved are aware of the significance for some consumers of the use of nut ingredients in products and to establish a system whereby information about the use of such ingredients flows down the food chain so that it can be made available to consumers especially at catering outlets.

I will keep my hon. Friend in touch with the progress and results of these discussions.

Days at Sea

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for a new decommissioning scheme following the judicial decision in respect of the days at sea restrictions.

Mr. Jack: I would refer the hon. Member to the written reply that I gave on 14 December at column 596 to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South- East (Mr. Hicks). As I explained then, decommissioning formed part of a package of fisheries conservation measures upon which, following our decision to suspend implementation of controls on days at sea, we are having to review the way forward. I am not yet able to announce the outcome of the review.

Sheep Dips

Ms Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received on the health risks of organophosphate sheep dips.

Mr. Soames: I have received a number of representations on this subject. On 1 December my right hon. Friend the Minister announced the steps that would be taken by the Government, following recommendations from the veterinary products committee.

Ms Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to announce her decision on organophosphate sheep dips.

Mr. Soames: My right hon. Friend the Minister announced on 1 December the Government response to advice from the veterinary products committee on the use of organophosphate sheep dips. This reponse identified a number of recommendations from the committee which would be followed up. Further announcements will be made in due course.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Witnesses

4. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the intimidation of witnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a number of representations on this issue. I am determined that witnesses should be properly protected. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will add to the remedies provided in the existing law by creating a new offence of witness intimidation with a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

Crown Prosecution Service

19. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with police organisations and police authorities the present policies and arrangements in regard to the work of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. Friend the Attorney-General and I have accepted the proposal of the recent study on administrative burdens on the police that a joint performance management mechanism should be established to monitor the performance of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, so far as they are related. Discussions have recently taken place on how best to implement the proposal. The police and the Crown Prosecution Service will participate in this work.

Illegal Drugs

20. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department is undertaking to ascertain the link between illegal drug use and crime.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is currently examining the results of a number of recent studies. These include the 1992 British Crime Survey which contained questions on drug misuse and a separate study of the lifestyles and economic behaviour of drug misusers. Further research on drug misuse and crime is planned for later this year.

23. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made by the Metropolitan police in the war against drugs.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Metropolitan police give a very high priority to the fight against drugs and it has had a number of notable operational successes. For example, operaton Welwyn in the King's Cross area and operation Tean, in the Stoke Newington area, specifically targeted at some of the worst affected areas of London, have resulted in the arrest of more than 300 drug dealers to date.

Magistrates

21. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from magistrates on his proposed changes to the criminal justice system.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no formal representations from the Magistrates Association following the announcement that he made on 6 October, but some magistrates have written to me as individuals indicating their support for that package or particular elements in it.

Jury-nobbling

22. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plan to deal with jury-nobbling.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the oral answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman).

Wheel Clamping

24. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on wheel clamping on private land.

Mr. Maclean: In considering what, if any, action it may be appropriate to take our aim is to ensure that any measure introduced to prevent or deter irresponsible and heavy-handed wheelclamping on private land does not prevent sensible measures being taken to control genuine parking problems.

Police

25. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the changes in police establishment levels since April 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is contained in the replies given to questions from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 24 November 1993 at cols. *54-56* and from the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 16 December 1993 at col. *788*.

Sheehy Report

26. **Mr. Ottoway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding his response to the Sheehy report on police pay and responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given at column *152* on 25 November to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown).

Car Thefts

27. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of car thefts recorded *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1979 there were 309,245 recorded thefts of motor vehicles in England and Wales.

In the latest 12-month period for which figures are available—July 1992 to June 1993—the number of thefts was 614,560.

Bail (Crime)

28. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to deal with those who commit crimes while on bail.

Mr. Maclean: In last year's Criminal Justice Act we required the courts to consider the fact that an offence had been committed on bail as an aggravating factor when passing sentence. The current Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill contains a range of measures to reduce the risk that such offences will be committed, including the removal of the presumption in favour of bail in all cases where a person is charged with an offence triable on indictment which was allegedly committed on bail.

Juvenile Offenders

29. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of Government policy in relation to juvenile offenders.

Mr. Maclean: The legislation necessary to implement our policies for juvenile offenders is before the House in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Political Parties (Funding)

30. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he is considering for changes in the law concerning the funding of political parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such proposals.

Lenient Sentences

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to lay an order concerning the Attorney-General's right of appeal against lenient sentences.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer given to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) earlier today.

Young Criminals

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the custodial arrangements for children under the age of 12 years who are convicted of murder or other criminal offences.

Mr. Maclean: Children under the age of 12 who have been convicted of murder are subject to the mandatory sentence of detention at Her Majesty's pleasure under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. Children of this age convicted of manslaughter may also be detained under section 53. My right hon. and learned Friend, who has responsibility for the placement of all children detained under section 53, makes the decision about where such children should be placed. In practice, children of this age are invariably held in secure establishments within the child care system.

Justice and Home Affairs Co-operation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, by what means and to whom he has made proposals for future parliamentary oversights of matters discussed at an inter-governmental level arising from title VI and articles K.1 to 9 of the treaty on European Union; and if he will publish them as a Command document.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government's proposals for parliamentary oversight of work carried out under title VI of the treaty on European union are set out in memoranda in similar terms submitted to the Home Affairs Committee and to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities in February and March 1993 respectively. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) gave oral evidence on this subject to the Home Affairs Committee on 21 April 1993, and I gave oral evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities on 15 June 1993. The memorandum to the Home Affairs Committee was placed in the Library of the House by the Committee on receipt. The House of Lords Committee has now published its report and the memorandum which I submitted to it.

Life Sentences

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been released for each year since 1969 after serving sentences of life imprisonment for murder; and how many have reoffended.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is drawn from the offenders index and is shown in the following table.

Table: Persons first released on life Licence[1] after a conviction of murder, 1972-1991, and the number of these who have been reconvicted of a 'standard list'[2] offence by the end of 1991

Year	Number of persons first released	Number of those released who were reconvicted by end 1991
Total 1972-91	1,068	229
1972	23	7
1973	25	10
1974	34	6
1975	37	14
1976	59	21
1977	50	16
1978	73	20
1979	64	21
1980	31	11
1981	60	16
1982	82	26
1983	86	17
1984	54	10
1985	54	11
1986	40	5
1987	48	8
1988	57	4
1989	71	6
1990	64	—
1991	56	—

[1] More information is published annually in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin, the most recent being HOSB 3/93, Life Licensees and restricted offenders reconvictions: England and Wales 1990.
[2] Mainly indictable offences but includes some summary offences such as assault on a constable and cruelty to or neglect of children.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which persons sentenced to life imprisonment for murder have themselves been murdered either in prison or after release since 1969.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Dr. Robert Spink, dated 13 January 1994:

INMATES SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT WHO HAVE THEMSELVES BEEN MURDERED

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about which persons sentenced to life imprisonment for murder have themselves been murdered either in prison or after release since 1969.

The information available from centrally held records relates only to deaths in custody from 1988 to date. One such death in 1993 was found at the coroner's court to be an unlawful killing and is still under investigation. There were no others during the period 1988 to 1992.

Prisoner Escorts

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* police officers and *(b)* prisoner officers will be freed from escort duties in the Metropolitan police district as a result of the service being contracted out to Securicor Custodial Services Ltd.; and how the time of the officers so released will be used.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Approximately 335 full-time equivalent prisoner officer posts are engaged on court escort and custody duties in the Metropolitan police district. The phased loss of a total of 250 prison officer posts is planned during the first year of the court escort and custody service in the Metropolitan police district. These posts will be those currently employed on court or escort duties at the prison establishments affected. The aim is that posts will be lost through natural wastage and transfer and that there will be no redundancies.

The remaining 85 posts will be retained at London prisons where they should enable regime improvements to

take place. The Metropolitan police will similarly have a phased reduction in staffing of 271 police officer posts and 47 civilian staff posts by 1996-97. It is for the Metropolitan police to decide on the use of the time of its officers freed from this responsibility.

Deported Jamaicans

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute a full inquiry into the events surrounding the detention of passengers from Kingston, Jamaica, at Gatwick airport on 21 December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No, but I have written to the hon. Member and placed a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the means of redress available for those refused temporary entry as visitors, following the abolition of the right of appeal against visitor's refusals in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A passenger who holds a current entry clearance at the time of refusal of leave to enter the United Kingdom as a visitor has a right of appeal before removal. It is open to a passenger without such an entry clearance to seek judicial review of the decision to refuse him leave to enter.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 14 January 1994

EDUCATION

Pupil Costs

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average cost of each place at maintained secondary schools since 1988-89 in each English local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: Spending per pupil by each English LEA in secondary schools in 1988-89 to 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available, was as shown in the table.

Net institutional expenditure per secondary pupil 1988-89 to 1991-92

	1988-89 £	1989-90 £	1990-91 £	1991-92 £
ILEA	2,505	2,725	—	—
Camden	—	—	2,290	2,430
Greenwich	—	—	2,385	2,295
Hackney	—	—	2,705	2,800
Hammersmith	—	—	2,665	2,740
Islington	—	—	2,440	2,940
Kensington	—	—	2,905	3,200
Lambeth	—	—	2,585	2,980
Lewisham	—	—	2,430	2,375
Southwark	—	—	2,350	2,460
Tower Hamlets	—	—	2,490	2,945
Wandsworth	—	—	2,520	3,275
Westminster	—	—	2,580	2,445
Barking	1,970	2,200	2,305	2,255
Barnet	1,820	1,925	2,110	2,325
Bexley	1,685	1,820	1,965	2,060
Brent	2,305	2,225	2,360	2,490
Bromley	1,770	1,955	2,220	2,440
Croydon	2,040	1,935	2,080	2,375
Ealing	2,145	2,345	2,575	2,835
Enfield	1,715	1,815	2,080	2,320
Haringey	n/a	2,850	2,590	2,650
Harrow	1,740	1,975	2,325	2,375
Havering	1,860	1,990	2,135	2,255
Hillingdon	1,870	2,010	2,340	2,625
Hounslow	1,895	1,995	2,075	2,160
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,900	2,120	2,240	2,475
Merton	1,660	1,925	1,990	2,620
Newham	2,140	2,310	2,410	2,470
Redbridge	1,735	1,855	2,120	2,310
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,640	1,790	1,985	2,115
Sutton	1,630	1,750	2,075	2,160
Waltham Forest	2,435	2,490	2,650	2,620
Birmingham	1,640	1,800	2,050	2,150
Coventry	1,940	2,180	2,340	2,115
Dudley	1,840	1,915	2,095	2,125
Sandwell	1,885	2,115	2,295	2,275
Solihull	1,650	1,835	2,085	2,125
Walsall	1,885	1,995	2,255	2,110
Wolverhampton	1,745	1,975	2,120	2,355
Knowsley	1,990	2,105	2,225	2,295
Liverpool	1,905	2,060	2,250	2,355
St. Helens	1,710	1,970	1,960	2,105
Sefton	1,600	1,715	2,030	2,015
Wirral	1,755	1,975	2,110	2,115
Bolton	1,635	1,795	1,990	2,130
Bury	1,730	1,860	1,810	1,900
Manchester	n/a	2,190	2,145	2,285
Oldham	1,590	1,765	1,940	2,260
Rochdale	1,700	2,050	2,135	2,135
Salford	1,860	2,140	2,185	2,190
Stockport	1,730	1,860	2,030	2,135
Tameside	1,660	1,770	1,945	2,100
Trafford	1,710	1,920	2,075	2,105
Wigan	1,845	2,000	2,095	2,290
Barnsley	1,645	1,795	1,820	2,045
Doncaster	1,655	1,805	1,860	1,995
Rotherham	1,635	1,810	1,950	2,150
Sheffield	1,810	1,920	2,155	2,180
Bradford	1,605	1,635	1,775	1,795
Calderdale	1,665	1,665	2,095	2,010
Kirklees	1,620	1,765	1,920	2,055
Leeds	1,545	1,715	1,920	1,980
Wakefield	N/A	1,800	1,940	2,115
Gateshead	1,770	1,865	2,080	2,115
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1,870	1,980	1,990	2,065
North Tyneside	1,780	1,885	1,940	2,075
South Tyneside	1,825	2,010	2,135	2,040
Sunderland	1,665	1,845	1,935	2,045
Isles of Scilly	N/A	3,805	4,385	4,160
Avon	1,630	1,800	1,945	2,050
Bedfordshire	1,635	1,815	1,875	2,035
Berkshire	1,570	1,735	1,950	2,155
Buckinghamshire	1,715	1,850	2,050	2,095
Cambridgeshire	1,480	1,640	1,880	2,025
Cheshire	1,545	1,715	1,955	2,105
Cleveland	1,770	1,915	2,085	2,110
Cornwall	1,525	1,690	1,885	1,955
Cumbria	1,685	1,845	2,030	2,175
Derbyshire	1,755	1,975	2,110	2,200
Devon	1,535	1,705	1,950	2,005
Dorset	1,485	1,635	1,805	1,920
Durham	1,575	1,735	1,900	2,020
East Sussex	1,565	1,765	1,985	2,020
Essex	1,635	1,800	1,955	2,275
Gloucestershire	1,545	1,735	1,910	1,755
Hampshire	1,580	1,790	1,965	2,130
Hereford and Worcester	1,440	1,635	1,840	1,960
Hertfordshire	1,745	1,900	2,065	2,235
Humberside	1,690	1,760	1,910	2,065
Isle of Wight	1,495	1,575	1,755	1,935
Kent	1,475	1,565	1,805	2,075
Lancashire	1,620	1,810	1,950	2,225
Leicestershire	1,770	1,900	2,095	2,255
Lincolnshire	1,475	1,630	1,905	2,080
Norfolk	1,585	1,810	1,990	2,115
North Yorkshire	1,595	1,760	2,025	2,150
Northamptonshire	1,545	1,685	1,795	1,970
Northumberland	1,630	1,645	1,805	1,965
Nottinghamshire	1,745	1,955	2,220	2,490
Oxfordshire	1,665	1,810	2,155	2,110
Shropshire	1,695	1,855	2,105	2,350
Somerset	1,570	1,745	1,855	1,950
Staffordshire	1,610	1,790	1,925	2,045
Suffolk	1,485	1,820	2,025	1,700
Surrey	1,635	1,675	2,105	2,200
Warwickshire	1,635	1,770	1,895	2,090
West Sussex	1,530	1,745	1,910	2,085
Wiltshire	1,555	1,700	1,890	1,945

Notes to the table

1. Figures are in outturn prices and are derived from local education authorities' returns of their net institutional expenditure to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education.

2. Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure. Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.

3. "N/A" indicates that a return has not been received from the LEA. Corporation of London LEA has no secondary schools. Figures are rounded to the nearest £5.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers in state-maintained schools receive a gross salary of £30,000 per year.

Mr. Robin Squire: On the basis of departmental projections of teacher numbers and data from the recent pay survey conducted by the School Teachers Review Body we estimate that in England and Wales approximately 9,700 full-time teachers in the maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special sectors, including 5,900 heads and 3,100 deputies, were being paid salaries of £30,000 per annum or more on 1 September 1993.

Pupil Transfers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that pupils who transfer from grant-maintained schools to local authority-maintained schools take a proportion of funds with them.

Mr. Robin Squire: The predominantly pupil-led funding arrangements for both grant-maintained and local authority maintained schools allow movements of pupils between the two sectors, in either direction, to be reflected in school budgets on an annual basis.

Nursery Education

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assumption he makes within the standard spending assessment for appropriate expenditure on education for each local education authority for their expenditure on optional nursery education; and to what extent this varies between authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: The local government finance settlement takes account of the broad range of pressures on local authorities, including the projected number of pupils aged under five in maintained schools, as published in the Department's annual report. The component of standard spending assessments which is notionally attributed to under-fives is allocated according to the population aged under five in each local authority area. This is adjusted by the additional educational need allowance which reflects the additional costs of providing a standard level of service in areas of relative deprivation, and by the area cost adjustment which reflects higher labour costs in the south-east.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimates he has made of the additional costs for training those qualified nursery teachers to the standards now in force for each additional 100 nursery school pupils receiving half-time nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: On the basis of current recommended staffing ratios and assuming that two half-time classes could be accommodated within a normal school week and with the same staff, 100 half-time nursery school pupils would require 2·5 full-time equivalent teachers. The average cost of initial training of a qualified early years teacher is approximately £6,350 per year, inclusive of student maintenance payments. The majority of early years teachers are at present trained on four-year BEd courses. These figures take no account of any requirement for nursery assistants in addition to teachers.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what formal statements he expects to make concerning the policies of Her Majesty's Government for nursery education which have been indicated informally; and when, and by what means, he plans to make them;

(2) what consultations he has had, or expects to make, prior to further announcements or distribution of circulars or advice concerning his plans for expanding nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: As my right hon. Friend indicated in his speech to the North of England conference on 7 January, the Government's policy is to promote choice, diversity, quality and cost-effectiveness in the provision of pre-school education, and to extend the amount of such education available. Over half of three and four-year-olds already attend maintained nursery and primary schools, and more than 90 per cent. receive some form of pre-school provision. We are exploring ways of adding still further, as resources allow, to the choice already available to parents from all sources—public, private and voluntary. When we have any proposals to make, we will announce them in the usual way. There will then be an opportunity for those concerned to express their views.

Teacher Training

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what have been the costs incurred in training teachers in relation to assessing those areas which have now been dropped as a result of the Dearing review.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is impossible to isolate and cost the elements of initial and in-service teacher training relating solely to those aspects of assessment that will change following the Dearing review. Such training generally has wider objectives that will remain relevant regardless of the changes that will be made.

Parents Charter

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost of production and distribution of the leaflet to be issued about the parents charter; how much of this cost is attributable to distribution; and how many of the leaflets will go to homes with children of school age.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of distributing the revised parents charter to every household in England is estimated at £500,000. The total cost of producing and distributing the charter is expected to be some £2 million. Raising standards in schools, and supporting what has already been achieved, are matters of national importance. The charter will therefore be relevant to all citizens, and not simply to the estimated 6·75 million households with children under the school leaving age.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies of his Department's grant-maintained schools folder, containing the fifth edition of "How to become a grant-maintained school", "Questions parents ask", "Questions staff ask", "Experiences during the first year", and a copy of circular 18/93, have been distributed; and what was the cost of (i)

the folders, (ii) each of the booklets, (iii) the circulars, (iv) the padded bags in which they were sent and (v) the distribution itself.

Mr. Robin Squire: Some 22,500 copies of the Department's grant-maintained schools folder were distributed to chairmen of governors of maintained schools in England to ensure that they had publications reflecting the relevant provisions in the Education Act 1993 which came into effect from 1 January. Further copies are being distributed in response to requests. The unit costs for printing and design were as follows:

	Pence
(i) folders	31
(ii) booklets:	
How to Become a Grant-Maintained School	63
Questions Parents Ask	8
Questions Staff Ask	22
Experiences during the First year	9
(iii) circular 18/93	23

For the initial distribution to all schools, the cost of packaging was £8,178, and the cost of postage was £20,106.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of new grant-maintained schools received an allocation for expenditure on named capital projects in the financial years (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Ninety-five per cent. of schools which entered the grant-maintained sector in 1992-93 and bid for capital grant on named projects received an allocation for the financial year 1993-94.

Seventy per cent. of schools which joined the sector between April and September last year and bid for funding have so far received allocations for 1994-95. The allocations are either to carry out a named project or for extra design work to place them in a priority position for support in 1995-96. In addition, grant-maintained schools which have entered the sector since September 1993 have been invited to submit their named project bids for 1994-95 by 28 January.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in how many cases the interval between his approval of grant-maintained status for a school and its incorporation date has been less than *(a)* five working days, *(b)* 10 working days, *(c)* 15 working days and *(d)* 20 working days; and, in category, whether he will list the schools and give the relevant dates.

Mr. Robin Squire: The interval between the approval of grant-maintained status for a school and its incorporation date has been less than five working days in seven cases, less than 10 working days in 47 cases, less than 15 working days in 75 cases and less than 20 working days in 128 cases. The schools and relevant dates are listed by category in the table.

Interval between approval of grant-maintained status and incorporation date
0–4 working days

School	*LEA*	*Approval*	*Incorporation*
Bishop Challoner RC School	Birmingham	28 September 1993	1 October 1993
Convent of Jesus and Mary GM HS	Brent	24 March 1993	1 April 1993
Queens Park Community School (GM)	Brent	24 March 1993	1 April 1994
Hayes Road Primary School	Devon	23 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. George's RC School	Hampshire	24 August 1993	1 September 1993
Harlington Community School	Hillingdon	22 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Peter and St. Paul RC HS	Lincolnshire	26 August 1993	1 September 1993

Interval between approval of grant-maintained status and incorporation date
5–9 working days

School	*LEA*	*Approval*	*Incorporation*
Ashmole School	Barnet	20 August 1993	1 September 1993
Bishop Douglass RC Comprehensive	Barnet	20 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Joseph's RC Primary School	Berkshire	16 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Columba's RC Boys School	Bexley	18 March 1993	1 April 1993
Oakington Manor Primary School	Brent	19 August 1993	1 September 1993
Cardinal Hinsley High School	Brent	23 August 1993	1 September 1993
The Radcliffe School	Buckinghamshire	18 March 1993	1 April 1993
Holy Trinity CE Senior School (GM)	Calderdale	23 March 1993	1 April 1993
Soham Village College	Cambridgeshire	18 August 1993	1 September 1993
La Sainte Union Convent School	Camden	19 August 1993	1 September 1993
Appleby County Primary School	Cumbria	21 September 1993	1 October 1993
Repton Primary School	Derbyshire	24 March 1993	1 April 1993
Redhill County Primary School	Derbyshire	21 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Mary's High School	Derbyshire	21 December 1993	1 January 1994
Dunmow County Infant School	Essex	21 December 1993	1 January 1994
Dunmow CE VC Junior School	Essex	22 December 1993	1 January 1994
The Coopers' Co. & Coborn (GM)	Havering	23 March 1993	1 April 1993
Mount Grace School (GM)	Hertfordshire	24 March 1993	1 April 1993
Chancellor's School	Hertfordshire	22 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Joan of Arc RC School	Hertfordshire	22 December 1993	1 January 1994
Grange Park Junior School	Hillingdon	19 March 1993	1 April 1993
Grange Park Infant School	Hillingdon	19 March 1993	1 April 1993
Abbotsfield School	Hillingdon	19 March 1993	1 April 1993
Swakeleys School	Hillingdon	19 March 1993	1 April 1993
St. Andrew's CE Primary School	Hillingdon	17 August 1993	1 September 1993

School	LEA	Approval	Incorporation
Howden CE Infant School	Humberside	16 December 1993	1 January 1994
Cranbrook School	Kent	17 December 1991	1 January 1992
Hayesbrook High School	Kent	16 December 1993	1 January 1994
Northfleet School for Boys	Kent	21 December 1993	1 January 1994
Tower Road County Primary School	Lincolnshire	21 December 1993	1 January 1994
Great Yarmouth High School	Norfolk	18 March 1993	1 April 1993
Sir Christopher Hatton School (GM)	Northamptonshire	16 December 1992	1 January 1993
Wrenn School (GM)	Northamptonshire	16 December 1992	1 January 1993
Cannock Chase High School (GM)	Staffordshire	18 March 1993	1 April 1993
Park Hall County Infant School	Walsall	17 December 1993	1 January 1994
Park Hall County Junior School	Walsall	17 December 1993	1 January 1994
The Commonweal School	Wiltshire	22 October 1993	1 November 1993
Studley Green Primary School	Wiltshire	20 December 1993	1 January 1994
South Wilts Girls' Grammar School	Wiltshire	20 December 1993	1 January 1994
Calday Grange Grammar, West Kirby	Wirral	22 March 1993	1 April 1993

Interval between approval of grant-maintained status and incorporation date, 10–14 working days

School	LEA	Approval	Incorporation
Osidge Primary School	Barnet	11 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. James' Catholic High School	Barnet	11 November 1993	1 December 1993
Reading School	Berkshire	13 March 1991	1 April 1991
Priory School	Berkshire	14 September 1992	1 October 1992
George Tomlinson School	Bolton	16 March 1993	1 April 1993
Kingsbury High School	Brent	16 March 1993	1 April 1993
Longsands Community College	Cambridgeshire	11 March 1993	1 April 1993
Bowness-on-Solway Primary School	Cumbria	15 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. John Fisher RC Primary School	Essex	9 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Giles CE Primary School	Hertfordshire	16 August 1993	1 September 1993
Charville Primary School	Hillingdon	12 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. Laurence CE Junior School	Hillingdon	13 August 1993	1 September 1993
Gunnersbury Catholic Boys' School	Hounslow	11 March 1993	1 April 1993
Senacre Technology School	Kent	11 December 1991	1 January 1992
Holy Trinity CE Primary School	Kent	12 August 1992	1 September 1992
Holy Cross Convent School	Kingston-on-Thames	11 March 1993	1 April 1993
Archbishop Temple School	Lancashire	15 March 1993	1 April 1993
Abbey Grange CE High School (GM)	Leeds	16 September 1993	1 October 1993
The Giles School	Lincolnshire	9 December 1993	1 January 1994
Lancaster County Infant School	Lincolnshire	9 December 1993	1 January 1994
Our Lady of Fatima RC High School	Liverpool	10 September 1993	1 October 1993
St. James CE Primary School	Rochdale	17 March 1993	1 April 1993
Yattendon Middle School	Surrey	10 August 1993	1 September 1993
Stanley Park Infants' School	Sutton	14 December 1993	1 January 1994
Stanley Park Junior School	Sutton	14 December 1993	1 January 1994
John Bentley School	Wiltshire	13 August 1993	1 September 1993
Kingsdown School	Wiltshire	16 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. Joseph's RC Comprehensive	Wiltshire	13 October 1993	1 November 1993

Interval between approval of grant-maintained status and incorporation date 15–19 working days

School	LEA	Approval	Incorporation
St. Michael's Catholic GS	Barnet	4 August 1993	1 September 1993
Finchley Catholic High School	Barnet	6 August 1993	1 September 1993
Holy Family RC School	Berkshire	8 December 1992	1 January 1993
Whitelocke Infant and Nursery School	Berkshire	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
St. Mary and St. Joseph's School (GM)	Bexley	9 March 1993	1 April 1993
Wibsey Middle School	Bradford	5 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. Gregory's RC High School	Brent	9 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. John Rigby School	Bromley	2 December 1992	1 January 1993
Stanground College (GM)	Cambridgeshire	9 March 1993	1 April 1993
Jews Free School	Camden	6 August 1993	1 September 1993
The Merrill Community School	Derbyshire	8 December 1992	1 January 1993
St. Walburga's RC Primary School	Dorset	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
Enfield Grammar School	Enfield	2 December 1993	1 January 1994
The Colne School	Essex	3 December 1993	1 January 1994
Broomfield County Primary School	Essex	3 December 1993	1 January 1994
Hadleigh Nursery and Infants School	Essex	6 December 1993	1 January 1994
The Stanway School	Essex	7 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Gregory the Great Catholic School	Gloucestershire	7 December 1993	1 January 1994
Blue Coat CE Primary School (GM)	Gloucestershire	4 March 1993	1 April 1993
St. Peter's RC Primary School	Hampshire	3 August 1993	1 September 1993
Dame Alice Owen's School	Hertfordshire	5 March 1993	1 April 1993

School	LEA	Approval	Incorporation
Bushey Meads School (GM)	Hertfordshire	8 March 1993	1 April 1993
Queen's School	Hertfordshire	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
Bushey Hall School	Hertfordshire	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
St. Michael's RC School	Hertfordshire	9 August 1993	1 September 1993
Gumley House Convent School	Hounslow	8 March 1993	1 April 1993
Mascalls School	Kent	4 March 1993	1 April 1993
Newington Junior School	Kent	9 August 1993	1 September 1993
Richard Challoner School	Kingston-on-Thames	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
Archbishop Tenison's School	Lambeth	9 March 1993	1 April 1993
St. Andrew's RC Primary School	Lambeth	6 December 1993	1 January 1994
St. Mary's High School	Lancashire	3 December 1993	1 January 1994
Lady Elizabeth Hastings CE Primary School	Leeds	3 August 1993	1 September 1993
Uppingham Community College	Leicestershire	8 March 1993	1 April 1993
William Robertson School	Lincolnshire	3 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. Wulfram's CE High School (GM)	Lincolnshire	3 August 1993	1 September 1993
St. Hugh's CE VC Comprehensive	Lincolnshire	8 December 1993	1 January 1994
Marshland High School	Norfolk	9 March 1992	1 April 1992
St. George's CE VC Middle School	Norfolk	6 December 1993	1 January 1994
Woodnewton Way Junior School	Northamptonshire	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
Woodnewton Way Infant School	Northamptonshire	3 December 1993	1 January 1994
Astley High School	Northumberland	3 September 1993	1 October 1993
Shenington CE Primary School	Oxfordshire	10 March 1993	1 April 1993
Handsworth St. Joseph's RC School	Sheffield	3 December 1993	1 January 1994
The Manor County First School	Surrey	9 March 1992	1 April 1992
Hawkedale First School	Surrey	9 March 1992	1 April 1992
De Stafford School	Surrey	10 March 1992	1 April 1992
Heathside Secondary School	Surrey	10 March 1992	1 April 1992
Wallington High School for Boys	Sutton	4 March 1993	1 April 1993
Chingford School	Waltham Forest	3 August 1993	1 September 1993
Burntwood School	Wandsworth	3 December 1991	1 January 1992
St. John's School	Wiltshire	3 August 1993	1 September 1993
Brandon Forest School	Wiltshire	8 October 1993	1 November 1993

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will identify all the specific purpose grants given to each grant-maintained school in South Yorkshire for each financial year since 1991-92; and if he will give the purpose of each grant.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following self-governing schools in South Yorkshire have received special purpose grants, SPGs:

School	Amount paid (£) for each financial year 1992-93	1993-94
Clifford C E First School, Sheffield		
SPG (Transitional)[1]	21,834	—
SPG (Development)[2]	2,915	4,985
SPG (Restructuring)[3]	11,136	—
SPG (VAT)[4]	1,044	4,141
SPG (Premises)[5]	—	920
All Saints RC School, Sheffield		
SPG (Transitional)[1]	—	59,640
SPG (Development)[2]	—	24,490
SPG (VAT)[4]	—	30,402
Notre Dame School, Sheffield		
SPG (Transitional)[1]	—	51,610
SPG (Development)[2]	—	22,436
SPG (Restructuring)[3]	—	8,652
SPG (VAT)[4]	—	26,262
St. John Fisher RC (VA) Primary, Sheffield		
SPG (Transitional)[1]	—	24,338
SPG (Development)[2]	—	4,863
SPG (VAT)[4]	—	4,298
Handsworth St. Josephs RC Primary, Sheffield		
SPG (Transitional)[1]	—	17,599
SPG (Development)[2]	—	1,678
SPG (VAT)[4]	—	1,711
St. Annes RC Primary, Sheffield		
SPG (Transitional)[1]	—	38,250
SPG (Development)[2]	—	1,497
SPG (VAT)[4]	—	1,703

Note: The purpose of each of the SPGs is as follows:

[1] *Special Purpose Grant (Transitional)*
Available to help with the costs incurred as a result of the school's acquisition of self-governing status.

[2] *Special Purpose Grant (Development)*
Available to fund management training, staff development and implementation of the national curriculum.

[3] *Special Purpose Grant (Restructuring)*
Available to help with essential staff restructuring which involves costs arising from premature retirement, redundancy or voluntary severance of teaching staff.

[4] *Special Purpose Grant (VAT)*
Compensates for the payment of VAT on supplies and services, which self-governing schools may not claim back.

[5] *Special Purpose Grant (Premises)*
Assists self-governing schools with the additional cost of school premises insurance.

National Curriculum

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of the printing, publishing and distribution of Sir Ron Dearing's interim report; and what are the estimated costs in respect of the final report.

Mr. Robin Squire: The printing and distribution costs of the interim report were £200,000. Comparable costs for the final report are estimated at £460,000.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for each key stage and curriculum area, what are the pilot

and development costs; and if he will identify those items of expenditure incurred in respect of those aspects now withdrawn as a result of the Dearing review.

Mr. Robin Squire: Most of these costs were incurred by the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council and date from the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988. Both councils have now been dissolved and it is not possible to identify the items of expenditure requested from their published accounts. Further work to identify the expenditure would incur disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost, since the enactment of the Education Reform Act 1988, of the development and implementation of the national curriculum and of the associated assessment of children.

Mr. Robin Squire: Expenditure by the Department on the development and implementation of the national curriculum and the associated assessment of children for the years 1988-89 to 1992-93 inclusive was £469 million. This mainly comprises grant in aid to the National Curriculum Council, the School Examinations and Assessment Council and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and funding under the grants for education support and training programme.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what have been the costs of external assessors in evaluating the various stages of the national curriculum and its assessment.

Mr. Robin Squire: There has been a variety of external evaluations of the national curriculum and its assessment, carried out under the auspices of the National Curriculum Council, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, and its successor, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The Office for Standards in Education has also evaluated various aspects of the national curriculum. Information on the expenditure incurred is not held centrally by the Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Schools Councils

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the total operating costs of *(a)* the National Curriculum Council and *(b)* the School Examinations and Assessment Council from their inception until their winding up.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total operating costs of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council, as recorded in their published accounts, from their inception on 15 August 1988 to 31 March 1993 were £36·3 million and £69·6 million respectively. Their final accounts for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Dearing Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the operating and staffing costs to date of the Dearing inquiry.

Mr. Robin Squire: The operating and staffing costs of the Dearing review of the national curriculum are estimated at £95,000, excluding the cost of printing and distributing the interim and final reports, which is estimated at £660,000.

Grant-maintained Status

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on which dates copies of circular 18/93 were dispatched to (i) chairs of governors of schools and (ii) chief education officers.

Mr. Robin Squire: Distribution of circular 18/93 to schools and to local education authorities and others was handled by two separate contractors. I understand that the former distribution was completed by 31 December 1993 and the latter by 12 January 1994.

Fitzherbert School, Brighton

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the value placed on the former Fitzherbert school site in Brighton, prior to the City Technology Colleges Trust selling it to the Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: This site was owned by the CTC Trust which was responsible for its valuation and disposal. The site was sold in November 1993 for a price which is commercially confidential.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electricity Supply

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to introduce competition into the provision of electricity supply in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland has responsibility for the development of competition in the supply of electricity. He reported on his plans for this on 16 December and a copy of his report can be obtained from the Office of Electricity Regulation, Northern Ireland.

Community Employment Schemes

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total number of claims for injury compensation on Action for Community Employment schemes in each year since 1988;

(2) what were the yearly global sums paid by way of compensation to those injured on Action for Community Employment schemes since 1988;

(3) how many injury claims were *(a)* contested in court and *(b)* settled out of court arising from Action for Community Employment schemes in each year since 1988.

Mr. Tim Smith: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Rev. Martin Smyth, dated 13 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me as Chief Executive of the Agency to reply to your questions about

claims for injury compensation arising within Action for Community Employment (ACE) Schemes in each year from 1988.

In responding to this enquiry I have to point out that ACE sponsors are independent employers subject to all the normal legal obligations of an employer including adherence to Health & Safety legislation. Sponsors are also required to arrange appropriate employer's and employee's public liability insurance for their projects.

Any injury compensation claims arising within projects do not therefore involve the Agency and are the subject of settlement between the employer, their insurers and the claimant. Consequently the Agency does not hold information about the incidence of claims, the nature of settlement, or the value of compensation awarded.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful on this occasion.

Union Flag

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to provide a Union flag for the premises of the Department of Agriculture at Newry road, Armagh; what arrangements have been made to fly the Union flag at these Government premises on the designated dates; why it was not flown on 1 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A Union flag is available at the premises of the Department of Agriculture at 2 Newry road, Armagh, for use on designated dates.

The Union flag is normally flown at the premises on designated dates, although I regret that it was not flown on Saturday 1 January 1994 as no staff were available on that day to carry out the task.

In future, when the designated date falls on a weekend or a public holiday the Union flag will be raised on the afternoon of the last working day prior to the designated date and lowered on the morning of the next working day.

Negative Equity

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the number of households with negative equity for the third quarter of 1993; and what this figure represents as a proportion of total owner-occupied households.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am unaware of any households in Northern Ireland with negative equity resulting from fluctuations in the housing market.

PRIME MINISTER

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

The Prime Minister: My office has not placed any contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by my office.

Civil List

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what is the annual financial value of the inflation-proofing built into the civil list; and by what amounts that has exceeded the sum required for annual indexation based on the actual cost of living in each year since the new civil list was introduced.

The Prime Minister: There is no inflation-proofing built into the civil list. While the £7·9 million fixed annual payment took account of the average rate of inflation for the years 1979-1989, if actual inflation falls below this level the household is not in a position to spend the surplus but is expected to carry it forward to the end of the 10-year period. This was made quite clear in paragraph 12 of the 1990 report of the Royal Trustees—HC 629—which reads:

"If cost inflation is lower in overall terms than the rate assumed in paragraph 11, the Royal Trustees would expect the Royal Household to carry forward a surplus at the end of the decade, for use in the next period."

Civil list expenditure to date under the new arrangements has fallen well below the actual rate of inflation.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what account is taken of the inflation-proofing element in the annual refund of civil list money relating to those who have been removed from the civil list.

The Prime Minister: As set out in the report of the Royal Trustees—paragraphs 21 to 23 of HC464, 11 February 1993—Her Majesty the Queen now reimburses the Consolidated Fund for the full cost of all the parliamentary annuities paid to members of the royal family except the Queen Mother and the Duke of Edinburgh. The reimbursement for 1993 has already been received. The annuities are fixed sums and the question of inflation does not arise.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether he has provided Lord Justice Scott with all documents requested for use by the inquiry;

(2) what documents he has submitted to Lord Justice Scott in advance of his appearance before the inquiry.

The Prime Minister: The only request I have received is for a written statement, which I submitted on 12 January.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what guidelines he has issued to Ministers in regard to which questions on the involvement of the United Kingdom in arms and military equipment exports to Iraq since 1985 may be substantively answered while the Scott inquiry is still sitting.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on 7 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *14*.

Mr. Frank Machon

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what record he has of telephone calls made by Mr. Frank Machon of Glasgow to officials at 10 Downing street between September and the end of December 1993.

The Prime Minister: None.

Radio Broadcast

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a transcript of his interview with "The World this Weekend" broadcast on Radio 4 on 2 January.

The Prime Minister: No, it is not my policy to do so.

The Union

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Prime Minister whether he intends to make it his policy that the county of Cambridgeshire, or any other similar area in England, Scotland or Wales, will be permitted to secede from the Union should the majority of the residents of that county agree freely and concurrently with a majority of the residents of any other foreign country that they wish to do so; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 12 January 1993]:* For my own part, I whole-heartedly support the continuation of the Union in its present form. The question of secession arises only in the context of nations rather than areas within the different jurisdictions. The majority of people in each of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom wish to maintain the Union.

TRANSPORT

BR Employees

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing how many York-based British Rail employees were employed by each division of British Rail at the latest date for which figures are available and at the same date in each of the previous three years.

Mr. Freeman: As at 1 January 1994, the number of York-based British Rail employees by division was as follows:

	Number
Central Services	532
British Rail Property Board	45
Trainload Freight	69
Inter City	988
British Transport Police	10
Regional Railways	601
British Rail Telecom	71
Group HQ	38
Total	2,354

Information for the previous three years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hasquad Study

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Hasquad study.

Mr. Norris: I announced on 4 January my decision not to pursue further the proposals for new road and rail infrastructure put forward by the consultants in their report on the Hasquad study.

The consultants' proposals would be very costly, amounting to more than £800 million in total. At a time when public spending is under severe pressure, there has to be a very strong case for taking these proposals forward. When there is an overriding need for a transport scheme, whether road or rail, difficult decisions cannot be avoided. But in this case the consultants were concerned with problems within the study area, and proposed options mainly to benefit local residents and town centres. In these circumstances, we would want to take the proposals forward only if they had been strongly supported by the community. If the proposals are unwelcome in the area, I see no reason for the Government to adopt them.

Of the large number of comments we have received from local residents since publication of the Hasquad report, the overwhelming majority have been opposed to the proposals. These have caused anxiety about the possible effects on property in the area and I therefore decided to end the uncertainty now rather than wait until the end of the consultation period.

The problems of travel and traffic congestion in the area identified by the consultants do, however, remain and are likely to get worse. My Department will therefore be ready to consider a package of more limited measures which the local authorities may wish to bring forward, in consultation with transport operators, with proposals for funding them.

Marchioness Disaster

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps were taken by the Metropolitan police, his maritime accident investigation branch, or any other body or person respectively to *(a)* obtain statements from and *(b)* provide information concerning their opportunity to give voluntary evidence to the maritime accident investigation branch inquiry, to Simon Hook and Dino Pereira, surviving passengers from the last cruise of the Marchioness.

Mr. Norris: Statements from both Mr. Hook and Mr. Pereira were taken by the Metropolitan police and copies were given to the inquiry. By means of press advertisement, anyone who wished to contribute to the inquiry was invited to do so; neither of the two gentleman named responded.

WALES

Negative Equity

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of households with negative equity for the third quarter of 1993; and what this figure represents as a proportion of total owner-occupied households.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on households with negative equity is not available for Wales as the samples in relevant surveys are too small to produce reliable estimates.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

7 Millbank

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee on how many occasions during 1993 the electricity supply to 7 Millbank was interrupted; on how many of these occasions the House authorities were warned of the interruption; and when he expects a reliable supply to be available.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works and I shall ask him to write to my hon. Friend.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each London borough the number of households and the proportion of all households claiming income support for each year since 1989.

Mr. Burt: The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each London borough the number of households and the proportion of all households claiming family credit for each year since 1989.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the United Kingdom and by standard region, including Greater London, the number of households and the proportion of all households claiming family credit for each year since 1989.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested.

The number of families with dependent children in 1991[1] in Great Britain by standard region is:

Region	*1991*
North	379,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	585,000
East Midlands	486,000
East Anglia	238,000
South East	2,034,000
South West	530,000
West Midlands	630,000
North West	787,000
Wales	353,000
Scotland	616,000
Total	6,638,000

The number of families receiving Family Credit in the DSS regions[2] is:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
London North	28,100	35,200	38,700	43,400	56,400
London South	24,700	28,000	30,100	36,600	48,000
Midlands	50,100	57,300	64,000	71,500	90,300
Northern	49,600	56,100	61,200	68,900	87,600
North Western	49,700	53,300	57,600	63,400	79,400
Scotland	34,200	37,100	41,000	45,400	57,100
Wales and South Western	42,100	47,000	48,700	54,800	68,100
Total	278,500	314,000	341,300	384,000	486,900

Sources:
[1] 1991 census of population.
[2] Five per cent. sample of family credit recipients as at 30 April for each year.

The information provided is for Great Britain only. Social security statistics for Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a regional breakdown of the figures published in "Personal Pensions 1993" by his Department.

Mr. Hague: A regional breakdown of all the tables in "Personal Pension Statistics 1991-92" could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

However, summary regional analyses are available and are in the tables.

People with a personal pension in the year ending 5 April 1992 by region and reckonable earnings

Ad-hoc 10 Thousands

Amount of reckonable earnings	*All cases*	*Northern*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
Men and Women											
Total cases	5,198·1	274·7	477·6	408·1	207·5	1,643·6	413·9	525·3	566·2	225·4	455·8
Mean earnings (£pa)	8,266	7,677	7,810	8,182	8,435	9,220	7,721	7,861	7,735	7,323	7,743
Zero	917·2	44·3	79·9	64·8	35·5	315·8	77·8	89·9	95·5	41·1	72·6
1-2,703	375·0	21·4	35·9	28·8	12·4	100·4	32·0	37·0	49·9	19·4	37·8
2,704-4,999	425·0	27·7	44·3	37·5	14·7	103·7	34·9	45·1	51·3	20·3	45·5
5,000-7,499	699·9	47·4	74·2	59·0	26·9	155·3	60·7	81·9	84·1	38·3	72·1
7,500-9,999	793·6	41·8	80·3	63·4	34·1	205·3	69·9	90·5	96·6	37·3	74·7
10,000-12,499	656·3	34·4	58·9	56·9	31·7	202·7	49·9	66·8	67·8	28·1	59·1
12,500-14,999	485·9	23·3	44·6	41·5	22·4	169·8	35·2	46·4	46·6	18·2	37·9
15,000-17,499	333·5	16·3	28·0	23·9	12·5	132·0	21·4	30·4	33·9	10·6	24·5
17,500-19,999	246·6	12·2	17·4	18·0	8·6	110·8	15·2	19·8	20·2	6·9	17·5
20,000 and over	265·1	5·9	14·1	14·3	8·7	147·8	16·9	17·5	20·3	5·2	14·4
Men											
Total cases	3,291·1	180·1	316·4	267·1	136·1	992·6	264·8	336·8	359·5	149·6	288·1

Amount of reckonable earnings	All cases	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	Wales	Scotland
Mean earnings (£pa)	9,289	8,976	8,851	9,465	9,601	10,109	8,766	8,915	8,861	8,196	8,854
Zero	583·5	28·1	54·4	40·1	21·2	194·2	51·2	57·9	60·3	28·5	47·6
1-2,703	184·7	9·8	17·8	14·8	6·4	48·4	15·6	19·5	24·8	9·4	18·2
2,704-4,999	184·3	11·4	19·4	15·4	6·5	47·6	13·6	18·7	22·9	9·8	19·0
5,000-7,499	316·3	21·2	34·2	25·8	12·4	72·1	28·0	36·4	37·2	17·8	31·2
7,500-9,999	456·0	26·8	50·6	37·2	19·4	102·2	40·8	53·8	57·0	25·7	42·5
10,000-12,499	473·5	28·7	46·7	45·3	25·7	118·5	37·8	50·1	51·0	22·8	46·9
12,500-14,999	383·8	22·1	38·9	36·7	18·6	111·1	30·0	39·6	39·1	15·5	32·2
15,000-17,499	271·9	14·9	25·3	22·0	10·7	91·5	18·8	27·1	30·7	8·9	22·0
17,500-19,999	208·8	11·5	15·9	16·6	7·5	86·2	14·0	17·5	17·6	6·3	15·7
20,000 and over	228·3	5·6	13·2	13·2	7·7	120·8	15·0	16·2	18·9	4·9	12·8
Women											
Total cases	1,907·0	94·6	161·2	141·0	71·4	651·0	149·1	188·5	206·7	75·8	167·7
Mean earnings (£pa)	6,499	5,205	5,767	5,751	6,212	7,863	5,865	5,977	5,779	5,598	5,835
Zero	333·7	16·2	25·5	24·7	14·3	121·6	26·6	32·0	35·2	12·6	25·0
1-2,703	190·3	11·6	18·1	14·0	6·0	52·0	16·4	17·5	25·1	10·0	19·6
2,704-4,999	240·7	16·3	24·9	22·1	8·2	56·1	21·3	26·4	28·4	10·5	26·5
5,000-7,499	383·6	26·2	40·0	33·2	14·5	83·2	32·7	45·5	46·9	20·5	40·9
7,500-9,999	337·6	15·0	29·7	26·2	14·7	103·1	29·1	36·7	39·6	11·6	31·9
10,000-12,499	182·8	5·7	12·2	11·6	6·0	84·2	12·1	16·7	16·8	5·3	12·2
12,500-14,999	102·1	1·2	5·7	4·8	3·8	58·7	5·2	6·8	7·5	2·7	5·7
15,000-17,499	61·6	1·4	2·7	1·9	1·8	40·5	2·6	3·3	3·2	1·7	2·5
17,500-19,999	37·8	0·7	1·5	1·4	1·1	24·6	1·2	2·3	2·6	0·6	1·8
20,000 and over	36·8	0·3	0·9	1·1	1·0	27·0	1·9	1·3	1·4	0·3	1·6

Ad-hoc 11

People with a personal pension in the year ending 5 April 1992 by region and amount of contracted-out rebate

Thousands

Amount of contracted-out rebate	All cases	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	Wales	Scotland
Men and Women											
Total cases	5,198·1	274·7	477·6	408·1	207·5	1,643·6	413·9	525·3	566·2	225·4	445·8
Mean amount (£pa)	353	318	326	346	361	409	326	329	322	299	324
Zero	1,279·2	65·4	113·9	92·7	47·0	415·5	107·8	126·6	143·5	58·9	107·9
0·01-99·99	318·9	20·8	34·3	27·5	11·6	78·4	25·2	33·1	38·9	15·9	33·2
100·00-199·99	425·9	28·6	44·3	35·8	15·3	97·8	34·9	45·9	53·5	21·1	48·7
200·00-299·99	532·1	33·9	55·8	45·5	22·0	119·0	48·0	64·6	62·6	30·6	50·1
300·00-399·99	544·6	28·8	55·3	42·3	22·9	143·8	49·4	60·8	64·1	25·5	51·7
400·00-499·99	487·4	25·3	45·1	40·9	22·0	142·3	39·7	50·3	55·4	20·4	46·0
500·00-599·99	410·3	20·8	37·5	36·3	20·0	130·6	29·8	44·5	40·5	16·9	33·4
600·00-699·99	328·5	15·8	28·8	28·8	15·7	115·6	23·1	29·9	31·3	13·2	26·3
700·00-799·99	250·8	11·9	21·4	18·4	10·8	97·1	17·4	22·8	25·5	8·0	17·5
800·00-899·99	195·0	9·8	16·3	14·2	5·7	82·2	11·6	17·9	18·3	5·4	13·6
900·00-999·99	159·6	7·7	10·9	11·6	6·0	73·0	10·0	11·3	12·0	4·3	12·8
1,000 and over	265·8	5·9	14·0	14·1	8·5	148·3	17·0	17·6	20·6	5·2	14·6
Men											
Total cases	3,291·1	180·1	316·4	267·1	136·1	992·6	264·8	336·8	359·5	149·6	288·1
Mean amount (£pa)	411	390	386	417	423	460	385	389	385	349	387
Zero	765·1	38·1	71·0	53·9	27·4	243·6	65·6	77·4	85·3	37·8	65·0
0·01-99·99	139·2	9·0	14·7	12·1	5·0	37·4	10·2	14·2	17·0	7·3	12·3
100·00-199·99	184·5	11·8	20·2	14·2	6·4	43·7	15·2	19·5	21·9	9·2	22·4
200·00-299·99	247·7	15·7	26·6	21·2	10·4	54·4	22·6	30·5	30·3	14·7	21·3
300·00-399·99	313·9	19·3	35·4	24·6	12·7	71·5	28·9	36·0	37·5	18·8	29·2
400·00-499·99	335·1	19·9	35·3	30·8	17·4	78·6	28·4	34·5	39·4	14·9	35·9
500·00-599·99	314·9	18·5	31·0	30·7	16·5	83·8	23·4	36·2	32·7	15·1	27·0
600·00-699·99	260·0	14·8	24·9	25·6	13·2	74·4	20·5	26·0	26·5	11·5	22·6
700·00-799·99	201·6	11·2	19·6	17·0	9·2	65·3	15·0	19·8	22·8	6·4	15·3
800·00-899·99	163·3	8·7	14·7	13·1	5·1	60·8	10·6	16·4	16·5	5·0	12·4
900·00-999·99	137·1	7·5	10·0	10·8	5·2	57·9	9·3	10·2	10·6	4·0	11·6
1,000 and over	228·7	5·6	13·0	13·1	7·6	121·2	15·1	16·1	19·0	4·9	13·1
Women											
Total cases	1,907·0	94·6	161·2	141·0	71·4	651·0	149·1	188·5	206·7	75·8	167·7
Mean amount (£pa)	254	182	210	210	241	333	220	223	214	202	214
Zero	514·1	27·3	42·9	38·8	19·6	171·9	42·2	49·2	58·2	21·1	42·9
0·01-99·99	179·7	11·8	19·6	15·4	6·6	41·0	15·0	18·9	21·9	8·6	20·9
100·00-199·99	241·4	16·8	24·1	21·6	8·9	54·1	19·7	26·4	31·6	11·9	26·3
200·00-299·99	284·4	18·2	29·2	24·3	11·6	64·6	25·4	34·1	32·3	15·9	28·8
300·00-399·99	230·7	9·5	19·9	17·7	10·2	72·3	20·5	24·8	26·6	6·7	22·5
400·00-499·99	152·3	5·4	9·8	10·1	4·6	63·7	11·3	15·8	16·0	5·5	10·1
500·00-599·99	95·4	2·3	6·5	5·6	3·5	46·8	6·4	8·3	7·8	1·8	6·4
600·00-699·99	68·5	1·0	3·9	3·2	2·5	41·2	2·6	3·9	4·8	1·7	3·7
700·00-799·99	49·2	0·7	1·8	1·4	1·6	31·8	2·4	3·0	2·7	1·6	2·2
800·00-899·99	31·7	1·1	1·6	1·1	0·6	21·4	1·0	1·5	1·8	0·4	1·2
900·00-999·99	22·5	0·2	0·9	0·8	0·8	15·1	0·7	1·1	1·4	0·3	1·2
1,000 and over	37·1	0·3	1·0	1·0	0·9	27·1	1·9	1·5	1·6	0·3	1·5

People with a Personal Pension in the year ending 5 April 1992 by region and age

Ad-hoc 12 *Thousands*

Age	All cases	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	Wales	Scotland
Men and women											
All ages	5,198·1	274·7	477·6	408·1	207·5	1,643·6	413·9	525·3	566·2	225·4	455·8
16 to 19	186·9	10·1	18·9	15·6	8·4	49·3	13·9	20·7	21·7	8·2	20·1
20 to 24	1,207·4	64·3	119·4	91·4	51·9	360·5	99·1	127·2	132·6	55·8	105·2
25 to 29	1,300·6	63·6	118·7	103·2	49·3	432·1	103·9	126·2	137·1	57·4	109·1
30 to 34	925·9	51·0	79·1	71·8	35·5	311·5	71·6	90·8	100·7	34·7	79·2
35 to 39	687·0	36·5	59·9	52·2	26·4	226·6	54·4	68·9	74·8	26·2	61·1
40 to 44	555·1	30·5	50·4	46·3	21·4	167·3	42·8	54·7	63·9	26·3	51·5
45 and over	335·2	18·7	31·2	27·6	14·6	96·3	28·2	36·8	35·4	16·8	29·6
Men											
All ages	3,291·1	180·1	316·4	267·1	136·1	992·6	264·8	336·8	359·5	149·6	288·1
16 to 19	99·0	5·2	9·4	8·4	4·4	25·9	7·1	12·3	11·7	4·5	10·1
20 to 24	659·4	34·0	70·1	52·6	29·0	189·3	54·6	69·3	71·9	31·0	57·6
25 to 29	780·7	39·9	76·0	63·3	32·5	239·1	64·9	78·3	84·1	36·5	66·1
30 to 34	611·6	36·4	54·4	50·4	23·4	192·2	48·5	58·5	68·7	24·8	54·3
35 to 39	451·5	24·5	41·6	34·2	18·0	147·5	35·9	44·7	48·6	18·0	38·5
40 to 44	398·8	23·6	37·1	33·8	15·9	117·5	30·0	40·5	44·1	19·9	36·4
45 and over	290·1	16·5	27·8	24·4	12·9	81·1	23·8	33·2	30·4	14·9	25·1
Women											
All ages	1,907·0	94·6	161·2	141·0	71·4	651·0	149·1	188·5	206·7	75·8	167·7
16 to 19	87·9	4·9	9·5	7·2	4·0	23·4	6·8	8·4	10·0	3·7	10·0
20 to 24	548·0	30·3	49·3	38·8	22·9	171·2	44·5	57·9	60·7	24·8	47·6
25 to 29	519·9	23·7	42·7	39·9	16·8	193·0	39·0	47·9	53·0	20·9	43·0
30 to 34	314·3	14·6	24·7	21·4	12·1	119·3	23·1	32·3	32·0	9·9	24·9
35 to 39	235·5	12·0	18·3	18·0	8·4	79·1	18·5	24·2	26·2	8·2	22·6
40 to 44	156·3	6·9	13·3	12·5	5·5	49·8	12·8	14·2	19·8	6·4	15·1
45 and over	45·1	2·2	3·4	3·2	1·7	15·2	4·4	3·6	5·0	1·9	4·5

Single Parents

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single-parent families there were to which the father made no contribution before the establishment of the Child Support Agency; and how many of such families there were at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: In 1991 there were 1·27 million[1] lone parents in the United Kingdom. Research conducted at the time indicated that just over 70 per cent. or about 900,000 of these families received no regular maintenance. These are the latest figures available.

[1]OPCS provisional estimate based on 1991 census data.

Marginal Deduction Rates

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide the latest estimates for the numbers of people with marginal net income deduction rates at or above 50 per cent., 60 per cent., 70 per cent., 80 per cent., 90 per cent. and 100 per cent. in 1992-93, 1993-94 or 1994-95, on the same basis as figure 19 on page 11 of the social security departmental report, February 1993.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table. Estimates for 1994-95 are not available.

The main reason for the increase in the numbers facing high marginal deduction rates is the effect of a reduction in the number of hours worked per week required to qualify for family credit from 24 to 16 which was introduced in April 1992. This has widened the scope of the analysis to include people working 16 to 24 hours per week who would have previously been in receipt of income support and faced deduction rates of 100 per cent.

Numbers (thousands) with marginal deduction rates at or above certain levels[1]

	1992-93[2]	*1993-94*[3]
100 per cent. and over	0	0
90 per cent. and over	75	105
80 per cent. and over	250	215
70 per cent. and over	500	575
60 per cent. and over	510	590
50 per cent. and over	510	595

Notes:

[1]Calculated for benefit units where at least one partner works 16 or more hours per week. Estimates are cumulative and rounded to the nearest 5,000.

[2]Projections based on 1986, 1987 and 1988 family expenditure Survey.

[3]Projections based on 1989, 1990 and 1991 family expenditure Survey.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals have been made against decisions that a recipient of invalidity benefit is fit for work for the last three quarters for which figures are available; and how many of those appeals have been successful.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. The available information is in the table.

Appeals registered with Social Security Appeal Tribunals: Invalidity Benefit[1]

Quarter ending	*Appeals lodged*	*Heard and decided*[2]	*Decided in claimant's favour*[2]
30 September 1992	2,836	1,236	670
21 December 1992	2,834	1,367	757
31 March 1993	3,245	1,436	782

[1] Figures show all invalidity benefit appeals, including those against decisions that the claimant is capable of work.

[2] Includes appeals lodged in an earlier quarter.

War Pensions Agency

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the salary to be paid to the chief executive of the War Pensions Agency; and what will be the total cost to the exchequer of this agency.

Mr. Hague: The post of chief executive of the War Pensions Agency is defined as civil service unified grade 5 level. Accordingly, Peter Mathison, chief executive-designate, will be paid within the grade 5 range of £36,019 to £53,740.

The agency's administration budget for 1994-95 is currently set at £55·8 million.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 29 November 1993 concerning a constituent's concern over the Child Support Agency of Ref. 3644/52; and what is the reason for the delay.

(2) when the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) will receive a reply to his letter of 9 December regarding a constituent's letter on the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: I have replied to the hon. Member's letters today. I regret that increased levels of correspondence on child support have meant that replies are in some instances taking longer than usual.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the membership of the group considering the criteria for eligibility for the proposed incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: As part of the consultation exercise on the proposed new objective medical test for incapacity benefit, we have convened a group of 80 experts to consider the details of the test. These experts are disabled people, representatives of disability organisations, doctors from the fields of general practice, occupational medicine, rheumatology, spinal disorders, public health, rehabilitation medicine, psychiatry and clinical psychology, chest and heart disease, diabetes and endocrinology, pain management, medical oncology and surgery, occupational speech therapists, physiotherapists and academics and researchers in the field of disability.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are unemployed but ineligible for state unemployment benefit.

Mr. Burt: Information held relates to the numbers of unemployed people claiming benefit or national insurance credits. The table provides a breakdown of the position of unemployed claimants at 12 August 1993, although a proportion of those not in receipt of unemployment benefit would have been awaiting a decision on their claim.

	Thousands
Total claimants	2,821
Unemployment benefit in payment	532
Unemployment benefit with income support	108
Income support only in payment	1,817
Neither unemployment benefit nor income support in payment	364

Source: Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants: August 1993—a copy is in the Library.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Grant Write-offs

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what amount paid to Unicorn Heritage plc has been written off; on what date that decision was made; by whose authority the decision was taken and how it was communicated to the company.

Mr. Sproat: Unicorn Heritage plc went into liquidation on 25 June 1990. On 13 August 1992, the English tourist board recommended to my Department that a debt of £200,000 owed to the board by Unicorn Heritage should be written off as irrecoverable. The board took this step following a letter from the company's liquidators, which stated that there was no prospect of this debt being paid.

Treasury approval for the write-off was given on 14 May 1993, and the loss was noted in my Department's 1992-93 appropriation accounts on 30 September 1993. There was no need for further communication with the company, which in any case had ceased to exist. Unicorn Heritage plc was not treated differently in any way from that in which any other company in similar circumstances would be treated.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Council Boards

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice he has given to training and enterprise councils over the granting of financial assistance to aid the declaration of interest of directors of TEC boards.

Miss Widdecombe: The contract between training and enterprise councils and the Department requires that TEC directors and employees declare any direct or material interest that may arise in respect of any matter to which the TEC is party. Where an interest has been declared, the prior approval of the directors is required before any contract may be made or funding given to any person or company. A director who has declared a conflict of interest may not be involved in such a decision.

Pit Closures

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what financial assistance has been made available through training and enterprise councils to help collieries which have been closed since the publication of "Prospects for Coal" to reopen under private ownership.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has made available £75 million to training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service to implement business plans to help communities affected by pit closures.

Plans include provision for job search activities and training and business start-up programmes.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what amount of finance has been made available for each closed colliery through training and enterprise councils to aid regeneration and redeployment activities.

Miss Widdecombe: The amount of finance being made available through training and enterprise councils to the areas affected by each colliery closure is given in the table:

£ million

Collieries	*Business Plan Value*
Trentham	3·695
Cotgrave	1·300
Silverhill—joint plan	6·810
Bevercotes—joint plan	
Clipstone—joint plan	
Bolsover—joint plan	
Shirebrook—joint plan	3·449
Markham	3·458
Sharlston	1·836
Markham Main—joint plan	8·015
Houghton Main—joint plan	
Grimethorpe—joint plan	
Rossington—joint plan	
Kellingley	1·058
Maltby	3·251
Parkside	1·740
Vane Tempest—joint plan	5·584
Easington—joint plan	
Westoe	1·902
Calverton	1·686
Daw Mill[1]	
Silverdale[1]	
Littleton[1]	
Rufford[1]	
Frickley[1]	
Bentley[1]	
Hatfield/Thorne[1]	
Wearmouth[1]	

[1]These pits have either only recently closed or reached two thirds redundancy, and contract negotiations with the relevant TECs are continuing. The total combined budget is £16·023 million, subject to final contract agreement.

£5 million has been made available to the Employment Service for assessment, guidance and job search activities.

£2·6 million allocated to Wales.

Youth Training

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide an up-to-date table showing for Greater London and for England as a whole, and for each year from 1989, the number of places on youth training schemes and the number of people who have been waiting for over eight weeks for a place.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of young people on youth training or youth credits for each year since 1989 was as follows:

	London	*England*
1989	20,300	306,200
1990	19,900	279,200
1991	12,200	260,700
1992	19,900	233,200
1993	21,100	231,800

Source: Management information provided by training providers and training and enterprise councils).

Information on the number of young people covered by the youth training guarantee has been collected only since autumn 1992. On 9 December 1993, the most recent date for which information is available, the number of young registered with the careers service and waiting for a youth training place for eight or more weeks was 264 in London and 1,111 in England.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide an up-to-date table showing for each training and enterprise council in Greater London, the figures for youth training cost per output point, employment training cost per output point, national vocational qualifications—NVQs—per 100 youth training leavers, positive outcomes per 100 employment training leavers, NVQs per 100 employment training leavers, youth training guarantee and investors in people.

Miss Widdecombe: Inter-TEC comparison tables for 1992-93 were published on 13 September 1993. A copy is available in the Library. We intend to publish full-year comparisons for 1993-94 this summer. We do not plan to publish in-year tables, because uneven flows of information during the year can distort comparisons of performance.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide an up-to-date table showing for TECs in England and Wales the amount of funding *(a)* allocated and *(b)* paid to them under each block of expenditure, for each year since 1990-91 and the amounts allocated for 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The budgets allocated and paid to training and enterprise councils in England in 1992-93, and the allocations for 1993-94 are shown in the table.

Information on funding to TECs in England for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is not available. Funding in these transitional years was made through both area offices and TECs, and included Scotland.

From 1992-93, funding blocks were replaced by individual budgets for each programme to be delivered. The table is therefore shown by programme.

Funding for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

TEC budgets 1992-93

£ million

Programme	*Budget allocated*	*Budget paid*
Youth training	686·65	604·23
Work-related further education	101·38	101·26
Education business links	9·16	9·12
Careers partnerships	1·64	1·83
Career libraries	7·02	5·99
Employment training	315·11	289·15
HTNT	23·95	22·04
Employment action	61·44	50·37
Local initiative fund	39·02	49·70
Budget enterprise scheme	152·69	145·91
National development projects	13·34	10·95
Research	0·22	0·44
Youth development projects	0·38	0·28
Management fee	123·26	99·50

TEC budgets 1993-94

£ million

Programme	*Budget allocated*
Youth training	692·114
Work-related further education	102·960
Education business links	9·130
Careers partnerships	1·483
Careers libraries	6·084
Training for work	731·926
Local initiative fund	42·623
Business start-up scheme	83·828
Employer investment in people	44·723
National development projects	11·445
Skill choice	7·693
Open learning credits	2·064
Out of school child care	2·149
Management fee	123·260

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what activities currently carried out by the Health and Safety Commission and Executive will be curtailed as a result of the reduction in its grant in aid provision in 1994-95.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Information about financial provision for the Health and Safety Executive will be published in the departmental report. Further detail will be provided in the 1994-95 estimates. The Health and Safety Commission's planned future activities will be set out in its plan of work for 1994-95 and beyond which is scheduled for publication in June.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Land Mines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the recent request by the United States Government for a global ban on the export of anti-personnel land mines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The request of the United States Government was tabled at the United Nations General Assembly, as a resolution calling for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines that pose grave dangers to civilian populations. The United Kingdom supported this resolution; however, in doing so, we stated our view that anti-personnel land mines directed at military targets are legitimate defensive weapons when used in compliance with the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention. If they are used in accordance with protocol II of the convention, and particularly if they are fitted with a self-destructing or self-neutralising mechanism, they do not pose grave dangers to civilian populations. We therefore think it would be wrong if the possession of self-destructing or self-neutralising anti-personnel mines were restricted to countries with the capacity to manufacture them.

Lockerbie

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his South African counterpart in relation to the bombing of Pan-Am flight 103 over Lockerbie in 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Diplomatic Fines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by country the fines paid in 1993 by British embassies or consulates incurred by illegally parked official vehicles.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Macedonian Embassy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to establish an embassy in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia following its diplomatic recognition by the EU Foreign Affairs Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There has been British Government representation in Skopje since May 1993. Following the establishment of diplomatic relations with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia on 16 December, formalities were completed to enable our mission to become a full embassy on 23 December. Her Majesty's ambassador in Skopje presented his credentials to President Gligorov on the same day.

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the visit of the United Nations Secretary-General to North Korea over the Christmas period with regard to implementation of nuclear inspection.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary-General of the United Nations visited North Korea over Christmas on a mission of goodwill in the framework of preventive diplomacy. One purpose of the visit was to convey to North Korea international concern at her continued failure to comply fully with International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and her equivocal attitude to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Somalia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the appeal by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Somalia for assistance with dismantling of unstable ground to air missiles.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not received a request for assistance from the UNHCR on this matter. The UNHCR headquarters in Geneva has confirmed that no such appeal has been launched.

Mr. Mordechai Vanunu

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he raised the case of the continued imprisonment of Mordechai Vanunu during his recent visit to Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have raised with the Israelis our concerns over humanitarian aspects of this case. The Israelis assured us in 1993 that the conditions under which Mr. Vanunu is detained have improved. We have no formal standing to intervene and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did not therefore do so when he was in Israel earlier this month.

East Timor

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has initiated at the United Nations over Indonesia's occupation of East Timor and treatment of its people.

Mr. Goodlad: East Timor and human rights issues there are regularly addressed at the United Nations in New York and at the annual session of the UN Commission for Human Rights in Geneva. We work with our European Union partners as appropriate in these bodies. We have encouraged Fortugal and Indonesia to work together under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General to find a solution to the East Timor problem.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to raise with *(a)* the United Nations and *(b)* member states of the European Union the case for a ban on arms sales to Indonesia on account of its occupation of East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: None. We do not believe that a ban on arms sales to Indonesia would be appropriate.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion or other contact he has had with the United States Government over their imposition of a ban on arms sales to Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: We are aware through Her Majesty's Embassy in Washington of recent United States action on defence sales to Indonesia, but we have our own clear policy and have no plans to change it.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Indonesia about their occupation of East Timor; and what response he has received.

Mr. Goodlad: We have encouraged Indonesia and Portugal to work together under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General to find a solution to the East Timor problem.

European Council

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following meeting is planned:

24 and 25 January: Agriculture Council

1. The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

Agriculture Council—24 and 25 January

—GATT
—Beef Quotas (possible)
—Forestry Monitoring Scheme (possible)
—Compensation Rules (possible)
—Pesticides (uniform principles) (possible)

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he uses to distinguish between those matters that are considered to be commercially confidential with reference to BNFL and those considered to be of public interest and importance.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 7 July 1992, *Official Report,* column *138* and on 24 March 1993, *Official Report,* column *612.*

Biodiversity

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the activities of his Department he has so far identified which threaten biodiversity abroad.

Mr. McLoughlin: The principles of sustainable development are taken into account in the development of my Department's policies. In international trade for example, the United Kingdom complies with the convention on international trade in endangered species and is participating fully in the trade and environment debate in both the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

So far as United Kingdom bilateral aid support for infrastructural projects in developing countries is concerned, the Overseas Development Administration guidelines on aid procedures are taken into consideration. The industrial and commercial aspects and the environmental impacts of the project are assessed.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom international trade he has so far identified where his Department has a role to play to further the objectives of the United Kingdom biodiversity national action plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

International trade, finance and aid issues will be covered in the biodiversity United Kingdom action plan and the sustainable development strategy as appropriate, both of which are due to be published very soon.

Cardigan Bay Licenses

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he made to the request by the campaign for a cleaner Cardigan bay for reasons for his Department's decisions on the issuance of oil and gas exploration licenses under the 14th round.

Mr. Eggar: I wrote to the Friends of Cardigan Bay regarding their "Campaign for a Cleaner Cardigan Bay" on

18 November 1992 and 29 January last year to explain the reasons for the Government's decision to offer blocks for oil and gas licensing in the 14th round. Since then, my officials have reiterated the points I made, both in general terms and with specific reference to those licences issued following the 14th round for blocks in Cardigan bay, through a number of letters and a recent meeting at which a member of the Friends of Cardigan Bay was present.

Nuclear Shipments

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received from the United States Energy Secretary with regard to her policy on the shipment of US-origin nuclear fuel from Switzerland to Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Plutonium (Japan)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the dates of dispatch and arrival of the plutonium returned to Japan since 1979; and what quantities of plutonium were involved.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 25 May 1993, *Official Report,* column *487.*

Nuclear Safety

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the publication date for the nuclear installations inspectorate examination of generic safety issues in Magnox reactors in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave on 11 January, *Official Report,* column *185.*

Vehicle Maufacturers

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the numbers of motor cars and commercial vehicles manufactured in the United Kingdom and in South Korea since 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The numbers of cars and commercial vehicles manufactured in the United Kingdom and in South Korea since 1987 are given in the table.

Number of motor cars and commercial vehicles produced in the United Kingdom and in South Korea

	United Kingdom		*South Korea*	
	Cars	*Commercial vehicles*	*Cars*	*Commercial vehicles*
1987	1,142,683	246,728	793,125	186,614
[1]1988	1,226,835	317,343	872,898	211,581
1989	1,299,082	326,590	871,898	257,572
1990	1,295,611	270,346	986,751	334,879
1991	1,236,900	217,141	1,158,245	339,573
1992	1,291,880	248,453	1,306,752	422,944

[1] United Kingdom data is for 53 weeks.

Sources: Central Statistical Office, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd., Korea Auto Industries Association.

Swan Hunter

Mr. Burns: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the European Commission has agreed to allow Swan Hunter to have access to the shipbuilding intervention fund.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following protracted negotations, the European Commission agreed on 21 December to allow Swan Hunter to have limited access to the shipbuilding intervention fund. The sum agreed is £7 million for up to three contracts to be offered during 1994 and 1995. This concession should enable Swan Hunter to compete more effectively for merchant contracts and so make them more attractive to potential buyers.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of direct and indirect tax paid by each quartile income group for each year since 1977; and what amounts are estimated for the next three years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not available.

1993 Budgets

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average cost of the March and November 1993 Budgets to businesses with a turnover of less than £30,000 per annum and to businesses with a turnover greater than £500,000 per annum in terms of a percentage of turnover.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not possible to provide the information requested. The net cost or benefit to individual businesses from the 1993 Budget measures will depend on a wide variety of factors including many not dependent on turnover, such as number of employees and rates of pay, level of profits, level of dividends and liability for non-domestic rates.

Private Medical Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many over 60-year-olds claim tax relief on private medical insurance in each year since relief was granted.

Mr. Dorrell: About 350,000 people have received tax relief on private medical insurance for contracts covering about 500,000 individuals, in each year since 1990-91.

Private Health Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much revenue is generated from individuals paying tax on the benefit of private health care provided by an employer;

(2) what is the Treasury estimate of the loss of revenue caused by making the company provision of private health care able to be set against tax.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1993-94 the tax due on the benefit of private medical, dental, etcetera, attention and treatment or insurance against the cost of such treatment provided by an employer will be about £190 million. Employers generally are able to obtain business tax relief for the expenses incurred in providing any benefits in kind in the same way as for wages and salaries. It is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the effects on tax paid by employers.

Statistical Inquiry Work

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make available the results of the consultation exercise on contracting out statistical inquiry work announced by the Central Statistical Office on 22 September 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: The consultation exercise was carried out by independent market researchers, and a copy of their report has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons. The results will be taken into account when any market testing of statistical activities is undertaken.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the implications for the import and export of toxic waste to and from the United Kingdom of the entering into force of the European Economic Area agreement on 1 January.

Mr. Atkins: Shipments of toxic waste will continue to be regulated as before.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total housing subsidy paid to *(a)* local authorities in England and Wales and *(b)* the City of Manchester for (i) the lastest 12-month period for which figures are available and (ii) the comparable 12-month period for 1979-80.

Mr. Baldry: The figures are set out in the table.

Year	*England and Wales £ million*	*City of Manchester £*
1979-80	1,333	30,063,403
1993-94	4,229	172,142,731

Since 1 April 1990, housing revenue account subsidy has included a contribution to rent rebate expenditure by local authorities. A rent rebate element of subsidy is therefore included in the above figures for 1993-94, but not in the figures for 1979-80.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total cost to date of the Ordnance Survey market-testing programme.

Mr. Atkins: The total cost to date of the market-testing programme which commenced in April 1992 is £342,500 including full staff costs and consultants' fees. The management and staff costs incurred before April 1992 were not specifically attributed to market-testing.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expected total cost of the Ordnance Survey market-testing programme.

Mr. Atkins: The total cost of the existing market-testing programme which commenced in April 1992 and is planned to end in March 1994 is expected to be £413,250; this comprises both management costs and consultancy fees.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what management consultants have been used to advise on market-testing in connection with Ordnance Survey; for what purposes; and at what cost.

Mr. Atkins: The following management consultants have been engaged in assisting Ordnance Survey with its market-testing programme at a total cost of £113,750:

Coopers and Lybrand
CSL Group Ltd.
Grosvenor Consulting Ltd.
Tricon FoodService Consultants

Consultants provided scoping advice, advised on the preparation of service specifications and assisted in the assessment of potential bidders, preparing in-house bids and analysing tenders.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total management and staff costs for the project board teams associated with the Ordnance Survey market-testing programme.

Mr. Atkins: The total management and staff costs to date for market-testing project teams in Ordnance Survey are £249,000.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings have been made as a result of the Ordnance Survey market-testing programme.

Mr. Atkins: Projected annual savings resulting from the market-testing programme which commenced in April 1992 are £1,554,580. Further benefits include the acceleration of the development and production of base data for new products.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost in 1992-93 of the Ordnance Survey market-testing programme.

Mr. Atkins: The total cost in the financial year 1992-93 was £230,000.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas of export finance and aid he has so far identified where he believes his Department can help to further the objectives of the United Kingdom biodiversity national action plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him today to his question to the President of the Board of Trade, *Official Report*, column *306*.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the percentage increase in the standard spending assessment provided for the Wychavon district council.

Mr. Baldry: Within the proposals for revenue support grant for 1994-95 announced on 2 December 1993, the provisional increase in the SSA for Wychavon district council between 1993-94 and 1994-95 is 11·9 per cent.

Yorkshire Water

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what agreements the National Rivers Authority has made with Yorkshire Water *(a)* on levels of pollution entering the Yorkshire Ouse system from sewage treatment works and *(b)* on increasing abstraction of water from the Ouse system; and how these two sets of agreements are linked.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority and Yorkshire Water.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was Yorkshire Water's 1992 estimate of the cost of transferring water from Kielder reservoir via the River Tees to Elvington on the River Derwent.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for Yorkshire Water.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the National Rivers Authority's 1993 estimate of the cost of transferring Kielder water into the Yorkshire grid system.

Mr. Atkins: My Department does not have this information.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much the National Rivers Authority paid to Sir William Halcrow and Partners for its study of water resources in the Yorkshire region, published in October 1993;

(2) what advice the National Rivers Authority's fisheries scientists have given to the National Rivers Authority's water resources division about the consequences of transferring Kielder water via the Rivers Whisk, Swale and Ouse.

Mr. Atkins: These are matters of day-to-day management for the National Rivers Authority.

Corby District Council

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum paid to Corby district council in each year of operation in lieu of rate revenue forgone in enterprise zones.

Mr. Baldry: The sums paid to Corby District Council in lieu of rate revenue forgone in enterprise zones were:

Year	*£000's*
1981-82	126
1982-83	434
1983-84	1,146
1984-85	1,688
1985-86	2,155
1986-87	2,896
1987-88	3,464
1988-89	4,344
1989-90	4,711

The figures are in own year prices.

Following the introduction of the national non-domestic rates in April 1990, the lost yield from business rates on enterprise zones is taken into account in setting the national poundage and it is no longer necessary to compensate councils individually for rate revenue forgone.

Council House Sales

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each district authority in Northamptonshire the total discounted value of houses and flats sold by them for each year since 1980-81.

Sir George Young: The total discounted values of dwellings sold by local authorities in Northamptonshire in the years 1980-81 to 1992-93 are given in the table. Actual cash receipts in any year will depend on the extent to which sales were financed by loans from the authorities.

Discounted value of all sales

£ thousand

Local Authority	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Corby	716	2,837	5,393	4,326	3,711
Daventry	1,643	2,478	2,067	1,995	1,605
East Northamptonshire	757	2,585	1,002	1,013	831
Kettering	721	1,659	1,035	918	1,108
Northampton	1,831	2,861	2,717	2,135	1,381
South Northamptonshire	1,123	2,258	2,628	2,382	1,727
Wellingborough	833	2,592	2,055	1,765	1,962

Discounted value of all sales

£ thousand

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Corby	3,901	3,332	4,998	9,036
Daventry	1,929	n/a	3,740	4,651
East Northamptonshire	1,008	1,720	2,519	4,160
Kettering	1,809	2,754	3,974	5,300
Northampton	n/a	5,674	8,961	16,530
South Northamptonshire	1,379	1,829	n/a	5,471
Wellingborough	1,303	2,882	3,617	6,311

Discounted value of all sales

£ thousand

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Corby	6,764	2,508	2,421	2,373
Daventry	3,437	1,425	1,242	3,061
East Northamptonshire	1,404	979	1,042	1,261
Kettering	1,869	923	1,020	1,029
Northampton	11,595	3,821	4,197	2,584
South Northamptonshire	2,467	769	1,109	1,543
Wellingborough	2,937	2,232	1,480	1,165

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy towards

council tenants purchasing the property they live in with the assistance of a loan from a private individual to whom they are not related.

Sir George Young: Council tenants have the same freedom as other home buyers to finance the purchase of their homes under the right to buy from whatever source they choose. The Department's advisory booklet "Your Right to Buy Your Home" encourages tenants to take independent legal advice before proceeding with their purchase.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the funding for the North Peckham task force in 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my letter of 6 December 1993 setting out the arrangements for funding of the North Peckham task force up to and beyond its closure on 31 March 1994. Detailed allocations of funding for 1994-95 have not yet been agreed, but there will be sufficient cover to honour all continuing contractual commitment.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member of Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 11 November regarding market franchise rights of G/BA/150/28931/93; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Baldry: We are considering the issue of market franchise rights in the light of the responses received to our consultation document of 16 August 1993 on this subject. Ministers will be replying as soon as possible to the hon. Gentleman and to other hon. Members who have corresponded with them on this subject.

Single Regeneration Budget

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish for consultation the draft bidding guidance on the single regeneration budget.

Sir George Young: We are today issuing for consultation the draft bidding guidance on the single regeneration budget. The guidance is being circulated to a wide range of national and local organisations. Copies of the guidance have been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Commission

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the budget of the Local Government Commission and the costs incurred by the commission so far.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission incurred expenditure of £2·056 million in 1992-93. We are making available £5·124 million to fund the commission's activities in 1993-94.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry (Gloucestershire)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all land owned by the Forestry Commission in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission manages 10,376 hectares of land in Gloucestershire. The commission is preparing a list of the individual woods and I shall send a copy to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of the Forestry Commission's holdings in Gloucestershire are earmarked for sale.

Mr. Jack: None of the Forestry Commission's woodlands in Gloucestershire is currently being considered for sale.

Biodiversity Convention

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussion she has had with the Fisheries Ministers in Denmark on initiatives to meet joint commitments under the biodiversity convention signed at Rio, including the application of the conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources to the North sea.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 14 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *541-42*.

Latero Flora

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of whether labelling on the American imported product Latero Flora and its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus complies with current food labelling requirements.

Mr. Soames: The responsibility for determining whether labelling of foodstuffs complies with the food labelling regulations lies with local authority trading standards departments. I will ensure that the hon. Gentleman's concerns about this product are brought to the attention of the co-ordinating body for enforcement authorities.

HEALTH

NHS Administration

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many managers and administrators have been employed in NHS hospitals in each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table. The figures provide the total number of managers and administrative and clerical staff in national health service regions including those in regional and district headquarters units. The general and senior manager class was introduced in phases from 1986 in recognition of the fact that the NHS was clearly undermanaged. The figures should be treated with caution because the increase is largely due to the reclassification of other professional and administrative staff as general and senior managers. My

right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health recently announced proposals for the future management of the NHS. These proposals will bear down on management numbers and maximise the amount spent on patient care. However, general and senior managers still account for only 2 per cent. of the total NHS work force.

General and senior managers and administrative and clerical staff as at 30 September, England

Whole-time equivalents

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
General and Senior Managers	8,990	12,420	14,980
Administrative and Clerical	111,730	118,900	122,990

Notes:

1. It is not possible to give a figure for "NHS hospitals" as numbers of staff in HQ units cannot be disaggregated.
2. General and senior manager figures include regional, district and hospital managers plus a small number of family health services authority managers within the RHA/DHA/trust structure.
3. Apart from the small number mentioned in 2 above, the figures exlude managerial and administrative staff in FHSAs and Other Statutory Authorities, but include those in Ambulance Services.
4. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

Sources: Non-Medical Workforce Census – 1990
DH form KM49 – 1991/92.

Computer Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide, by health authority and trust in England, the revenue and capital expenditure on computer systems in each of the financial years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library. Part of the goal of the national health service management executive is to pursue a strategy of making the best possible use of the four key resources of money, staff, estates and information. High-quality information is essential for improved patient care and regular upgrading or replacement of information management and technology systems gives rise to higher capital expenditure at intervals.

Mrs. Elsie Westron

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the report on the circumstances surrounding the death of Mrs. Elsie Westron in Greenwich district hospital on 1 September 1993, due to be delivered by the national health service management executive and the Greenwich healthcare trust on 10 January.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report has yet to be presented to the trust board and publication is a matter for it.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which English health authorities will not be providing infertility treatment for 1993-94;

(2) what plans she has to make the provision of infertility treatment by all health authorities obligatory.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service provides a wide range of treatments for subfertility. Decisions about the resources to be made available for these services must be left to individual health authorities as they are in the best position to determine priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances. Advice is available to health authorities and clinicians in two recent publications:

The Effective Health Care Bulletin on management of Subfertility, published for the NHS Management Executive by a consortium of Leeds and York Universities and the Research Unit of the Royal College of Physicians.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists publication "Infertility—Guidelines for Practice".

Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Fluoridation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if primary legislation is necessary to require water companies to fluoridate water.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes.

NHS Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the extent to which NHS staff may talk to hon. Members about their concerns on health matters without fear of disciplinary action.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service staff have a right to seek the advice and guidance of their Member of Parliament on any issue at any time.

Dentists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of dentists took NHS patients in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. However, there are now more dentists in contract with family health services authorities than ever before.

Nurses

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will tabulate the number of students enrolling and qualifying for each of the grades of qualified nurses for each year from 1982 to 1992, together with the approximate numbers for those years leaving national health service employment for all reasons.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available in the format requested.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what factors her Department has taken into account over the last 10 years in assessing the need for nurse training places; and what were the estimates of the number of trained nurses under the age of 60 years who were *(a)* no longer nursing in the public sector, *(b)* nursing in the private sector and *(c)* not nursing at all in each year from 1982.

Mr. Sackville: The arrangements for education and training of nurses in the national health service are designed to carry forward Government policy that training should be employer led and that it is for employers to determine the work force they require and the training staff need. Regional health authorities calculate the overall demand for training places in consultation with provider units, family health service authorities and the private and voluntary sectors.

Total number of trained nursing staff (excluding registered midwives and nursing auxiliaries/assistants) in private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984 England

Year	Total
1982	16,545
1983	18,929
1984	21,363
1985	25,543
1986	30,528
1987-88	37,338
1988-89	42,693
1989-90	47,955
1990-91	55,191
1991-92	60,664
1992-93[1]	65,134

[1] Provisional.
Source: SD2A; SBH212 return 1982-86; KO36 return 1987-88—1992-93.

Information is not available in the format requested on training nurses no longer nursing in the public sector. Information on the number of trained nurses under the age of 60 who were not nursing at all is not available centrally.

Speech Therapists

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of speech therapists employed by each health authority in England and Wales indicating in each case any shortfall against establishment.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available figures for speech therapists employed in the national health service in England, by region and by district health authority, are shown in the table. Information on shortfall against establishment is provided for regional health authorities, but not by district health authority and this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

	Whole-time equivalents
England	
TOTAL	3,200
Northern Region	
Northern Regional Health Authority	20
Hartlepool	10
North Tees	20
South Tees	20
East Cumbria	10
South Cumbria	10
West Cumbria	0
Darlington	10
South West Durham	20
Gateshead	20
Newcastle	30
North Tyneside	10
South Tyneside	10
Sunderland	20
North Durham	20
TOTAL	220
Yorkshire Region	
Hull	10
East Yorkshire	10
Grimsby	10
Scunthorpe	10
Northallerton	10
York	10
Scarborough	10
Harrogate	10
Bradford	20
Airedale	10
Calderdale	10
Huddersfield	20
Dewsbury	10
Leeds	50
Wakefield	10
Pontefract	10
TOTAL	220
Trent Region	
Trent Regional Health Authority	10
North Derbyshire	30
Southern Derbyshire	20
Leicestershire	40
North Lincolnshire	10
South Lincolnshire	20
Nottingham	50
Barnsley	10
Doncaster	10
Rotherham	10
Sheffield	40
North Nottinghamshire	30
TOTAL	280
East Anglian Region	
Cambridge	20
West Suffolk	10
East Suffolk	20
North West Anglia	20
Norwich	30
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	10
Huntingdon	10
TOTAL	120
North West Thames Region	
North Bedfordshire	20
South Bedfordshire	20
North West Hertfordshire	20
South West Hertfordshire	10
Barnet	20
Harrow	10
Hillingdon	10
Hounslow and Spelthorne	30
Ealing	30
Riverside	40
Parkside	30
East and North Hertfordshire	10
TOTAL	230
North East Thames Region	
Basildon and Thurrock	10
Mid Essex	20
North East Essex	20
West Essex	10
Southend	20
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	20
Hampstead	30
City and Hackney	10
Newham	20
Tower Hamlets	10
Enfield	10
Haringey	20
Redbridge	10
Waltham Forest	10
Bloomsbury and Islington	40
TOTAL	270
South East Thames Region	
Brighton	20
Eastbourne	20
Hastings	10

	Whole-time equivalents
South East Kent	10
Canterbury and Thanet	30
Dartford and Gravesham	20
Maidstone	10
Medway	20
Tunbridge Wells	20
Bexley	20
Greenwich	20
Bromley	20
West Lambeth	20
Camberwell	20
Lewisham and North Southwark	50
TOTAL	290
South West Thames Region	
North West Surrey	20
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	10
South West Surrey	20
Mid Surrey	0
East Surrey	10
Chichester	10
Mid Downs	20
Worthing District	20
Croydon	20
Kingston and Esher	10
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	20
Wandsworth	30
Merton and Sutton	20
TOTAL	200
Wessex Region	
Dorset	30
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	40
Southampton and South West Hampshire	20
Winchester	10
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	10
Salisbury	10
Swindon	20
Bath District	20
Isle of Wight	10
TOTAL	170
Oxford Region	
East Berkshire	30
West Berkshire	30
Aylesbury Vale	10
Wycombe	20
Milton Keynes	20
Kettering	10
Northampton	20
Oxfordshire	40
TOTAL	170
South Western Region	
Bristol and District	80
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	20
Exeter	20
North Devon	10
Plymouth	20
Torbay	30
Gloucestershire	50
Somerset	30
TOTAL	250
West Midlands Region	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	10
Herefordshire	10
Kidderminster and District	10
Worcester and District	10
Shropshire	20
Mid Staffordshire	20
North Staffordshire	20
South East Staffordshire	30
South Warwickshire	20
East Birmingham	10
North Birmingham	10
West Birmingham	10
Coventry	10
Dudley	20
Sandwell	10
Solihull	10
Walsall	10
Wolverhampton	10
North East Warwickshire	30
South Birmingham	40
TOTAL	330
Mersey Region	
Crewe	10
Halton	20
Macclesfield	10
Warrington	10
Liverpool	30
St. Helens and Knowsley	20
Southport and Formby	10
South Sefton	0
Wirral	10
TOTAL	140
North-Western Region	
Lancaster	10
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	20
Preston	20
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	10
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	10
West Lancashire	10
Chorley and South Ribble	10
Bolton	10
Bury	10
North Manchester	20
Central Manchester	10
South Manchester	20
Oldham	20
Rochdale	10
Salford	10
Stockport	20
Tameside and Glossop	20
Trafford	10
Wigan	20
Total	270
Special Health Authorities	
Hospitals for Sick Children	10
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	10
The Royal Marsden Hospital	0
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospital	10
Broadmoor	0
Ashworth	0
Rampton	0

Source: HAP(STATS)B Non-Medical Workforce Census.
Notes: All figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole number.
Totals may not add due to rounding.
'0' indicates a figure of 5·00 or less.

The percentage of Speech Therapists in post against funded establishment, March 1993, by Region

Region	Per cent.
Northern	99·8
Yorkshire	99·2
Trent	99·1
East Anglian	97·8
North West Thames	96·0

Region	Per cent.
North East Thames	96·5
South East Thames	97·4
South West Thames	99·4
Wessex	95·3
Oxford	100·1
South Western	97·2
West Midlands	94·6
Mersey	95·7
North Western	104·0
SHAs	100·0
England	98·0

Source: Joint National Professional Manpower Initiative (March 1993).

Prescriptions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has received about people not being able to use their prescriptions because they cannot afford to pay the charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: Nine in the past year.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department undertakes of the affordability of prescription charges in order to inform annual decisions over uprating.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. There are extensive arrangements for charge exemption and remission which ensure that no one need forgo necessary medication for financial reasons.

Corporate Governance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce the findings of the working party on corporate governance.

Dr. Mawhinney: Copies of the report of the corporate governance task force will be placed in the Library. We are now consulting a wide range of interested bodies on draft codes of accountability, and of conduct for national health service boards and their members.

Departmental Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the time scale and scope of the review of her Department's staffing and functions.

Mr. Sackville: We announced a review of the Department of Health, excluding the national health service management executive and the Department's agencies, on 6 January. The terms of reference of the review, giving details of its time scale and scope, are as follows.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT:

decisions and on-going work on the NHS Functions and Manpower Review;
the requirements of Ministers and the demands made on them by Parliament and the public;
the importance of reducing running costs as far as possible while maintaining an effective service to Ministers;
continuing guidance from the Steering Group appointed to oversee this and related work.

1. To identify the core functions, responsibilities and accountabilities of the Department of Health, excluding the Management Executive, the agencies, the Medical Devices Directorate and the Youth Treatment Service.
2. To examine the manpower resources used to do that work including in particular the Senior Open Structure posts and the way they are organised and deployed.
3. To identify the borderline between the work of the wider Department and the Management Executive and to examine the way they work together.
4. To make recommendations by the end of May about:
work that should no longer be done;
what work, if any, should be transferred between the wider Department and the Management Executive;
the management structures and the use of manpower best suited to deliver effectively the work that remains;
the level of staffing in general;
the number, grading and responsibilities of the Senior Open Structure posts in particular;
the elimination of any duplication of work between the wider Department and the Management Executive.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the membership of the review team investigating her Department's staffing and functions.

Mr. Sackville: The review will be conducted by Mrs. Terri Banks, formerly Registrar General for England and Wales. She will be supported by management consultants, who have yet to be appointed, and by a grade 7 and an HEO(D) civil servant, from the Department of Health and the Treasury respectively.

The review will be conducted under the oversight of a steering group, which will also be responsible for ensuring that this exercise is co-ordinated with the implementation of changes to national health service central management arising from the functions and manpower review. The steering group's membership is as follows:

Graham Hart, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health *(Chairman)*.
Sir Duncan Nichol, Chief Executive, NHSME.
Dr. Kenneth Calman, Chief Medical Officer.
Andrew Edwards, Grade 2, Treasury.
Brian Edwards, Regional General Manager, West Midlands RHA.
Alan Langlands, Chief Executive Designate, NHSME.
Joe Pilling, Grade 2, Department of Health.
Strachan Heppell, Grade 2, Department of Health.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the review of her Department's staffing and functions will cover the work of her Department in answering parliamentary questions and dealing with correspondence and inquiries from hon. Members.

Mr. Sackville: Yes.

Single Mothers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to announce details of her plan to assist single mothers to return to the work force.

Mr. Bowis: The changes to the rules governing disregards and the entitlement to family credit, announced in the Budget by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will stimulate expansion of child care services. These changes have effect in October this year. We shall announce measures in the Department's field to support these important changes before then.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the criteria to be applied for including a person on the proposed register of the serious mentally ill living in the community.

Mr. Bowis: We will shortly be issuing guidance to national health service purchasers and provider units which will set out the criteria for including a mentally ill person on the register.

Patients (Information)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether the patient information leaflets proposed by her Department will include information relating to appropriate and inappropriate techniques for administering the medicine concerned;

(2) what steps she intends to take to ensure awareness of, and access to, patient information leaflets relating to medicines used within the national health service;

(3) what is the planned time scale for the introduction of patient information leaflets about medicines used within the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Unless all the required information is on the product label, an approved patient information leaflet is required for a new product granted a marketing authorisation on or after 1 January 1994 and for an existing medicine where its marketing authorisation is renewed.

The patient leaflet is to be supplied with the medicine when it is dispensed to the patient. Patient information leaflets provide information on how the medicine should be used including the indication, dose instructions, precautions, warnings and side-effects. Doctors and pharmacists have been informed about the introduction of patient information leaflets in the November issue of "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance".

HIV and AIDS

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount devoted to research into HIV and AIDS by her Department for each financial year since 1986-87.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support research into HIV and AIDS is the Medical Research Council—MRC—which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The table shows the level of research funded by the Department of Health either directly or, since 1988-89, via the MRC for its epidemiological research and its AIDS programme.

Year	*Direct DH funding (£000)*	*DH contribution to MRC research (£000)*	*Total (£000)*
1986-87	111	—	111
1987-88	239	—	239
1988-89	464	400	864
1989-90	500	650	1,150
1990-91	593	1,233	1,826
1991-92	786	2,000	2,786
1992-93	789	1,708	2,497
1993-94	789	1,838	2,627

The figures quoted for 1993-94 are current estimates.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his best estimate of the percentage incidence of AIDS in each EC country.

Mr. Sackville: This table shows for each European Community country the number of AIDS cases reported to the World Health Organisation in 1992 and the estimated incidence rate per 100,000 population.

Country	*AIDS Cases Reported to WHO in 1992*	*Rate per 100,000 population.*
Belgium	118	1.1
Denmark	196	3.8
Germany	1286	2.1
France	4151	7.3
Greece	162	1.6
Ireland	75	1.9
Italy	3812	6.6
Luxembourg	12	3.2
Netherlands	468	3.1
Portugal	265	2.5
Spain	3469	8.7
United Kingdom	1268	2.2

The table indicates that the United Kingdom is in a relatively favourable position compared with for example France, Italy and Spain. This underlines the importance of the prompt and decisive action taken to limit the impact of HIV on the United Kingdom population and of more recent campaigns to alert the public to the risks of HIV infection when travelling to countries with higher prevalence.

Press and Communications

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were employed in the press and communications office at Richmond house, including clerical and administrative staff in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The number of staff employed in the main press office for each year since 1990 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1990-91	15
1991-92	14
1992-93	15
1993-94	14

There is a separate press support section which has five administrative staff.

Press Conferences

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press conferences the Department held in each year since 1990; and what was the cost of the conferences for each year.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not readily available, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1991 the expenditure by family health services authorities on administration.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 3 December 1993 at columns *799-800*, which gave expenditure on administration by family health services authorities. Expenditure on administration by contractors providing family health services is not available centrally.

GP Surgeries (Closures)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the rights which exist for patients, in the patients charter or other official documents, to appeal against a family health services authority's decision to close a general practice surgery.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no rights of appeal against decisions to close general practice surgeries.

Latero Flora

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will order an investigation into whether the American imported product Latero Flora and its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus meets the requirements of a novel food;

(2) what was the result of the independent assay carried out by the Government chemist on the product Latero Flora in relation to its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus;

(3) what approval under the Food Safety Act 1990 has been given for the American imported product Latero Flora and its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus;

(4) what recent tests her Department has carried out into the product Latero Flora and its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus; and with what results.

Mr. Sackville: Latero Flora was the subject of a recent, voluntary, application for approval as a novel food product. The independent, expert, Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes agreed that it should be classed as a novel food, but concluded that additional information was required before a decision could be reached; the manufacturer has been asked to provide that additional data.

The Department has neither carried out nor commissioned tests or analyses of Latero Flora. It is understood, however, that an analysis was recently commissioned, by a private organisation, from the Laboratory of the Government Chemist; neither the Department nor the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has seen a report of that analysis.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order an investigation into the promotional literature for the imported American product Latero Flora and its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus.

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control Agency investigates all reports of unlicensed medicines and their advertising, labelling and sales and takes appropriate action to stop illegal activity as soon as possible. Following a reference in October 1993, the agency secured assurances the following month from the suppliers of Latero Flora in the United Kingdom that the promotional literature complained of would no longer be used. The agency's wider investigation continues.

Counsellors

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued to family health service authorities, regarding criteria for deciding whether to reimburse general practices for the employment of staff designated as counsellors.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidelines on how the general practitioner practice staff reimbursement scheme should be administered are contained in the "Statement of Fees and Allowances", copies of which are available in the Library.

Patients

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statutory procedures exist for consulting patients about the closure of, or changes to, the general practice surgery with which they are registered.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no specific statutory procedures for consulting patients in such cases. Family health services authorities are, however, required by the Community Health Council Regulations 1985 to consult the local community health council on any proposals to make any substantial variation in the provision of general medical services in their area.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on the development of medical priority dispatch systems within national health service ambulance services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: A number of ambulance services are evaluating the use of priority dispatch systems. No central decisions will be made on a future role for these systems until the safety of their use and the benefits to patients have been fully assessed.

Spectacles

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has received about the adequacy of the voucher to cover the cost of spectacles; and how the estimate of the value of the voucher is reached.

Dr. Mawhinney: Departmental officials have met and exchanged correspondence about the value of optical vouchers with the Optical Voucher Consultative Committee, which is composed of representatives from the Association of British Dispensing Opticians, the Association of Optometrists and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians. The value of optical vouchers is determined by the patients' optical prescription; the more complex the prescription, the higher the value of the voucher. Values currently range from £24·40 to £113.

Private Health Care

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics she has on the availability of private health care *(a)* by region and *(b)* by district in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Independent hospitals, nursing homes and clinics are required to register with the national health service under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984. Annual statistics are provided which show the provision of beds and other facilities, together with staffing information. Summarised information at national, regional and district level is published in "Private Hospitals, Homes and Clinics Registered under Section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984", copies of which are available in the Library.

Private Medicine

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the membership of the Welsh Office/Department of Health joint working party, set up to review rules on practising private medicine on national health service premises.

Mr. Sackville: There is no such joint working party. The Department of Health and the Welsh Office are revising the handbook "Management of Private Practice in Health Service Hospitals in England and Wales" and officials are liaising in the normal way.

Depo medrone

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she expects to produce a patient information leaflet for the drug Depo medrone.

Mr. Sackville: Patient information leaflets are produced by pharmaceutical companies which market medicinal products and are authorised by the licensing authority. Under a European Community directive on the labelling of human medicines and leaflets—EC 92/27—copies of which are available in the Library, a package leaflet containing specified information for the patient has to be provided unless that information is on the product label. United Kingdom regulations implementing these provisions have been made and the new requirement came into force from 1 January 1994. Products already on the market, such as Depo medrone, have to meet the new requirements at the time of the five-yearly renewal of their licence.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff, whole-time equivalents, are employed at Richmond house.

Mr. Sackville: There are 441 staff who work for the Department of Health and 190 who work for the Department of Social Security. We are unable to provide these figures as whole-time equivalents.

Press Releases

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much it cost to redesign the Department's press release paper.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of redesigning the Department's paper was £993.

Car Parks

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region, for each year since 1990, the income from car parking charges implemented by hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the net income received from car parking charges in 1991-92, provided by the 57 national health service trusts which then existed and by region for other hospitals, is shown in the table. Information for other years is not available centrally.

Region (in respect of Directly Managed Units)	*Net income £000s*
Northern	0
Yorkshire	0
Trent	0
East Anglian	63
North West Thames	138
North East Thames	110
South East Thames	138
South West Thames	85
Wessex	31
Oxfordshire	147
South Western	206
West Midlands	−19
Mersey	0
North Western	146
Total Regions	1,046
NHS Trusts	192
National Total	1,238

Fundraisers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals and trusts employ a fundraiser; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We welcome a close working partnership between the health service and local voluntary and community groups including fund-raising activities. Detailed information about the number of fundraisers employed is not available centrally.

Corticosteroids

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when and how she intends to publish the findings and recommendations of the Medicine Control Agency's investigation into corticosteroids; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control Agency has investigated the issue of immunosuppression in patients taking corticosteroids and in particular the association with disseminated chickenpox. Advice has been sought from the Committee on Safety of Medicines and its findings and recommendations will be published in the next issue of the bulletin "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance". This will be circulated to all doctors and pharmacists next month.

Health Care Purchasing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *557*, if she will provide a breakdown of the purchase of health care from non-NHS bodies for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: We do not collect expenditure figures broken down by type of health care purchased from non-national health service bodies.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are her Department's latest estimates for levels of mesothelioma over the next 30 years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the level of mesothelioma is not separately identified at present in Office of Population Censuses and Surveys figures. A review of the OPCS data collection is currently under way with a view to enabling separate identification.

Clothier Inquiry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce the findings of the Clothier inquiry.

Dr. Mawhinney: Shortly.

Private Medical Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to arrange that future general household surveys provide details of private medical insurance in British households.

Mr. Sackville: The schedule of questions for the 1994 general household survey—GHS—was finalised some months ago. It is not possible to say at this time whether questions on private medical insurance are likely to be included in the 1995 GHS.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each district health authority *(a)* the current annual budget and *(b)* the current number of managerial staff.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* Information will be placed in the Library giving details of revenue expenditure for each district health authority in 1992-93. Information on current budgets and numbers of managerial staff is not available centrally.

Travelling and Subsistence

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for 1991-92 and 1992-93 the expenditure on travelling and subsistence for *(a)* health regions, *(b)* health districts and *(c)* trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The information is shown in the table.

Expenditure on travelling and subsistence

£ thousands

	1991-92	*1992-93*
Regional health authorities	18,165	18,879
District health authorities	145,094	122,410
NHS trusts	17,987	55,827

Note: Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Source: Financial returns for regional health authorities, district health authorities and NHS trusts.

Expenditure in real terms has fallen since 1990-91 due to good management of the national health service. The increased expenditure by NHS trusts reflects the increase in their numbers.

Office Equipment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for 1992-93 and 1991-92 the expenditure on office equipment by *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* Information on revenue expenditure is shown in the table.

Revenue expenditure on office equipment

	1991-92 £ 000s	*1992-93 £ 000s*
Regional Health Authorities	2,767	2,980
District Health Authorities	32,028	30,873
Trusts	4,135	12,725

Note: The figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Source: The financial returns of regional health authorities, district health authorities and NHS trusts.

Costs have remained roughly static in real terms since 1990-91. The increase in expenditure by National Health Service trusts reflects the increase in their numbers.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances public money is made available to assist in drawing up a proposal for trust status; on how many such occasions applications for trust status have failed or not been proceeded with; which potential trusts were involved; and what was the cost of drawing up the proposals.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* When expressions of interest in national health service trust status are approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health funds are made available to regional health authorities to assist those units in drawing up their applications. The table lists those applications which were withdrawn or deferred after the expression of interest was approved. Information about the cost of drawing up individual applications is not available centrally.

Applications for NHS trust status withdrawn or deferred by wave of trust

First Wave
Brighton Acute Services
St. Bartholomew's
St. Thomas' Hospital
Crawley/Horsham
Bromley Acute
Harefield Hospital
Ravensbourne Priority Services
North West Hertfordshire Priority Services

Second Wave
Northwick Park Hospital
Royal London Homeopathic Hospital
Bromley Healthcare
Mid-Kent Health Care Services (Maidstone Acute)
Princess Christian (Tonbridge Wells Mental Handicap)
South Buckinghamshire (Wycombe Health Services)
West Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit
Horton General
North West Durham Hospital and Community Services
Mid Surrey Mental Handicap
St. Bartholomew's (Dissolved before operational date of 1 April 1993)
St. Thomas' Hospital (Dissolved before operational date of 1 April 1993

Third Wave
Essex and Hertfordshire Health Services
Newham Healthcare
Tavistock and Portman Clinics
Stockport Health Services
Queen Victoria East Grinstead
Yardley Green
Dewsbury Health Care
Rehabilitation North

Tameside and Glossop
Medway and Swale Healthcare
Plymouth Acute Services
Derbyshire Royal Infirmary
Hull and East Yorkshire Community and Mental Health Services
St. Georges Health Care (combined acute and community services application deferred, reconfigured application for acute services subsequently approved)
North West Hertfordshire Acute

Fourth Wave[1]
The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital
South Birmingham Acute
Solihull Hospital
Newcastle General Health
Unityne
West Sussex Ambulance
East Sussex Ambulance
Riverside Acute
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes

[1] The information for the fourth wave is the latest available as the fourth wave assessment process has not yet been completed.

NHS Leavers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many employees who have left the NHS have required permission to join firms of management consultants in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* This information is not available centrally. Employment issues such as this are the responsibility of local national health service employers. The Department of Health does not require employers to include any restrictive clause in employment contracts preventing employees from immediately taking up employment as a consultant after resigning from the NHS.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *478*, what amount of the fundholding allocation was retained by general practitioner fundholders in 1991-92 *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The final audited savings for 1991-92 are now available and are shown in the table. Overall general practitioner fundholders retained £14·5 million efficiency savings which will be spent on further improving services for patients. This represents 3·6 per cent. of budgets set and is a considerable achievement by fundholders in the first year of the scheme.

Region	*Fundholder savings retained in 1991-92 (£ million)*
Northern	0·7
Yorkshire	1·1
Trent	1·5
East Anglian	0·6
North West Thames	0·9
North East Thames	1·0
South East Thames	0·7
South West Thames	1·6
Wessex	0·7
Oxford	1·1
South Western	0·5
West Midlands	2·5
Mersey	1·1
North Western	0·7
England	14·5

Note: Figures do not add for England total due to rounding.

SCOTLAND

Forestry Commission

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what area of Forestry Commission land the Government requires the commission to sell by the end of the century; and what area it has sold in the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government asked the Forestry Commission in 1989 to dispose of 100,000 hectares of forestry land and properties during the period up to the end of the century. The commission has sold 32,000 hectares to date.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list all Forestry Commission woods in the Hamilton constituency; (2) what plans he has to sell off any of the woods in the Hamilton constituency under the current disposals programme of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Lang: There are no Forestry Commission woodlands in the Hamilton constituency.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place a copy of the information contained in the Forestry Commission's sub-compartment data base in the Library.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* A print of the Forestry Commission's sub-compartment database would cover about 12,000 pages and form a pile of paper about 3.5 ft high. It would be impractical to place this in the Library, although I would arrange for a copy to be delivered to the hon. Member if he wished.

The Forestry Commission is, however, preparing a list of all its woodlands and I shall send a copy to the hon. Member. I shall also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

British Rail Order

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will have completed consideration of the British Railways (No. 3) Provisional Order.

Mr. Lang: In line with the procedures laid down in the general orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 which apply to this draft provisional order, discussions on the content of the order are taking place between my officials and the partlamentary agents acting on behalf of the promoters, British Rail. There is outstanding a petition against the draft order and if that petition is not withdrawn, an inquiry will require to be held before parliamentary commissioners. If the petition is withdrawn, I shall make arrangements for the order confirmation Bill to be introduced into Parliament as soon as possible after completion of these discussions and the necessary statutory procedures. It is hoped that the Bill will be in a position to receive Royal Assent before the Easter recess.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his views were sought on 5 November 1993 on the appointment of Mr. Laurence Peterken to the post of special projects director with the national health service management executive; whether he had already been informed of the adverse comments made about Mr. Peterken, and the comments made in the letter of 6 August referred to at the Select Committee hearing on Wednesday 1 December; and on what date those comments were drawn to his attention.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend's views were sought on the possibility of Mr. Peterken being offered a post at national level on the afternoon of 5 November. He first became aware of the contents of the letter of 6 August on 23 November. He first became aware of some comments about Mr. Peterken's performance, both favourable and adverse, in February 1993 and of the content of Mr. Peterken's performance appraisal on 30 November.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his letter of 15 December 1993, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill, if he will list the areas identified by the new NHS chief executive as requiring a short managerial review which will be undertaken by Mr. Laurence Peterken.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not write to the hon. Member on 15 December 1993. Pursuant to the Minister of State's letter of that date, Mr. Peterken's first task is to review the organisation of the Common Services Agency, which employs 5,000 people and provides services worth £125 million. Thereafter, he will review the arrangements within the NHS for information services and management development.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Lang *[pursuant to his answer, 16 December 1993, c. 884-85]:* Expenditure by my Department on advertising for each of the last 12 months has been:

	£
January	51,000
February	47,000
March	362,000
April	38,000
May	51,000
June	68,000
July	72,000
August	102,000
September	60,000
October	367,000
November	194,000
December	243,000

HOME DEPARTMENT

Road Accidents

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of road accidents *(a)* per police officer and *(b)* per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on ratios of police officers to population levels are contained in the appendices to the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, copies of which are in the Library.

Videos

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to regulate the availability of videos for home viewing which contain gratuitously violent material.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *780*.

Immigration Controls

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes were made in 1993 to the United Kingdom immigration control arrangements vis-à-vis other member states of the European Community; and what proposals he has to change those arrangements in 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such changes to our immigration control arrangements were made in 1993. The possible changes outlined in my reply of 9 July 1993 to the hon. Member, at column *298*, are still under consideration. However, as indicated in my reply of 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *655*, to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), certain changes to embarkation checks will be introduced on 1 February 1994.

Bryn Melyn

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations he has made into the background to professional qualifications and success record of the Bryn Melyn centre for young offenders prior to his comments to the media on the centre's use of away-from-base treatment on 29 December 1993.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend's comments on 29 December 1993 were concerned with the relative powers under existing law of courts and social services departments to make decisions on how to deal with young offenders, and with the changes in the balance of these powers proposed in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which is currently before Parliament.

European Economic Area

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the provisions of the European Economic Area agreement to extend the free movement provisions of the EC's single market which came into effect on 1 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *956*.

Refugees

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people had their refugee status withdrawn in the last 12 months for which figures are available, and one year and two years earlier.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available indications are that the number of such cases is small.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the guidelines laying down the personal circumstances he takes into account in deciding whether it is appropriate in a particular case to remove the grant of exceptional leave to remain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no set guidelines, but it might be appropriate not to renew exceptional leave to remain where, for instance, the particular circumstances which had led to its grant had ceased to apply.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many dogs have been destroyed as a result of action taken under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991;

(2) what plans he has to amend or review the operation of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991;

(3) what has been the annual cost to public funds of legal proceedings brought under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the number of dogs destroyed, and on the cost of legal proceedings in connection with action taken under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, is not collected centrally. However, information on the number of prosecutions, convictions and cautions under the Act during 1992, the first full year of its operation, is given in the tables.

The Act is kept under continuing review. We shall shortly be issuing a further Home Office circular on aspects of the operation of the legislation, but I have no plans to amend the Act.

Defendants cautioned for offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

England and Wales 1992	
Section 1 (2) (a)	4
Section 1 (2) (b)	2
Section 1 (2) (c)	—
Section 1 (2) (d)	10
Section 1 (2) (e)	—
Section 1 (3)	24
Section 3 (1)[1]	21
Section 3 (3)[1]	5
Section 3 (1)[2]	143
Section 3 (3)[2]	3

[1] Aggravated offences.
[2] Non-aggravated offences.

Defendants Proceeded Against at Magistrates Courts for Offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

							Aggravated offences		*Non-aggravated offences*	
England and Wales 1992	*Section 1(2)(a)*	*Section 1(2)(b)*	*Section 1(2)(c)*	*Section 1(2)(d)*	*Section 1(2)(e)*	*Section 1(3)*	*Section 3(1)*	*Section 3(3)*	*Section 3(1)*	*Section 3(3)*
Total proceeded against	31	4	3	187	27	209	310	20	389	30
Proceedings discontinued	5	1	—	44	6	30	35	5	37	4
Withdrawn or dismissed	15	—	1	56	11	54	122	7	168	16
Total found guilty	11	3	2	85	10	125	123	8	181	10
Total committed for sentence	11	3	2	85	10	124	123	8	181	10
Absolute discharge	4	—	1	6	2	12	6	—	11	—
Conditional disharge	1	1	—	17	—	40	27	3	37	4
Fine	5	2	1	59	7	65	49	5	112	6
Unsuspended sentence of imprisonment	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Immediate custody	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Otherwise dealt with	1	—	—	2	1	7	41	—	21	—

Note: There were no probation or supervision orders imposed.

Defendants found guilty at Crown Court for offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
England and Wales 1992

	Section 3(1) aggravated	*Section 3(3) offences*
Total found guilty	8	—
Total committed for sentence	8	—
Conditional discharge	3	—
Fine	3	—
Otherwise dealt with	2	—

Animal Experiments

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* designated scientific procedure establishments, *(b)* procedures carried out by these establishments and *(c)* project licence holders carrying out these procedures there were in the most recent year for which figures are available;

(2) how many *(a)* Home Office inspectors by rank and *(b)* support staff dealt with experiments on live animals at designated establishments in the most recent year for which figures are available;

(3) how many *(a)* new project licences and *(b)* new personal licences for scientific procedures on animals were issued in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information about the number of designated establishments, procedures, project licence holders and inspectors is published annually in "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals: Great Britain", 1992: Cm 2356.

Information about licences issued in 1992 is given in the report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 1992, Cm 2301.

The inspectors are given administrative support by 19 staff who are also responsible for the processing of the licensing arrangements under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present cost of *(a)* a personal licence under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, *(b)* a certificate designating a scientific procedure establishment and *(c)* a certificate designating a breeding and supplying establishment; and how much these fees raised in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The fees to be charged in respect of 1993 are:

(a) £108
(b) £120
(c) £545

It is estimated that these fees will raise £2·4 million.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the cost of the Animal Procedures Committee in the most recent year for which figures are available;

(2) how many full and part-time staff are presently working for the Animal Procedures Committee;

(3) if he will list the members of the Animal Procedures Committee showing what organisation or interest they represent.

Mr. Charles Wardle: For 1993-94, the estimated cost of the Animal Procedures Committee is £16,663.

The committee is served by two part-time members of staff.

The membership of the Animal Procedures Committee as at 1 January 1994 is as follows:

Professor Margaret Brazier, LLB (Chairman), Professor of Law, University of Manchester.
Dr. Michael Balls, MA PhD FIBiol, Head of the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM); Chairman of the Trustees of the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME).
Mr. Edward Bernard, FIAT, Chairman, Serotec Ltd.
Professor Barry Bridges, BSc MD, former Professor of Histology, Queen's University, Belfast.
Dr. Fiona Broughton Pipkin, MA DPhil, Professor of Perinatal Physiology, University of Nottingham.
Professor Anthony Dayan, MD FRCP FRCPath FFPM FIBiol. Professor of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.
Mr. Roger Ewbank, OBE MVSc FIBiol MRCVS, Director of the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW).
Mr. Clive Hollands, Secretary to the Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation (CRAE).
Sir Andrew Huxley, OM FRS, Past President, Royal Society.
Dr. Susan Iversen, MA PhD, Academic Head of the Department of Experimental Psychology, Oxford University.
Dr. Brian Newbould, BPharm FPS PhD MCPP, formerly Director, International Research Affairs, Zeneca Ltd.
Dr. Onora O'Neill, MA PhD, Principal, Newham College Cambridge.
Professor Lord Soulsby, MA PhD DVSM AM DSc MRCVS, formerly Professor of Animal Pathology, University of Cambridge.
Professor Michael Spyer, BSc, PhD DSc, Professor of Physiology, Royal Free Hospital Medical School.
Dr. Anthony J. Suckling BSC PhD, Chief Scientific Officer of the RSPCA.

Deportations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been deported under escort in 1991, 1992 and 1993; how many of these were arrested and/or deported under any kind of physical restraint; how many cases involved private security guards; how many had been previously found guilty of a criminal offence; and what was the cost of these operations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The numbers of deportation orders enforced and the numbers of those enforced following a court recommendation on conviction of a criminal offence were as follows:

	1991	*1992*	*1993*[1][2]
Total	641	873	544
Following a court recommendation	385	474	259

[1] Provisional
[2] First six months

Race Relations Act 1976

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider proposing the removal from the Race Relations Act 1976 of the exemption of immigration law and practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No; the existing complaints system —monitored by the new complaints audit committee—and disciplinary procedures provide adequate safeguards.

Exceptional Leave to Remain

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many cases of removal of exceptional leave to remain, in the last 12 months for which figures are available, were because of the cancellation of policies towards individual countries and how many arose from individual circumstances;

(2) how many people granted exceptional leave to remain have had such leave *(a)* revoked and *(b)* not renewed in the past 12 months for which figures are available, and one year and two years earlier.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Complete information on the number of persons with exceptional leave whose leave was revoked is not available, but the available indications are that the number is small. The available information for 1992 suggests that the number of persons refused an extension of exceptional leave does not exceed a figure of the order of 15.

UN Human Rights Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 December 1993, *Official Report,* columns *680-81,* if he will list those non-governmental organisations, hon. Members and others who will be consulted in the formation of the policies to be recorded in the United Kingdom's fourth periodic report to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations in August.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The report will record the numerous existing Government policies, which fulfil the United Kingdom's obligations under the United Nations international covenant on civil and political rights. Information about the organisations and individuals who have been consulted in the formation of these policies is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Immigration Complaints Body

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide the full address and telephone numbers of the new immigration complaints body; and if he will make it available to all those wishing to lodge a formal complaint about their treatment at Gatwick airport on 21 December 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Anyone who feels aggrieved by his or her treatment by the immigration and nationality department should write to:

Immigration and Nationality Department
Complaints Unit
Room 1213
Lunar House
40 Wellesley Road Croydon CR9 2BY Fax: 081-759 7215

The independent complaints audit committee—CAC—recently appointed to monitor the complaints system, is not responsible for the investigation of individual complaints.

General correspondence for the CAC should be marked "Complaints Audit Committee" and sent to the above address at Lunar house.

Card Phones

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the difference in cost to the user between card phones situated in prisons and those situated elsewhere.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 14 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the cost to the user of calls from card phones situated in prisons, and those situated elsewhere.

Calls from card phones situated in prisons are charged on exactly the same basis as calls from BT card phones situated elsewhere.

Anti-terrorist Measures

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police authorities have been granted an increase in their capital budget for *(a)* closed circuit television schemes and *(b)* other anti-terrorist measures in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Salman Rushdie

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to allow the author Salman Rushdie to achieve a degree of anonymity which will reduce the risk to him in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Arrangements for protecting Mr. Rushdie are an operational matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. It would be inappropriate to comment further on these arrangements.

Security Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a detailed breakdown of the costs involved in preparing the building in Millbank to be used by the Security Service; if he will give the final figure involved; what authorisation was given for all the art, decoration and fittings for the use of the Security Service; and by whom that authorisation was given.

Mr. Howard: The projected outturn cost of the work on Thames house is £227 million. Part of the cost relates to the specialist nature of Security Service requirements on which I am not prepared to comment further. As Thames house is a listed building, some work is being carried out as a result of the requirements of English Heritage.

Burglars

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he holds on the reconviction rates of imprisoned burglars, on a comparable basis to the figures he has quoted on domestic burglars given community service orders in 1987.

Mr. Maclean: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Deported Jamaicans

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers on flight KT 311 from Kingston, Jamaica, were refused entry at Gatwick airport on 15 December 1993; and what were the reasons for the refusals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Thirty-eight people who arrived on flight BA 1262—KT 311 from Kingston—on 15 December 1993 were refused leave to enter of whom 33 have been removed. The reason for refusal in each case was that the immigration officer was not satisfied that the passenger was genuinely seeking entry for the period of the visit as stated by him.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from Jamaica were held at *(a)* Campsfield detention centre, Oxfordshire, and *(b)*

Newhaven detention centre, East Sussex, over the period 21 to 23 December 1993; and what were the reasons for their detention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of passengers who had arrived at Gatwick airport on flight JQ 001 from Jamaica who were held at Campsfield house or the Newhaven detention centre for the period 21 to 23 December 1993 was as follows:

Date	*Detention Centre*	*Number of Detainees*
Night of 21-22 December 1993	Campsfield House	49
	Newhaven	4
Night of 22-23 December 1993	Campsfield House	22
	Newhaven	4
Night of 23-24 December 1993	Campsfield House	22
	Newhaven	4

Each case was considered on its merits and detention was authorised only when the immigration service considered that the person concerned was not likely to comply with the terms of temporary admission.

In addition, one other Jamaican national was detained at Campsfield house during this period.

Immigration

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in relation to immigration issues concerning passengers from Jamaica on 21 December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: About 80 letters have been received about individual cases or wider issues.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will place in the Library the correspondence and any other documents relating to the immigration issues concerning the flight from Jamaica on 21 December 1993; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about immigration issues in respect of passengers from Jamaica on 21 December 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have arranged for a copy of my reply today, to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), about the arrival of flight JQ 001 from Kingston, to be placed in the Library.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he had prior discussions with the airline or the travel agents about immigration issues for passengers flying from Jamaica on 21 December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 16 December the immigration service was telephoned by the airline and the charterer. They inquired about the desirability of the passengers obtaining prior entry clearance; about the possibility of incurring carriers' liability charges; and whether it would be possible to send an immigration officer to Kingston to examine the passengers before embarkation.

They were advised by the immigration service that carriers' liability was unlikely to be a problem provided that the passengers held a valid passport; and that prior entry clearance was not required for Jamaican citizens, although they were encouraged to apply if in any doubt about their eligibility for admission. They were also informed that pre-clearance in Kingston would not be possible. There are no standing arrangements for the immigration service to operate controls overseas, and even if such an arrangement had been thought desirable it would not have been possible to conclude the necessary agreements with the Jamaican authorities in the short time available.

The immigration service subsequently confirmed with the airline the expected time of arrival, aircraft type and the expected number of passengers, and logistical arrangements for disembarkation were discussed with the airline's handling agents. The airline also provided the immigration service with a passenger manifest three and a half hours prior to the aircraft's arrival at Gatwick.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers from Jamaica on 21 December 1993 were *(a)* allowed to remain and *(b)* deported; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There were 326 passengers on flight JQ 001 from Kingston. On 12 January 1994, 67 passengers had been refused leave to enter of whom 33 had been removed. Five cases have still to be resolved.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what immigration procedures are applied to passengers travelling from Jamaica on *(a)* scheduled and *(b)* charter flights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All passengers who seek leave to enter the United Kingdom are examined by an immigration officer and must satisfy him that they quality for entry under the immigration rules.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is the policy of the Government to refuse permission of the Russian citizen, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is open to the Home Secretary to direct personally that entry be refused to a foreign national whose exclusion would be conducive to the public good. Consideration is given to the individual merits of any case, and account taken of the purpose of any proposed visit and all the relevant circumstances.

Joy Gardner

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Police Complaints Authority's investigation into the death of Joy Gardner to report.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The police investigation into the death of Mrs. Gardner is being supervised by the Police Complaints Authority and it is a matter for the authority itself to decide when the investigation has been completed to its satisfaction.

Charitable Bodies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hospitals and trusts have within them a registered charitable body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Charity Commissioners are currently conducting a review of such bodies for the purpose of updating the register of charities and precise figures are not available at present.

The great majority of NHS trusts are trustees of charitable funds which have been transferred to them from health authorities. There are also 26 groups of special trustees responsible for funds attached to teaching hospitals. In some cases, a single NHS trust may administer as many as 100 different charitable funds.

DEFENCE

Defence Costs Study

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *631,* if he is now prepared to state *(a)* the number of study teams and *(b)* each of the different areas of support businesses they will be examining;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *631,* whether he is now prepared to list each of the aspects of support that he will be looking at as part of the defence costs study; and if he is now prepared to provide detailed information on their current functions and costs.

Mr. Aitken: The defence costs study is looking at all aspects of support to the front line. So far 16 individual studies have been set in hand to examine particular areas. These are the MOD's organisation and function; service HQs, command and top-level budget struetures; MOD police; research and development; procurement projects and practices; the function and organisation of the Procurement Executive; a review of the market-testing programme; financial management; defence estate and property; repair, spares, storage, distribution and infrastructure; military training; recruiting and manning; medical support; non-operational information technology; security; and naval support infrastructure. I am arranging for a short note explaining more about each of these studies to be placed in the Library of the House. A number of other areas are under consideration, and additional studies will continue to be added to this list. The function and costs of support organisations will be analysed as part of the study.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to his defence costs study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence outlined the purpose and scope of the defence costs study to his NATO counterparts at a Defence Planning Committee meeting held in Brussels on 8 and 9 December 1993.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *632,* if he will provide details of the rank or civil service grade of the members of the secretariat established to co-ordinate work on the defence costs study.

Mr. Aitken: The full-time secretariat team established to co-ordinate the defence costs study comprises an air vice marshall, a grade 5, a captain RN, a colonel, a grade 7, a higher executive officer (development), an administrative officer and a personal assistant. In addition, a grade 3 is also working on the study as part of his existing responsibility.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communication took place between his officials and members of the media on the subject of the defence costs study on 20 December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Selected journalists were given a background briefing on the defence costs study on 20 December 1993 by a senior Ministry of Defence official.

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes will result in the arrangements for financing capital expenditure on married quarters as a result of his plans to transfer the administration of married quarters to a housing trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: After the transfer of the Ministry of Defence married quarter estate to a housing trust, responsibility for capital expenditure on the estate will be assumed by the trust. The Ministry of Defence will pay rent on those properties required to meet the accommodation requirements of service personnel.

Joint Training Exercises

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider the deployment of battalion-sized groups for joint training exercises with former Warsaw pact forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The prospect of joint military activities, and peacekeeping field exercises within the framework of "Partnership for Peace", was unveiled at the NATO summit meeting in Brussels earlier this week. In addition, the MOD is currently considering the specific possibilities for British land forces, initially at company level, to conduct joint training and exercises with some of our North Atlantic Co-operation Council partners.

General Cordy-Simpson

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that the recent experiences of General Cordy-Simpson have been incorporated into *(a)* training procedures and *(b)* the development of new doctrine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A formal and institutionalised mechanism already exists for debriefing commanders at all levels on return from all operations; United Nations operations are no exception. Their observations and lessons are used to provide ongoing assessment and validation of both doctrine and training.

United Nations Military Operations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department has taken to assist the United Nations in improving its contingency planning arrangements for military operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In his report "An Agenda for Peace", the United Nations Secretary-General identified the need to strengthen the United Nation's capacity to conduct peace support operations and invited member states to make proposals in this regard. The United Kingdom's reply included suggestions for reinforcing the United Nation's planning mechanisms. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office continue to be actively involved in discussions aimed at taking these suggestions forward. In addition, the United Kingdom is co-operating fully with the United Nations standby forces planning team. Five military personnel are attached to the United Nations secretariat and agreement has been given in principle to a request for two more officers to be made available.

United Nations Military Intelligence

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is prepared to assist in the development of a United Nations military intelligence capability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A considerable volume of information is already available to the United Nations from a variety of sources and there is scope for enhancement of its ability to marshall and analyse this. The United Kingdom is ready to consider requests for assistance in this area. It would, however, be prohibitively expensive and unnecessary for the United Nations to develop its own military information capability.

Royal Ordnance

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the commercial relationship between Royal Ordnance and Heckler and Koch *(a)* prior to 1987 and *(b)* since 1987.

Mr. Aitken: A licence agreement between Heckler and Koch GmbH and the Secretary of State for Defence was signed in April 1970, with amendments completed in February 1972 and December 1977. Under the terms of the licence, royal small arms factory Enfield built various Heckler and Koch weapons and sold these to Heckler and Koch (UK). The licence transferred to RO plc on incorporation of the latter on 2 January 1985. The Secretary of State for Defence has had no responsibility for the affairs of RO plc since its sale to British Aerospace plc.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how export control legislation was applied to the activities of Royal Ordnance *(a)* before and *(b)* after privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Prior to 2 January 1985, when the royal ordnance factories became a plc, any sales made directly through the defence exports sales supply division had Crown status, and were therefore not subject to licensing. All other exports of ROF equipment were subject to the normal licensing requirements. From 2 January 1985, all exports by RO were subject to licensing.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning *(a)* the sale of rocket propellant to Iraq by Royal Ordnance and *(b)* assistance provided by Royal Ordnance to Iran for the construction of a weapons plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Matters relating to the export of United Kingdom defence equipment and dual use goods to Iraq are being investigated by Lord Justice Scott, and it would be inappropriate to comment on them before the publication of his final report. My Department holds no information to support the suggestion that Royal Ordnance provided assistance to Iran in the construction of a weapons plant.

HMS Intrepid

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *918*, what communications he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the operational status of HMS Intrepid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Details of the operational status of all forces declared to NATO, which include HMS Intrepid, are made available to NATO, and to all NATO partners, on an annual basis.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *918*, what plans he has to return HMS Intrepid to operational status.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Intrepid is at present held in a state of extended readiness at Portsmouth. On current plans, she would be returned to operational status only in the event of an emergency.

Defence Research Agency

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he will publish copies of the customer satisfaction surveys carried out by the Defence Research Agency in the last three years;

(2) what measures are used to assess the quality of service provided by the Defence Research Agency other than the customer satisfaction survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Dr. David Clark, dated 14 January 1994:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying to your two questions about the quality of service provided by the DRA and the customer satisfaction survey.

I will deal with the customer satisfaction survey first. As I said in my answer of 16 December the survey is very extensive and is undertaken each year by an independent contractor experienced in this sort of work. The detailed results of the analysis are presented to me in a report by the contractor. Since this report includes information which has been collected in confidence it would not be right for me to put it into the public domain.

What I can say, however, is that the first two surveys showed a consistent picture and that our customers recognise that we are making good progress in achieving better performance. As I said in my last answer we analyse our performance against eight criteria: overall customer satisfaction, technical quality, facilities, staff reputation, understanding our customers' needs, project management and formal quality. The surveys showed the DRA scoring well on the first five criteria particularly technical quality and understanding of customers' needs. The 1992 survey showed a real improvement in responsiveness over the 1991 survey. Both surveys showed we had work to do in project management and

formal quality. This is not surprising as the DRA has only had a formal customer/supplier relationship since becoming a Trading Fund in April 1993. Before this the organisation did not operate on a project basis and had no requirement for formal quality certification. I shall be looking with interest at the results of the 1993 survey (which I will receive shortly) to see if the benefits of the initiatives we have launched to correct those weaknesses have yet been detected by our customers.

You also asked what other measures we use beside the survey to gauge the quality of the service we offer. The major measure which is also one of my key performance targets, is achievement of customer programme "milestones". This means achieving a specific technical goal on time and to cost. We started from a low base level of only 50% in 1991/92 and our target is to reach 85% by 1997/98. But in fact we are already this year likely to achieve in excess of 80% which reflects very well on the enthusiasm of the organisation to turn itself into an efficient customer oriented business. Additionally we have some indication of the underlying scientific quality of our work through the peer group assessments of the quality of our strategic research proposals. These too show a steady improvement over the last three years.

Royal Anglian Regiment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training the 2nd Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment, has received in the last six months in *(a)* route clearing, *(b)* anti-ambush drills, *(c)* convoy control, *(d)* driving techniques and *(e)* basic language skills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The 2nd Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment, has been identified as the possible replacement for 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, if a further six months deployment were to be undertaken, and will undertake formal Operation Grapple training in February and March this year. The battalion already has considerable experience in route clearing, anti-ambush drills and driving techniques. Liaison officers with training in Serbo-Croat would be attached to the battalion if it deployed. No decisions have been taken about a further roulement of British forces in Bosnia in April/May this year.

10 Squadron

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *909*, what assessment he has made as to whether the repayments provided to his Department as a result of the non-defence tasks carried out by 10 Squadron are at an appropriate level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Repayment charges for non-defence tasks carried out by 10 Squadron are at an appropriate level. The criteria used for determining repayment charges accords with the rules and regulations set out in Government accounting and departmental guidelines.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *909*, what were the numbers and types of *(a)* non-defence specific tasks and *(b)* defence specific tasks carried out by 10 Squadron in 1992-93.

Mr. Hanley: In 1992-93, there were 17 repayment flights in respect of non-defence specific tasks, comprising nine for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and eight for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The repayment flights in respect of defence-specific flights are as follows:

48 Operational flights in support of UN operations in the former Republic of Yugoslavia;
192 Weekly scheduled flights to Washington, Belize and Decimomannu;
195 Flights in support of exercises (Tri-service requirement);
105 Special flights, including medical evacuations;
and some 360 hours of Squadron training flights.

Heckler and Koch

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the use of Heckler and Koch weapons during the recent conflict in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no firm information concerning the use of Heckler and Koch weapons during the recent Cambodian conflict.

Royal Yacht

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *916*, what was the cost of the refit of the royal yacht in 1991 and the nature of the work undertaken.

Mr. Aitken: The cost of the refit of the royal yacht in 1991 was some £7·2 million. The work involved fitting new sewage treatment plants; major repairs to the hull; refurbishment of steam and electric generators, main boilers and condensers and a complete repaint.

RAF Support Command

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *907*, whether he will publish the reports of efficiency savings at the stations and units within the RAF Support Command maintenance group.

Mr. Hanley: In the financial year—FY—1992-93, the RAF Support Command maintenance group achieved efficiency savings of £12,900,000. In FY 1993-94, the group is forecasting efficiency savings of £16,200,000. Details of efficiency savings are published in the Maintenance Group Defence Agency's annual report and accounts, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

War Crimes, Bosnia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *290*, if he will provide details of the number of occasions on which information on alleged war crimes in Bosnia has been passed to the relevant United Nation authorities by British forces.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Departmental Objectives

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *423*, if he will provide details of the types of quantitive data used in his assessment of performance aganist departmental standing objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The quantitative aspect of performance review in the Department is based, first, on indicators of

military capability and readiness for forces and headquarters; these include manning levels, the availability of equipment, and levels of collective training. In addition, a significant amount of data is available to assess progress with management initiatives such as the efficiency programme, market testing and next steps reviews. The performance of the Procurement Executive is monitored by indicators of the health of major projects. Budgetary data are also employed.

RAF Carlisle

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the full study report and costings which formed the basis of the decision to close 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Hanley: It would not be appropriate to release the full study report and costings. A consultation document covering the factors involved has been issued to all interested parties, and further detailed information will be provided where appropriate.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement outlining the impact on other MOD establishments within the area of closing 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value of all refurbishment work carried out at 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle over the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: Over the last five years, £31 million has been spent on minor new build and refurbishment at RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the decision to close 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle is compatible with his announcement on "front line first".

Mr. Hanley: The defence cost study will be taking a new and radical look at all aspects of support, with the aim of identifying further areas where we can reduce costs. The proposals to rationalise the support provided to the RAF at the equipment supply depots by reducing to a single depot, which originated before the "front line first" programme was instituted, are entirely consistent with that aim.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make more time available for the consultation process on the decision to close 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Hanley: At the request of the local trade unions at our meeting last month, I agreed that the consultation period should be extended by one month to 18 March 1994.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the transfer of posts to go from 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle to 16 maintenance unit, RAF with an estimate of people and grades required for transfer.

Mr. Hanley: As indicated in the consultative document, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, it is estimated that some 332 civilian posts would be relocated. It is not possible at this stage to be specific about the numbers and grades of personnel required for transfer.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make an official visit to 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle to discuss plans to close the unit by 1997.

Mr. Hanley: I have already indicated to local representatives my intention to visit RAF Carlisle to discuss our proposals during the period of consultation.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the alternative plan to make savings submitted by the trade unions involved in 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Hanley: We have not yet received the trade union plan; when we do, we shall, of course, give it due consideration.

RAF Equipment Supply Depots

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available to the trade union representatives at RAF Carlisle, RAF Quedgeley and RAF Stafford the review report into the equipment supply depots of the RAF.

Mr. Hanley: It would not be appropriate to release the full study report and costings. A consultation document covering the factors involved has been issued to all interested parties, and further information will be provided where appropriate.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 17 January 1994

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government car service—GCS—provides cars for Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers. Increases in GCS charges since 1990-91 are due to the following factors:

(i) GCS prices for its standard service were increased by 12 per cent. from 1 July 1990 and again by 10 per cent. from 1 January 1991;

(ii) the basis for provision of a protected car was also changed. Prior to 1 April 1992, GCS purchased the base car while the user Department funded the one-off cost of protection. From 1 April 1992, GCS charges for a protected vehicle were increased by 54 per cent. to take account of the full cost of providing a protected car, amortised over its five-year lifespan;

(iii) Value added tax on GCS bills increased from 15 to 17·5 per cent. on 1 April 1991.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Sudan

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Sudanese Government on the question of human rights violations in southern Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We take every suitable opportunity, both bilaterally and in concert with our European Union partners, to express our concern to the Sudanese authorities at reported abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout Sudan, including the south. We have also raised our concerns with the leaders of the SPLA factions. We were active earlier this year in securing the appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate the human rights situation in Sudan. At the United Nations General Assembly, we co-sponsored a hard-hitting resolution, commending the work of the special rapporteur, which was passed in plenary by 111 votes to 13.

False Imprisonment

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider taking steps to ensure that British citizens wrongly imprisoned abroad receive adequate compensation from the Governments responsible.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Claims for compensation against foreign Governments must be pursued through their courts. Under international law, a Government will not consider espousing a claim on behalf of an individual while other legal channels remain open. Even after the claimant has exhausted all available legal channels, we would need to consider all the circumstances of each case before taking such a course.

Land Mines

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he proposes to implement the land mines protocol and ban the export of anti-personnel land mines by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has always adhered to the United Nations weaponry convention, protocol II of which lays down rules for the responsible use of land mines. We signed the convention in 1981 and hope to ratify it later this year.

We are not contemplating additional measures to cover the export of anti-personnel land mines from the United Kingdom. We have not produced or exported anti-personnel mines for some time; and we believe that our current stringent controls on the export of defence equipment, which includes controls on all mines, are sufficient to stop the sale of these weapons to countries which may use them irresponsibly.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with his German counterpart and at the next EU Foreign Affairs Council the implications for EU export control and non-proliferation policy of the recent conviction of the owners of RO-SCH Technology GmbH of Kaufbevren of exporting carbon fibre centrifuge rotor tubes for uranium enrichment in contravention of the Federal German Foreign Trade Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I do not intend to raise this issue. The action of the German authorities is a matter for that sovereign state.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government intend to put to the second preparatory committee meeting of the fifth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to be held in New York from 17 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the second preparatory committee meeting, we shall be working to ensure that decisions are reached on outstanding procedural and administrative matters relating to the 1995 non-proliferation treaty extension and review conference. Our policy is to secure the unconditional and indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995.

EC Social Development Fund

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent changes in the organisation of the Council of Europe's social development fund; and if he proposes, in the light of these reforms, that the United Kingdom should now participate in the fund.

Mr. Goodlad: Following allegations of irregularities in the operation of the social development fund, a number of measures were agreed on by the member states, designed to ensure greater rigour and transparency in the management of the organisation and the proper care of public funds.

There are no plans for United Kingdom participation in the fund.

Hong Kong

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what terms will be offered to expatriate civil servants currently based in Hong Kong on the resumption of sovereignty by China; and what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of these arrangements.

Mr. Goodlad: Two White Papers of 1954 and 1960 set out our obligation to Her Majesty's overseas civil service —HMOCS—employed in overseas territories upon the ending of British sovereignty. These obligations include provision of a compensation scheme and a sterling pension protection scheme. Draft schemes have been prepared for consultation with the Hong Kong HMOCS association. The cost of these schemes will be known when they have been finalised.

Immigration

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of his submission to the European Commission and the Council of Ministers concerning the rights to enter the United Kingdom of citizens of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Kiribati, Lesotho, the Maldives, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has made no submission to the European Commission or the Council of Ministers about the rights of the citizens of the countries listed to enter the United Kingdom.

The European Commission has, however, made proposals to determine the list of countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external frontiers of member states. When these proposals have been received formally from the Council secretariat they will be made available to Parliament in accordance with normal scrutiny arrangements.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Dominica, Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Kiribati, Lesotho, the Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, the Solomon Islands, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Zambia and Zimbabwe on changing the status of their citizens with regard to entering the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had no consultations with the Governments of the countries listed about changing the status of their citizens with regards to entering the United Kingdom. Entry into the United Kingdom for these nationalities, and others, will continue to be governed by the immigration rules.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what undertakings he has given to the Governments of each of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Kiribati, Lesotho, the Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, the Solomon Islands, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Zambia and Zimbabwe about the continuing rights of their citizens to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwelth Affairs has given no undertakings to the Governments of the countries listed about the continuing rights of their citizens to enter the United Kingdom. Entry into the United Kingdom for these nationalities, and others, will continue to be governed by the immigration rules.

Council of Europe

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those Council of Europe conventions and agreements which the United Kingdom has not signed or ratified; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for not doing so.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has neither signed nor ratified the conventions or agreements set out in the table. The reasons for not signing or ratifying vary. The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

European Convention on Compulsory Insurance Against Civil Liability in Respect of Motor Vehicles (1959)

Agreement Relating to Application of the European Convention on International Commercial Arbitration (1962)

European Convention on the Supervision of Conditionally Sentenced or Conditionally Released Offenders (1964)

European Convention on the Punishment of Road Traffic Offences (1964)

European Convention Providing a Uniform Law of Arbitration (1966)

European Convention on Establishment of Companies (1966)
European Convention on Foreign Money Liabilities (1967)
European Convention on Consular Functions (1967)
European Convention on "Au Pair" "Placement (1969)
European Convention on the International Validity of Criminal Judgments (1970)
European Convention on the Repatriation of Minors (1970)
European Convention on the Transfer of Proceedings in Criminal Matters (1972)
European Convention on the Place of Payment of Money Liabilities (1972)
European Convention on the Calculation of Time-limits (1972)
European Convention on Social Security (1972)
Supplementary Agreement to the European Convention on Social Security (1972)
European Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused by Motor Vehicles (1973)
Agreement on the Transfer of Corpses (1973)
European Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitation to Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes (1974)
European Convention on the International Effects of Deprivation of the Right to Drive a Motor Vehicle (1976)
European Convention on products Liability in regard to Personal Injury and Death (1977)
European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers (1977)
European Convention on the Service Abroad of documents relating to Administrative Matters (1977)
European Convention on the obtaining abroad of Information and Evidence in Administrative Matters (1978)
European Convention on The Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Firearms by Individuals (1978)
European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter (1979)
European Outline Convention on Transfrontier co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (1980)
European Convention on Offences Relating to Cultural Property (1985)
European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985)
European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (1987)
Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (1988)
Arrangement for the Application of the European Agreement of 17 October 1980 concerning the Provision of Medical Care to Persons During Temporary Residence (1988)
European Convention on Certain International Aspects of Bankruptcy (1990)
European Convention on the General Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1990)
European Code of Social Security (Revised) (1990)
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 1992
Convention on Civil Liability for Damage from Activities Dangerous to the Environment (1993)

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on negotiations with North Korea for the access of nuclear inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to its nuclear facilities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: North Korea's refusal to comply fully with its IAEA safeguards agreement is a cause for great concern. We hope that the problem can be resolved through dialogue between North Korea, the United States, South Korea and the IAEA. Any solution must reaffirm the IAEA's right to inspect all North Korean nuclear sites to the agency's satisfaction.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he now plans to follow up his signature of the chemical weapons convention in Paris in 1993; what legislation is necessary to implement the United Kingdom's commitments under the convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We intend to ratify the chemical weapons convention—CWC—as soon as the necessary implementing legislation is in place. The legislation's main elements will be rights of entry and immunity for Organisation in the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons inspectors, requirements for industry declarations and creation of offences in respect of non-compliance with the CWC. We will introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time becomes available.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Goodlad: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Allowances

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the numbers of additional income tax payers in 1994-95 compared to 1992-93 as a result of freezing the rate of personal allowance in two years; and how much extra income tax will be raised as a result.

Mr. Dorrell: Compared with indexing the 1992-93 personal allowance to 1994-95 levels by reference to the statutory formula, the revenue yield from the measures in the last two Budgets is £1·1 billion and about 400,000 more people will pay tax.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss to the Treasury of tax revenue as a result of the exemption from inheritance tax of gifts to political parties for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that this information is not available.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of insider dealing were reported by the authorities in each year since 1980.

Mr. Nelson: Alleged cases of insider dealing are generally detected by the stock exchange through its

monitoring of share dealing. Following a preliminary investigation the stock exchange informs the Department of Trade and Industry when it believes there is a prima facie case. That Department has powers to investigate and to bring prosecutions where appropriate. The cases referred to the DTI in this way since 1980 are set out in the table.

Alleged cases of insider dealing reported to the DTI by the stock exchange between 1980 and 1993-94[1]

	Cases reported
1980	7
1981	18
1982	23
1983	17
1984	12
1985	6
1986-87	13
1987-88	29
1988-89	33
1989-90	21
1990-91	8
1991-92	11
1992-93	5
1993-94	7

[1]The data for the period 1980-85 relate to calendar years whereas thereafter the figures are on a financial year basis. The information for 1993-94 relates to cases which were reported to the DTI between April and the end of December 1993. A case may have led to more than one person being prosecuted.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of insider dealing have been prosecuted in each year since 1980; and how many prosecutions resulted in *(a)* conviction and *(b)* acquittal.

Mr. Nelson: The information is given in the table.

Insider dealing prosecutions between 1980-81 and 1993-94[1]

Year	*Cases*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*	*Acquittals*
1980-81	0	0	0	0
1981-82	1	1	1	0
1982-83	2	3	3	0
1983-84	0	0	0	0
1984-85	2	4	0	4
1985-86	0	0	0	0
1986-87	1	1	1	0
1987-88	3	3	3	0
1988-89	1	1	0	1
1989-90[2]	10	14	4	9
1990-91	1	2	2	0
1991-92	5	8	3	5
1992-93	3	7	5	2
1993-94[3]	3	6	0	5
Total	32	50	22	26

[1] The figures reflect the number of individual defendants who were prosecuted in the thirty-two insider dealing cases which have been concluded since 1980. They do not include a case which is still in progress.
[2] The figures for 1989-90 include one prosecution which was subsequently withdrawn.
[3] The figures for 1993-94 include one case which was not proven.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Nelson: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate can be made of the number of people who would have an income tax liability from April 1995 whose sole income was incapacity benefit; and what would be the yield in a full year of taxing incapacity benefit.

Mr. Dorrell: Only a very small number of people whose sole income was incapacity benefit would have any income tax liability in 1995-96 on the basis of the announced rules for the taxation of incapacity benefit for 1995-96 and the changes to income tax allowances announced for that year, assuming indexation of benefits and the personal allowance. The revenue yield in respect of these people would be negligible.

Charities (VAT)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether previous VAT zero-rated non-domestic charitable institutions will be liable for VAT from 1 April.

Sir John Cope: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the existing VAT zero rate for fuel and power used by a charity otherwise than in the course or furtherance of a business. I confirm that the relief will not apply from 1 April 1994.

Household Debt

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of debt per household for every £100 of disposable income in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the level of household debt outstanding are not available. The level of debt of the personal sector, which includes apart from households, all unincorporated private businesses, sole traders, partnerships, non-profit making bodies serving persons and private trusts, per £100 of disposable income in 1992 was £112. Figures for 1993 have not yet been published but the latest Treasury estimate is shown in chart 3.9 of the Red Book.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury has no IT service contracts that involve the use of personal data held by the Department.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will detail the statistical sources for the information given by the Paymaster General in answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) of 24 November, *Official Report,* columns *66-70.*

Sir John Cope: The sources of this information were:

1. The document produced by the Commission of the European Communities entitled "The Evolution of VAT Rates applicable in the Member States of the Community" and numbered XXI/158/93-EN, which was deposited in the House of Commons Library in reply to a Parliamentary Question tabled by the hon. Member for Newham South, of 18 October 1993, Official Report, columns 7-8;
2. VAT in Europe;
3. International VAT Monitor; and
4. Tax News Service.

Items 2 to 4 are produced by the International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation.

American Depositary Receipts

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total revenue gathered from stamp duty reserve tax on American depositary receipts issued on behalf of United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Nelson: The 1·5 per cent. rate of stamp duty and stamp duty reserve tax applies to transfers of shares either into a depositary receipt scheme or into a clearance service system. The total yield from the 1·5 per cent. rate is estimated at around £20 million. Precise information is not available about the proportion attributable to transfers into American depositary receipt schemes, as distinct from other depositary receipt schemes or clearance services.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Racially Motivated Crimes

32. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will discuss with the Director of Public Prosecutions the procedure for the Crown Prosecution Service drawing to the attention of the courts the fact that a crime appears to be racially motivated; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: It is the duty of all those who prosecute on behalf of the Crown to put all the relevant facts before the court.

Serious Fraud Office

33. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the future of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Solicitor-General: The review of the handling of serious fraud by the Serious Fraud Office and the fraud divisions of the Crown Prosecution Service, which the Attorney-General announced last October in the light of the recommendations of the royal commission, is expected to report by the end of February.

34. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent consideration has been given by the Serious Fraud Office regarding City crime and sentencing.

The Solicitor-General: Sentencing in all cases is a matter for the independent judiciary.

Prosecutions (Public Interest)

35. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Attorney-General what criteria are used by the Director of Public Prosecutions in assessing the public interest when deciding whether to proceed with a prosecution.

The Solicitor-General: The general principles used when assessing the public interest are set out in the "Code for Crown Prosecutors" which is published and laid before Parliament each year in the annual report of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Extradition (Cyprus)

36. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next plans to visit Cyprus to discuss extradition.

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General has no such plans.

Fiats for Cases to Proceed

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Attorney-General in how many instances in each of the last five years he has *(a)* granted his fiat and *(b)* refused his fiat for a case to proceed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The information sought by my hon. Friend is recorded only on the files relating to individual defendants in relation to a wide variety of different offences and is not collected or collated centrally. The information requested could therefore be collected only at disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

Corby District Council

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since 1980-81 the money paid to Corby district council under the derelict land scheme.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available in the precise form requested. However, since 1980-81, Corby district council has incurred the following expenditure on land reclamation which has been eligible for derelict land grant. Grant is payable on this expenditure at a rate of 100 per cent.

Corby District Council Derelict Land Grant Expenditure

Year	*Expenditure* £
1980-81	505,000
1981-82	809,000
1982-83	3,112,640
1983-84	3,289,793
1984-85	3,512,493
1985-86	3,652,513
1986-87	4,000,000
1987-88	3,941,974
1988-89	3,035,917
1989-90	2,410,386
1990-91	1,374,391
1991-92	1,914,953
1992-93	3,635,003
[1]1993-94	1,305,000
Total	36,499,063

[1]forecast

A further £27,000 of derelict land grant has been paid towards reclamation schemes carried out by non-local authority applicants in the Corby district.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been made available to the district and borough of Corby under the estate action scheme in each year since 1985.

Sir George Young: The following amounts of estate action resources have been made available to Corby since 1985:

	£ million
1985-86 to 1990-91	Nil
1991-92	1·4
1992-93	1·85
1993-94	2·9
1994-95[1]	3·0
1995-96[1]	3·0
1996-97[1]	0·6

[1] Provisional.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to take to encourage local authorities to become debt free.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities which have repaid all their long-term debts have recently been given general freedom to spend amounts already set aside for debt redemption. They are also generally relieved of the obligation to make further provision for debt redemption, either from capital receipts or revenue.

Local Authorities (Northamptonshire)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total of usable receipts held by each local authority in Northamptonshire at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

Authority	*Usable receipts at 1 April 1993 £'000*
Northamptonshire County Council	220
Corby	749
Daventry	2,884
East Northamptonshire	2,628
Kettering	1,481
Northampton	3,634
South Northamptonshire	Nil
Wellingborough	11,840

Source: Local authority returns.

Homelessness

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the representations he has received from the British Medical Association about the accuracy of his Department's estimates of the extent of homelessness in London in the light of their research findings using capture-recapture analysis techniques.

Sir George Young: This Department has received no such representations from the British Medical Association. The methodology used by the voluntary sector to count the number of people sleeping rough in central London, which has informed the rough sleepers initiative, was developed independently to provide a series of accurate, directly comparable counts. This methodology is now being adapted to undertake local counts in some other towns and cities.

Private Rented Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce incentives to strengthen and increase the private rented sector; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We are very keen to expand the private rented sector. The package of deregulation measures in the Housing Act 1988, which introduced assured and assured shorthold tenancies at market rents for most new lettings, was designed to encourage landlords to bring their property on to the market. In addition, we have already launched a number of specific initiatives to encourage private landlords to let their property. We are keen to explore all avenues to encourage further growth in the sector.

Press Office

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed in his Department's press/communications office including clerical and administrative staff in each year since 1979.

Mr. Gummer: There are currently 46 staff employed by the Department of the Environment's information directorate.

Figures for prior years on the composition of the information directorate are published each year within the management information system for Ministers dating back to 1979 which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his Department's press releases in date order since 1 June 1992.

Mr. Gummer: Monthly summaries of this Department's press releases for the period 1 June 1992 to 31 December 1993 have been placed in the Library.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each service that has been market-tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Gummer: The Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the Efficiency Unit in the Cabinet Office. Some points of detail have yet to be finalised, but, once this has been completed, much of the information requested in

the question will be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Rent Assessment Committees

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his review of the role of the rent assessment committees.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *507*.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make public the conclusions of his review of the homeless persons legislation.

Sir George Young: I intend to publish before the end of this month a consultation paper about reforming the homelessness legislation and improving access to local authority and housing association tenancies. I look forward to a constructive debate about the Government's proposals for reform.

Superstores

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will ensure that superstores *(a)* have more than one entrance and exit and *(b)* are sited at sufficient distance from petrol stations such that it would be impossible for a fire in a superstore to spread to a petrol station.

Mr. Baldry: Whether a single entrance and exit is adequate for escape in fire is dependent on the size of the building and the distances that persons would need to travel. A superstore would almost certainly be large enough for more than one escape route to have to be provided to satisfy the Building Regulations.

If the petrol station was outside the boundary of the superstore site compliance with the Building Regulations would ensure that the superstore was located at a safe distance from the boundary if a fire were to take place therein. If the petrol station was within the confines of the superstore site boundary guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive would need to be followed with regard to its location. If this guidance were not followed, a petroleum licence would not be issued. The relative locations of different land uses may also be material considerations to be taken into account in deciding whether to grant planning permission, whether in response to an application or by the Secretary of State on appeal.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* In the financial year 1991-92, my Department spent £815,118·06 on advertising; in the financial year 1992-93, it spent £6,929,637·89 on advertising. However, before the financial year 1991-92, figures are not available for advertising alone. In addition, information relating to the financial years before 1979-80 and 1984-85 cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. The total publicity expenditure for each financial year from 1985-86 to 1992-93 was:

	£ million
1985-86	3·5
1986-87	4·2
1987-88	4·8
1988-89	6·9
1989-90	[1]31·5
1990-91	7·5
1991-92	2·7
1992-93	[2]13·4

[1] The figure for 1989-90 includes publicity costs associated with water privatisation and community charge.
[2] The figure for 1992-93 includes publicity costs associated with the CO_2 reduction campaign "Helping the Earth" and the introduction of the council tax.

For the financial years 1985-86 to 1990-91 inclusive, the figures also include associated staff costs for my Department, including agencies. Before 1991-92, expenditure was not broken down between different publicity media.

The cost of publicity advertising per month for the past 12 months has been:

	£
December 1992	nil
January 1993	3,311·74
February 1993	3,120,031·18
March 1993	3,236,235·92
April 1993	475,506·00
May 1993	1,394·00
June 1993	1,128·00
July 1993	780,047·00
August 1993	nil
September 1993	257·33
October 1993	3,493,327·30
November 1993	347,246·71

These costs include creative and production charges, value added tax, and other levies as paid.

The costs given for the months above relate to the month in which the invoice was processed for payment; in some cases the advertising may have appeared some time previously.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local education authorities in England who in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94 have spent or are expected to spend less than their allocated standard spending assessment for education in each of those years, together with the respective figures for each year, the totals of all such spending assessments for that authority, the standard spending assessment figure in respect of interest on capital expenditure approved by Her Majesty's Government, the amount paid or expected to be paid and the contribution to any consequential deficit that must be made, pro rata, by transfer from the respective standard assessments for educational expenditure made by Her Majesty's Government for the relevant years.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. It is for each local authority to determine its spending priorities between services in the light of local circumstances.

Negative Equity

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *7–8*, if he will disaggregate the table on households with negative equity into the normal planning regions.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* No. The sample sizes from which changes in house prices and distributions of mortgage advance to price ratios are estimated are not large enough to produce sufficiently reliable figures for all regions.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the site or sites of proposed enterprise zones in north Nottinghamshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction intends to announce very shortly proposals for four sites in the east midlands to be designated, subject to the agreement of the European Commission, as enterprise zones.

Council Tax

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was paid to whom in each district council area in North Yorkshire for carrying out council tax valuations; and what was the cost of managing and administering the valuation process.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

It is not possible to disclose payments to individual contractors, on the grounds of commercial confidence. The cost of managing and administering the valuation process in North Yorkshire was £98,517.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against council tax valuations in each district council area in North Yorkshire have been settled in the last six months; and what was the average cost of settling each appeal.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Receipts and settlements of appeals against council tax for each billing authority in North Yorkshire are as follows:

Billing authority	*Appeals settled*
Craven	374
Hambleton	496
Harrogate	872
Richmondshire	210
Ryedale	509
Scarborough	488
Selby	498
York	484

The estimated average cost of processing a council tax appeal in the current financial year in England is £115. This estimate includes Valuation Office agency and valuation tribunal costs.

PRIME MINISTER

Severance Payment

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what ministerial severance payment has been offered to the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and what amount is to be paid to the hon. Member.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is entitled to a severance payment under the provisions of the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.

Iraq and Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister whether the policy on Iraq and Iran set out by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985, *Official Report,* column 450, remains that of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: No. An embargo on trade with Iraq was imposed by the Iraq and Kuwait (United Nations Sanctions) Order 1990 (SI 90/1651). This put into effect the sanctions on Iraq imposed by United Nations resolution 661. Current policy on exports to Iran was set out by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 1 March 1993, *Official Report,* column *8.*

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister when he or his predecessor last met his counterpart or the President of Iraq; and what was the purpose of the meeting.

The Prime Minister: I have not met my Iraqi counterpart or the President of Iraq; neither did my predecessor.

Question Time

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions in total *(a)* he, *(b)* Lady Thatcher or *(c)* Lord Callaghan was absent from the House at Prime Minister's Question Time while serving as Prime Minister; and what that figure represents in each case and as a percentage of the total number of Prime Minister's Question Times for which he or she was responsible.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter of public record.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what records held at 10 Downing street prior to December 1990 have been passed to the Scott inquiry on request.

The Prime Minister: My office has passed to the Scott inquiry those records held at 10 Downing street prior to December 1990 which fall within the terms of the inquiry's requests.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list each occasion since the 1992 Edinburgh European Council that cameras have been admitted to meetings of European Community Council of Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The following Council sessions —all in 1993—have been televised:
Foreign Affairs, 1 February: Danish Presidency work programme, and opening EFTAn accession negotiations;
Agriculture, 9 February: agriculture price fixing proposals;
ECOFIN, 15 February: Danish Presidency work programme;
Foreign Affairs, 5 April: opening of accession negotiations with Norway;
Internal Market, 5 April: Sutherland report;
Social affairs, 6 April: employment;
Industry, 3 May: industrial competitiveness and environmental protection;
Development, 25 May: development co-operation policy to 2000 (Horizon 2000);
Foreign Affairs, 19 July: Belgian Presidency work programme;
ECOFIN, 13 November: Belgian Presidency work programme;
Internal Market, 11 November: strengthening the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises, and skilled workers and development of employment in the Community;
Environment 3 December: Green Paper on civil liability.

Mr. Gerry Adams

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister (1) on what date or dates he has received a letter or letters from Mr. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, seeking clarification of the joint declaration; if he will place a copy of the letter or letters in the Library; when he intends to reply to Mr. Adams; and if he will place a copy of his letter or letters to Mr. Adams in the Library;

(2) if he will give the precise terms of clarification of the joint declaration sought by Mr. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, in communications with him since the joint declaration was published; what were the precise terms of his responses to such communications; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I received an unsigned letter on Mr. Adams's headed notepaper, dated 7 January 1994, last week. It is being considered and no response has yet been made.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of the public appointments that he is able to make, excluding Cabinet and ministerial appointments and those covered by "Questions of Procedure for Ministers"; and which appointments he has made since 1991.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* As Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury I am able to appoint to the following public bodies. There is no single central record for all these appointments, but, to the best of my knowledge, the appointments listed in the table have been made over the last three years.

Museums and Galleries Commission
15 Commissioners of which 6 have been appointed from 1991

British Museum
15 Trustees of which 5 have been appointed from 1991

Natural History Museum
8 Trustees of which 3 have been appointed from 1991

National Gallery
13 Trustees of which 6 have been appointed from 1991

Tate Gallery
11 Trustees of which 5 have been appointed from 1991

National Maritime Museum
Normally 12 Trustees of which 5 have been appointed from 1991

National Portrait Gallery
Normally 15 Trustees of which 5 have been appointed from 1991

Victoria and Albert Museum
Not less than 12 and not more than 20 Trustees of which 3 have been appointed from 1991

Science Museum
Not less than 13 and not more than 20 Trustees of which 4 have been appointed from 1991

Museum of London
9 Governors of whom 4 have been appointed from 1991

Wallace Collection
7 Trustees, none of whom has been appointed from 1991

National Heritage Memorial Fund
11 Trustees of whom 7 have been appointed from 1991

Kennedy Memorial Trust
6 Trustees, none of whom has been appointed from 1991

Security Commission
7 members have been appointed from 1991

Advisory Committee on Business Appointments
None has been appointed from 1991

Police Negotiating Board Chairman and Deputy Chairman
None has been appointed from 1991

Police Arbitration Tribunal Members
None has been appointed from 1991

Security Service Tribunal Commissioner
No appointment made from 1991

Interception of Communications Tribunal Commissioner
1 appointment has been made from 1991

Political Honours Scrutiny Committee
2 members have been appointed from 1991

Armed Forces Pay Review Body
6 members have been appointed from 1991

Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body
6 members have been appointed from 1991

Nurses', Midwives' and other NHS Professions' Review Body
2 members have been appointed from 1991

Schoolteachers' Review Body
12 members have been appointed from 1991

Senior Salaries Review Body
2 members have been appointed from 1991

Citizen's Charter Panel of Advisers
9 members have been appointed from 1991

Women's National Commission
1 appointment has been made from 1991

Chequers Trustees
1 Trustee has been appointed from 1991

Dorneywood Trustees
3 Trustees have been appointed from 1991

Chevening Trustees
1 Trustee has been appointed from 1991

As Prime Minister, I am also responsible for advising Her Majesty the Queen on Crown appointments.

Sinn Fein

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the value served by the ban on Sinn Fein voices being heard and of the practice of using an actor to dub the person's voice.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is reviewing the relevant restrictions, in consultation with other Government Departments concerned.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Political Advisers

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether political advisers receive redundancy payment when they resume the same responsibilities *(a)* when the appointing Minister leaves his post and the appointment is renewed by his successor and *(b)* when the same Government are returned after a general election; and since 1986, how many political advisers have resumed their same responsibilities after a change of appointing Minister and after a general election.

Mr. Waldegrave: Although each Minister's appointment of a special adviser is formally a new appointment, no severance payments are made if there is no break in the special adviser's service. Since 1986, special advisers have remained in post after a change of appointing Minister on eight occasions, including, in one case, following the 1992 general election.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. David Davis: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will hold discussions with independent television company representatives on the proposals that the Council of Europe approve a special study of the value of co-production at the regional level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I believe that the hon. Gentleman refers to the resolution, published in March 1993 by the Council of Europe standing conference of local and regional authorities of Europe, on the regional dimension of the European audiovisual area. This resolution proposed a study of regional television co-production. I understand that the project is still in its early stages, and I have not seen any detailed proposals. In these circumstances, a meeting with industry representatives would be premature.

Theatre in Education

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps his Department is taking to maintain and develop the educational and artistic methodology of theatre in education as a vehicle for educating children in social responsiveness and community responsibility.

Mr. Brooke: The methodology of theatre in education raises questions of educational and artistic judgment in which my Department does not become involved. The value, use and development of theatre in education are issues that need to be addressed by those agencies with a direct interest—local authorities and individual schools, and the arts councils and regional arts boards.

Arts Venues

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how the advent of unitary authorities will affect the funding of venues with fewer than 400 seats.

Mr. Brooke: I maintain a close interest in the work of the Local Government Commission, although ministerial responsibility rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The funding of local authority controlled arts venues is a matter for the local authorities concerned.

European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he plans to put forward to enhance European cultural activities during the Greek presidency of the European Union.

Mr. Brooke: It is for the Greek presidency of the European Union to indicate what areas it wishes to give priority to during its presidency. The United Kingdom will participate fully in carrying forward the work of the Culture Council as a whole.

London Orchestras

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent information he has about the Arts Council's policy towards funding the leading London orchestras; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Having undertaken a review of its support for the London orchestras, the Arts Council has decided that, in the immediate future, it will continue to concentrate funding on the London Symphony, Philharmonia and London Philharmonic orchestras. In addition, the Council has welcomed the emerging regional strategy of the Royal Philharmonic orchestra, for which it will also provide financial support.

The Council will be discussing this approach, and its longer-term policies with the Philharmonia and London Philharmonic orchestras, and with the Royal Philharmonic orchestra. In formulating its policies, the Council will take account of the general review of orchestral provision now being undertaken jointly with the BBC, and of the timing of decisions to be taken by the South Bank Board on the future of the orchestral residency at the royal festival hall.

Television (Children)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what evidence he has on the numbers of children watching after the 9 pm watershed.

Mr. Brooke: Statistics on the make-up of television audiences are not collected by my Department, but the table sets out data, compiled by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board and interpreted by the BBC, on television viewing by children during a recent period.

Estimated average numbers of children aged 4 to 15 years, watching TV channels (including satellite) after 9 pm in period 5 to 10 December 1993

	Million
9.00 to 9.30 pm	2·0
9.30 to 10.00 pm	1·8
10.00 to 10.30 pm	1·1
10.30 to 11.00 pm	0·7
11.00 to 11.30 pm	0·5
11.30 to 12.00 pm	0·3

HOME DEPARTMENT

Joy Gardner

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce the outcome of his internal review of deportation policies and procedures following the death of Joy Gardner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 12 January, *Official Report*, columns *212–13*.

Vehicle Theft

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange to publish statistics showing separate figures for reported thefts of *(a)* cars and motorcycles, *(b)* light commercial vehicles and vans and *(c)* heavy commercial vehicles.

Mr. Maclean: The information collected centrally relates to the total number of offences of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle recorded by the police. It is not possible to identify the type of vehicle stolen and there are no plans to collect such information.

Football (Arrests and Ejections)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the Carling premiership and Endsleigh Insurance league clubs together with the total season's attendance at *(a)* matches played in the Carling premiership and Endsleigh Insurance leagues and *(b)* matches played in the FA cup, Coca-Cola cup and Autoglass trophy with the total numbers of (i) arrests, (ii) ejections and (iii) arrests plus ejections as a percentage of the total attendance at each category of such matches, accurate to four decimal places, for the seasons 1991–92 and 1992–93; and if he will make a statement on attendance rates and arrest rates at each category of such matches.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many warrants were issued under section 2 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 in each year since 1986; and how many such warrants are still in operation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of warrants issued by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland and of those remaining in force at the end of each year are published in the annual reports of the commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Road Accidents

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has on the level of involvement in serious road accidents of persons found to be under the influence of alcohol while being below the legal limit of intoxification for driving a car in each year from 1980.

Mr. Maclean: The only available information relates to the years 1987 to 1991 and was published in Home Office statistical bulletins "Breath Test Statistics". This suggests that the following percentages of persons were found to be below the legal limit in England and Wales when required to submit to an evidential test following a positive roadside screening breath test after a road accident:

	Per cent.
1987	15
1988	14
1989	13
1990	14
1991	14

Homosexual Offences

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions and convictions there have been involving homosexual offences committed by consenting persons in private over the past five years where any person involved was aged between 16 and 21 years of age.

Mr. Maclean: The table gives information on consensual acts of buggery or attempted buggery of a male of, or over 21, with another male under the age of 21, with consent—Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 12 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 3(1).

Number of persons prosecuted and convicted for consensual sexual offences[1], 1988-92

England and Wales		*Number of persons*
Year	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
1988	19	24
1989	8	17
1990	10	9
1991	19	10
1992	14	12

[1]Buggery or attempted buggery of a male of, or over 21 with another male under the age of 21 with consent.

Game Shooters

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to ensure that all game bird shooters have a licence to shoot;

(2) how many prosecutions of game bird shooters have taken place under the Game Licence Act 1860 in each of the last five years; and what plans he has to more rigorously enforce the Act;

(3) how many game licences have been issued in each of the last five years; and what proportion this represents of the number of game bird shooters.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

Game Licences issued, 1988-89 to 1992-93

	Number
1988-89	40,600
1989-90	43,600
1990-91	43,300
1991-92	46,700
1992-93	43,900

There is no information currently available on the extent of licence evasion.

Defendants proceeded against in magistrates' courts for offences under the Game Licence Act 1860, 1988-92

England and Wales	Number
1988	61
1989	76
1990	86
1991	76
1992	70

Enforcement of the law is a matter for the police.

We are currently consulting interested groups to see how far the game licences continue to meet their original objectives of combatting poaching and enforcing the statutory close seasons, or whether there may be better means of achieving the same object.

Murder

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been murdered or are suspected to have been murdered by members of their immediate families or by those with whom they have been placed in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: The table shows the number of offences currently recorded as homicide in England and Wales where the victims were persons under the age of 16 years and the suspect was the parent, other relative or a child minder or nurse:

Year	Number
1983	57
1984	62
1985	79
1986	37
1987	58
1988	80
1989	47
1990	51
1991	76
1992	59

Children at Risk

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that local police officers are informed of the names and addresses of all children recorded as being at risk; and if he will advise all police forces and local authority social services departments that it is essential for relevant information to be passed both organisations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Detailed guidance on liaison arrangements between the police, social services departments, and other agencies concerned with child protection is contained in "Working Together: A guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from abuse" which was published by the Government in October 1991. Copies were distributed to all police forces. This document emphasises the importance of sharing information between agencies and the requirements of confidentiality. The detailed arrangements are a matter for local operational decision.

Mr. Stefan Kiszko

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Lancashire police commenced their investigation into the conviction of Stefan Kiszko; when he expects it to be complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The investigation started on 10 May 1991. A report was submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service on 3 June 1993, and is now under consideration.

Organised Crime

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an inquiry into organised crime and protection racketeering in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have no plans to do so. However, the hon. Member may be aware of an inquiry into organised crime currently being undertaken by the Home Affairs Committee to examine the threat from organised crime and to consider the most effective ways of responding to that threat.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has been given by the chief constable of Northumbria regarding the prevalence of protection rackets and organised crime in his region.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The chief constable is aware of media reports about organised crime in his force area. He acknowledges that protection rackets do exist in some parts of Tyne and Wear. Concerted efforts are being made by Northumbria police to tackle this type of crime. These are operational matters for which the chief constable is responsible.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to deal with protection rackets in the leisure industry in major cities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The investigation of alleged criminal offences is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police.

Mr. Tony Bland

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make available in the Library the post-mortem report and any specialised pathology reports relating to the case of the late Mr. Tony Bland;

(2) whether it is his usual policy to publish post-mortem and pathology reports relating to inquests which are held; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the normal period which elapses between the death of a patient in accidental or unnatural circumstances and the holding of an inquest into that death.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Coroners always endeavour to open inquests into deaths reported to them as soon as is reasonably possible.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long elapsed between the death of Mr. Tony Bland and the completion of the inquest into his death; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the West Yorkshire (West) coroner that Mr. Bland died on 3 March 1993. The inquest into his death was opened the following day and adjourned to await the outcome of relevant legal proceedings. The inquest was resumed on 21 December 1993 and concluded on the same day. Coroners are independent judicial officers and Ministers have no authority to intervene in or comment on the way in which a coroner carries out his duties in any individual case.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his Departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Howard: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

Police Authorities

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to select the five members of each police authority whom he will be required to appoint under the provisions of the Police and Magistrates Court Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Members of the public will be able to put themselves forward for appointment as independent members of a police authority. To assist people to decide whether they have the qualities to undertake the duties of a police authority member, I am publishing today a job description and personal profile against which candidates' suitability for appointment will be considered.

Job Description

The main tasks of a police authority will be:

To establish the local priorities for policing in consultation with the Chief Constable.

To ensure that there are effective arrangements for consulting local communities about policing and for reflecting those views in local policing priorities.

To set the total budget for policing for the year.

To approve and publish a costed plan for policing. The police authority will need to ensure that the plan is designed to deliver both the Government's key objectives and those which are set locally.

To monitor the financial and other performance of the police force during the year in terms of key and local objectives and targets.

To maintain a dialogue with the Home Office about the achievement of key and local objectives for policing.

To publish annual performance results in a standard form to allow comparison of performance against other forces.

To participate in the selection of senior police officers.

To participate in the selection of senior civilian staff, both for the force and the authority itself.

Members of a police authority will be expected to:

Act on behalf of local people as the "customer" of the service which the police force provides.

Consult the public about the work of the police force.

Help to build a partnership between the police and the local community.

In achieving these aims, members of the authority will be expected to:

Attend all meetings of the police authority.

Attend meetings of any sub-committees of the authority as appropriate.

Prepare for these meetings by reading papers, reports and background information in advance and by keeping abreast of developments both locally and nationally in the policing sphere.

Represent the policy authority in discussions with:

- other police authorities
- staff associations
- local government
- central government
- any other groups with an interest in policing matters.

Attend local police consultative groups as appropriate.

Consult with representatives of the local community about issues relating to policing.

It is envisaged that the above duties will require a minimum commitment of 18 days a year. Most commitments will be on weekdays, on some occasions during the evenings.

There is a statutory obligation on police authority members to set a lawful budget each year. Failure to do so may lead to a member being surcharged if auditors consider that the authority suffered a financial loss as a consequence.

Appointments will be made for a period not exceeding four years.

Police Authority Members are not paid but are entitled to receive an allowance and expenses relating to the work they undertake on the Authority's business.

Personal Profile

Potential candidates should be at least 21 years old, be under 70 years of age at the expiration of their term of appointment and be of good character. They should also meet the following criteria:

They should live or work in the area for which the authority is responsible.

They should possess good communication skills.

They should have good financial skills.

They should be able to demonstrate the ability to challenge accepted views in a constructive way.

They should have an understanding of the needs of the community with regard to policing and of the pressures and challenges which face the police themselves.

They should have the skills and experience which would broaden the expertise available to the authority.

Police Authorities should include members from a wide range of backgrounds and experience and should reflect the composition of the society they serve.

All applications received will be considered in the first instance by one of six regional short-listing panels. Each regional panel will consist of a professional recruitment consultant and two people independent of Government.

I shall select those I wish to appoint as members of police authorities from the short-list for each authority submitted by the regional panels.

The involvement of people independent of Government in the short-listing procedure, and the publication of the selection criteria for these appointments emphasise the Government's aim that the five independent members of each police authority should be truly independent, and bring to their authorities a broader range of skills and experience.

We are consulting the Association of Lord-Lieutenants about their possible involvement in the short-listing procedure.

Juveniles (Secure Accommodation)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend the powers of the courts to direct that juveniles who are remanded to local authority accommodation should be held in secure conditions.

Mr. Howard: I intend shortly to introduce an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill 1993, which would allow the courts to exercise such a power in relation to all juveniles who are at least 12 but not more than 16 years old, in accordance with the existing statutory criteria for its use in relation to 15 and 16-year-olds.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Sustainable Energy Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the Association of County Councils to discuss its recent paper on a sustainable energy policy, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Eggar: The association will discuss its paper with my officials in February.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he had with the Secretary of State for Defence and the Lord Chancellor, or their deputies or officials of their Departments, in regard to the withholding of departmental records inherited from the former Ministry of Power and Ministry of Fuel and Power, on Anglo-American arrangements for the import and export of nuclear materials to and from the United States, under the provisions of section 3(4) of the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, in preparation for the most recent release of official papers from the Public Records Office.

Mr. Eggar: The decision to approve the retention of records or to prescribe a closure period of longer than 30 years, in accordance with the criteria established under the Public Records Acts, is made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor on the advice of the Advisory Council on Public Records and of his officials in the Public Record Office. Applications are made by the relevant departmental officials in consultation with colleagues in other Departments as appropriate.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with his counterparts on the EC Council of Ministers in regard to communicating to the American nuclear industrial trade organisations the European Community's policy on obtaining a one-time waiver comprising prior consent for a programme of approval for reprocessing US nuclear fuel in European reprocessing plants after 1995.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Corby Development Area

Mr. William Powell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been paid by his Department under the Industry Act 1972 and subsequent related legislation in each year to companies in the Corby development area.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details of payments to companies in the Corby travel-to-work area under the original and revised regional development grants scheme; regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants, are as follows:

	£ million
1980-81	0·3
1981-82	3·4
1982-83	9·3
1983-84	12·6
1984-85	7·2
1985-86	7·2
1986-87	9·9
1987-88	8·0
1988-89	8·5
1989-90	8·9
1990-91	4·9
1991-92	1·9
1992-93	1·0
1993-94	0·7

Aggregate information about payments to companies under other sections of the Industry Act 1972 and its successors is not available at a sub-regional level.

Indonesia

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what export licences were granted in 1993 for arms or arms-related equipment to Indonesia.

Mr. Needham: In 1993, 51 licences were issued for goods listed in schedule 1 part III group 1 of the Export of Goods Control Order 1992.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of imports and exports with Indonesia in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table:

United Kingdom trade with Indonesia

Year	*United Kingdom imports £ millions*	*United Kingdom exports £ millions*
1983	169·4	193·6
1984	181·5	186·7
1985	156·5	175·3

Year	United Kingdom imports £ millions	United Kingdom exports £ millions
1986	141·2	196·5
1987	144·8	236·0
1988	233·7	203·3
1989	273·1	183·9
1990	327·9	198·0
1991	415·2	198·0
1992	536·0	312·8

Source: Business Monitor MA20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Jetstream

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the outcome of his meeting, and the meetings between officers of his Department, with the management of Jetstream; what representations he is making to the European Commission as a result of these meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The managing director of Jetstream has had meetings with myself and my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. As a result, discussions are taking place on whether DTI can further help promote Jetstream's export campaigns, while the European Commission has been asked to look at possible examples of unfair competition.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Eggar: The effect on my Department's budget of the abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate is likely to be more than offset by the reduction in employers' national insurance contributions.

Departmental Organisation

Mr. Burns: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to consolidate the organisation of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I have today announced further changes to consolidate the DTI's organisation along the lines initiated in July 1992, to take effect on 1 March 1994. The changes mark another step in restructuring the Department to ensure that it is best placed to fulfil my principal objective of helping United Kingdom business to win in world markets.

The principal changes are:

The main division sponsoring industrial sectors will be grouped under one Deputy Secretary.

In recognition of the vital importance of innovation and the policies in the recent White Paper on science, engineering and technology, DTI's work on technology development will be integrated more closely with its promotion of industrial competitiveness; its work on technology transfer and the spreading of management best practice will be brought together with the work to assist small and medium-sized enterprises and develop the business link network.

The divisions dealing with export promotion will be grouped under the director general, export promotion.

The Invest in Britain Bureau's successful efforts are to be reinforced by establishing it as a separate division of the DTI under a new chief executive.

The Offshore Supplies Office will become the new Oil and Gas Projects and Supplies Office. It will have a wider remit covering oil and gas market opportunities at home and abroad both upstream and downstream including petrochemicals. It will continue its existing work to ensure that United Kingdom suppliers take full advantage of North sea market opportunities, working closely with the DTI's energy divisions, under the Minister for Energy. It will, in addition, have a new task of exploiting opportunities for major overseas projects as well as other export opportunities working as part of the DTI's export promotion effort, under the Minister for Trade.

Science and Technology Adviser

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to maintain a post of chief adviser on science and technology; and to which official he intends the Innovation Unit to report.

Mr. Heseltine *[pursuant to the reply, 14 December, c. 612]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). Following the reorganisation of the work of the Department on innovation, I shall not be appointing a successor to Dr. Robinson when he returns to the private sector in March. Within the new structure, the innovation unit will report direct to the head of the industry command.

Local Authority Enforcement Functions

Mr. Burns: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for a review of overlapping local authority enforcement functions; and what the terms of reference for such a review will be.

Mr. Heseltine: In response to concerns of business, and following the announcement after the Prime Minister's last progress meeting on deregulation, that ways of eliminating duplication between enforcement agencies should be reviewed, the Government have decided that there should be a review of the enforcement functions of local authorities. This review has started today with the following terms of reference:

To investigate the organisational arrangements for the enforcement functions of local authorities, except insofar as they relate to fire safety, and to report on the scope for minimising business compliance costs and enforcement costs, as well as reducing inconsistencies in enforcement by removing any duplication and improving co-ordination within and between enforcement functions. The study should:

(a) review experience of co-ordination of enforcement, particularly within existing unitary authorities and also within and between other authorities;

(b) assess the scope for wider-coordination of regulatory functions by all authorities; and

(c) make recommendations on the means available to central and local government to promote good practice.

The scrutiny will report to Ministers within the 90 working days which are allowed under efficiency scrutiny guidelines.

The Secretary of State for the Environment and I will be the supervising Ministers for the scrutiny. The scrutiny team will be advised by a steering group which will include officials from interested Government Departments together with representatives of the local authority associations.

Fire Safety

Mr. Burns: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for a review of the enforcement agencies for fire safety matters; and what the terms of reference for such a review will be.

Mr. Heseltine: Following the announcement after the Prime Minister's last progress meeting on deregulation, that ways of eliminating duplication between enforcement agencies should be reviewed, and in response to concerns of business such as those of the deregulation task force for the construction industry, the Government have decided that there should be a review of those enforcement agencies responsible for fire safety. This review has started today with the following terms of reference:

Taking account of the review of the operation and effectiveness of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 recently undertaken by the Home Office, to review the operation and effectiveness of all legislation for which Home Office, DOE and HSE have policy responsibility in relation to fire safety; to review the organisation arrangements of all relevant bodies and agencies, including local authorities, responsible for enforcing this legislation; and to make recommendations.

The study should identify any areas of overlap, duplication or lack of clarity between the responsibilities of enforcement bodies, and should recommend ways of dealing with them. It should also address the practicability of bringing all policy responsibility for fire safety together in a single Department.

The scrutiny will report to Ministers within the 90 working days which are allowed under efficiency scrutiny guidelines.

The Home Secretary, Secretary of State for the Environment, Secretary of State for Employment and I will be the supervising Ministers for the scrutiny. The scrutiny team will be advised by a steering group which will include officials from interested Government Departments. The steering group which will be assisted by a contact group representing the interests of business users, constructors, the insurance industry and the various enforcement interests.

British Coal

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conclusions he has reached about arrangements for the future of concessionary fuel entitlements after the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: In October, the Government published a consultation paper on proposals for future concessionary fuel arrangements after privatisation of British Coal. Comments were received from coal industry unions, other organisations and a number of individuals.

Careful consideration has been given to all responses to the consultation paper. In the light of these responses, the Government have decided to pursue the proposals which were set out in the consultation paper.

Responsibility for meeting the entitlements of former British Coal employees and their dependants would be transferred at privatisation to the Secretary of State. The Coal Industry Bill which was introduced into the House on 2 December would provide powers for the Secretary of State to make payments necessary for securing these entitlements. The total liability to be assumed by the tax-payer would be in the region of £1,500 million.

Responsibility for supplying concessionary fuel to employees transferred to successor companies would pass to those companies. The Coal Industry Bill would provide the powers for these transfers by means of restructuring schemes. The schemes would place a contractual obligation on successor companies to honour the concessionary fuel entitlements of persons transferred to their employment.

In order to achieve continuity in the administration of concessionary fuel entitlements, the Government have decided that the National Concessionary Fuel Office—NCFO—part of British Coal's pensions and insurance centre in Sheffield—PIC—should continue to administer such entitlements for at least four years after the main privatisation of British Coal. The PIC would be privatised within a year or so of the main privatisation.

As far as continuing employees are concerned, it would be for successor companies to ensure satisfactory administrative arrangements in respect of concessionary fuel entitlements of British Coal employees who transfer to their employment. If required, the NCFO would be able to provide a concessionary fuel administration service to successor companies.

The Government believe that these proposals meet in full their commitment to safeguard the entitlements of past and present employees of British Coal, and their dependants, to concessionary fuel or cash in lieu after privatisation.

Export Licences

Dr. David Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what information he has on the export of Heckler and Koch machine guns from the United Kingdom to the United Arab Emirates in 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will now publish details of all export licences granted to Royal Ordnance between 1980 and 1993; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has on the export of Heckler and Koch weapons from the United Kingdom to the former Yugoslavia in 1992; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has relating to the exports of Royal Ordnance to *(a)* the United Arab Emirates, *(b)* central America, *(c)* the former Yugoslavia and *(d)* the former East Germany; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information he has relating to the export of ethyl cellulose by Royal Ordnance in 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what is his policy regarding the collection and publication of information on the export of weapons by Heckler and Koch from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* It has been the policy of successive administrations not to disclose details of an individual company's export licence applications, which are submitted to my Department in confidence.

Trade Barriers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy towards negotiating bilateral agreements with *(a)* Russia, *(b)* Hungary and *(c)* the Czech Republic in relation to reducing tariff or other trade barriers on agricultural products and food manufactured products; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The negotiation of trade agreements is undertaken on behalf of the Community by the European Commission, working from mandates approved by the Council of Ministers. Europe agreements have been concluded both with Hungary and the Czech Republic, as well as with Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. These provide access to the Community market at concessionary rates of import charge for a wide range of agricultural and processed agricultural products, as well as favourable access terms for the Community's farm exports to their markets. The United Kingdom strongly supported the negotiation of these agreements which should help the development of more market-oriented economic structures in those countries.

Russia benefits from certain agricultural concessionary arrangements under the Community's generalised scheme of preference. Negotiations are currently under way for a partnership and co-operation agreement with Russia. This agreement does not contain specific trade concessions but does hold out the possibility of a free trade agreement in the future.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid (Kenya)

38. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new British aid projects are now being considered in discussions with the Kenyan Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are discussing new projects in many areas including health and family planning, education, agriculture and wildlife, transport and the police.

Cambodia

41. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions Her Majesty's Government are currently making towards the lifting of mines in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since October 1991, we have provided nearly £500,000 for demining in Cambodia, and we are currently contributing in addition some £135,000.

Brazil (Street Children)

42. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government have given to projects in Brazil concerned with assisting former street children.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1992, we have committed over £400,000 to projects which assist Brazilian street children. This assistance is largely channelled through United Kingdom non-governmental organisations such as Childhope, Womankind and Oxfam.

Nigeria

43. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how aid is being affected by the political situation in Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Existing aid projects continue and we are reviewing the rest of our programme. A £23·3 million grant to the power sector has been cancelled.

Sudan

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the impact of conflict in Sudan on the United Kingdom"s aid programme to that area.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We closed our aid projects in southern Sudan in 1986 due to the conflict. In 1991, the continuing civil war was one factor in the decision to terminate our aid programme completely.

South Africa

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the United Kingdom is doing to help the training of the police and crowd control marshals in South Africa, with particular reference to election monitoring.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following a successful pilot project, we have agreed to help train marshals in crowd control at a cost of £750,000. We also plan to train 6,000 peace monitors who will be deployed during the elections at a cost of some £830,000. In addition we shall contribute to the activities of the new electoral unit to be set up in South Africa by the European Union, and consider any specific requests from the South African Independent Electoral Commission.

World Bank

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the accountability of the World bank and the International Monetary Fund to Parliament; and what plans he has to make changes to improve accountability to national Parliaments.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World bank and the IMF are accountable to their shareholders, including the United Kingdom. The Government are accountable to Parliament for payments made to these institutions. These arrangements work and we therefore have no current plans to change them.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the report, "Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa" published by the operations evaluations department of the World bank on 30 June 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Individual evaluations produced by the operations evaluation department—OED—of the World bank are not published, but summaries of selected reports highlighting the main findings and lessons are released. Publication of the summary of the OED report on adjustment in sub-Saharan Africa is imminent, and a copy will be placed in each Library of the House as soon as it is received.

HEALTH

NHS Employees

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued to health authorities regarding procedures for suspension of NHS employees and the length of time in which formal disciplinary inquiries should be instigated, where such an inquiry is to take place.

Dr. Mawhinney: Disciplinary proceedings for national health service staff employed on national terms and conditions of service are governed by section 40 of the General Whitley Council's handbook, a copy of which is available in the Library. This provides a framework within which employing authorities determine local disciplinary procedures.

Guidance on disciplinary procedures for hospital medical and dental and community medical staff, where questions of professional conduct or professional competence are involved, was issued to employing authorities in departmental circular HC(90)9, copies of which are available in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of all individuals appointed to chair NHS trusts and serve as non-executive directors, listing their occupation and sex.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what capital allocations have been awarded to each NHS trust in the Northern region for 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: Capital allocations to national health service trusts are not yet complete. An announcement about the issue of trust external financing limits, which control trust capital spending, will be made shortly.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish estimates of the amount of money held in trust funds by *(a)* district and *(b)* region.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS hospitals are at present engaged in community activities in order to raise money to purchase a magnetic resonance imaging scanner.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Surgeons' Assistants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on cardiac surgeons' assistants.

Dr. Mawhinney: This interesting development is being evaluated at the Churchill John Radcliffe hospital, Oxford. The Royal College of Surgeons is closely involved in the scheme and it will be discussed with the medical profession in the joint consultants committee shortly.

Optician Registered Premises

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many optician registered premises there were in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of ophthalmic opticians premises[1] for the five most recent years for which figures are available is as follows:

at 31 December

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
England					
Ophthalmic opticians premises[2]	4,970	4,944	4,887	4,944	4,927
Other[3]	—	—	735	734	832
Total	—	—	5,622	5,678	5,759
Wales					
Ophthalmic opticians premises	349	345	330	353	358
Other	—	—	56	51	47
Total	—	—	386	404	405

[1]Between 1986 and 1989, data were not collected on those premises not classified as 'Ophthalmic Opticians' premises. In 1990, information on all premises was collected. As a result, it became apparent that some family health services authorities were wrongly classifying some premises as 'Ophthalmic Opticians'. These figures should therefore be used with care.
[2]Premises where the owner or manager is registered with the General Optical Council as an ophthalmic optician.
[3]Premises where the owner or manager is not registered with the General Optical Council as an ophthalmic optician.

Female Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many female consultants there were in the national health service on 1 January; and what was the Opportunity 2000 target for female consultants in the national health service by 1994.

Mr. Sackville: Most recent figures available are that there were 2,822 female consultants in the national health service as at 30 September 1992. The Opportunity 2000 target is that 20 per cent. of all consultants should be female by 1994.

Dentists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists were salaried in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Number of salaried dentists in England at 30 September

Year	*Number of salaried dentists*
1989	36
1990	33
1991	27
1992	65
1993	93

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of general practitioner fundholders have spent more than their budgets for 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not yet available centrally. The Department is awaiting finally audited figures on fundholder expenditure from some regions.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to be able to publish a regional breakdown of the 1992–93 allocations retained by general practitioner fundholders.

Dr. Mawhinney: These figures are not yet available centrally, as the Department is awaiting finally audited figures from some regions. When these are available, the regional information will be published.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it remains her policy that hospital treatment should be made available equally to the patients of fundholding and non-fundholding general practices; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: All patients are entitled to expect high-quality health care, regardless of whether the treatment is paid for by a fundholding general practitioner, or a district health authority on behalf of the general practitioner.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received from right hon. and hon. Members identifying instances where is it alleged that different priority in the allocation of treatment is given to the patients of fundholding and non-fundholding general practices; and if she will in each case identify the establishment allegedly operating any such two-tier system.

Dr. Mawhinney: According to our records, six parliamentary questions—excluding my hon. Friend's—and 61 letters from hon. Members have been answered in the current financial year.

The establishments named were:
Addenbrookes Hospital (twice), Cambridge
Kidderminster General, Kidderminster
Lister Hospital, Stevenage and Queen Elizabeth II Hospital Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire
Luton and Dunstable Hospital Trust, Luton
Norfolk Acute Hospitals Trust, Norwich
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Headington
Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow, Essex
Royal Surrey Hospital, Guildford
Royal United Hospital Trust, Wiltshire
St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London
St. Peter's Hospital, Chertsey
South Warwickshire General Hospital Trust, Warwick
Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury
Watford General, Watford
Westmorland General Hospital, Kendal and Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle.

Cigarette Advertising

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of the effect of a ban on cigarette promotion on levels of smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health discussion document "Effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption" reviewed the evidence on the effect of tobacco bans in other countries. The report makes no estimate of the effect of an advertising ban in the United Kingdom. Copies of the report, published in October 1992, are available in the Library.

Opticians

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many opticians were registered with family health services authorities in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of ophthalmic opticians and ophthalmic medical practitioners registered in the five most recent years for which figures are available is:

At 31 December

	England[1]			*Wales*[1]		
	Ophthalmic opticians	*Ophthalmic medical practitioners*	*Total*	*Ophthalmic opticians*	*Ophthalmic medical practitioners*	*Total*
1988	5,378	832	6,210	419	47	466
1989	5,514	784	6,298	436	43	479
1990	5,652	779	6,431	461	46	507
1991	5,745	757	6,502	471	50	521
1992	5,863	738	6,601	477	53	530

[1] Practitioners are generally counted only once even if they have a contract with more than one family health services authority. If however, they have contracts in both England and Wales, they will appear in figures for both countries.

Confidentiality

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she first announced a plan to publish a code of confidentiality for the NHS; what progress has been made; and if she will publish the draft NHS Management Executive document on confidentiality, use and disclosure on NHS information.

Mr. Sackville: In 1984 and in 1989, the Government issued consultation documents on a draft code of practice for handling personal health information. After failure to achieve consensus on this code the Government decided instead to prepare guidance on the matter. This was announced in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 13 February 1991 at column *509*. There have been complex legal issues to resolve, but we hope to issue the guidance for consultation before the end of March.

Midwifery

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on the establishment by Leeds university of a chair of midwifery which is open to non-midwives; and if she will make a statement about the funding of this post.

Mr. Sackville: The qualifications required for appointment to the chair of midwifery are a matter for the university funding the chair to determine.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what communication she has had with the director of research and development about advertisement for the chair of midwifery at Leeds university being open to non-midwives; and if she will comment about his views.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to restructure the Medicines Control Agency; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control Agency became an executive agency in July 1991 and a Government trading fund in April 1993. In accordance with the usual arrangements, and as announced in the next steps review 1993, we shall be conducting a review of the performance and operation of the Medicines Control Agency for completion within three and a half years of the agency's launch—that is, by early 1995.

GP Night Fees

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is required on the form on which general practitioners claim night fees.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health has issued a model form for completion by general practitioners claiming night visit fees. However, individual family health services authorities are free to amend this form to ask for additional information if they wish. The model form asks for details of the GP making the visit, including FHSA code number, and his or her relationship to the patient's own GP; the patient's personal details, including national health service number and date of birth; place of attendance; and confirmation that the visit was requested and made between the hours of 10pm and 8am; additionally, if more than one patient was seen on the same visit to one place, details for each patient are requested.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are those people currently appointed to serve on regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Non-executive chairmen and members of regional health authorities are as listed. The appointment of executive members to regional health authorities is a matter for the authorities themselves.

East Anglian Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Sir Colin Walker
Non-executive members
Mrs. J. Hopwood
Professor Sir David Peters
Mr. J. Mowson
Mr. L. Rice
Mrs. S. Sida-Lockett

Mersey Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Sir Donald Wilson
Non-executive members
Professor Alistair Breckenridge
Mrs. R. Hawley
Mrs. J. Timms
Mr. J. Halliday
Mr. B. Jenkins

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Sir William Staveley
Non-executive members
Mr. P. Holwell
Baroness Gardner of Parkes
Major General R. Wall
Dr. Mollie McBride
Mr. B. Davis

Northern Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Mr. P. Carr
Non-executive members
Mr. A. Brown
Professor Michael Rawlins
Mr. R. Spoor
Mrs. J. Flanagan
Mrs. S. Irvine

North Western Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Sir Bruce Martin
Non-executive members
Mr. C. Jeanes
Dr. Arup Banerjee
Professor Stephen Tomlinson
Professor Janet Finch
(Vacancy)

North West Thames Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Sir William Doughty
Non-executive members
Mrs. J. Stern
Mrs. J. Hanham
Mr. J. Taylor
Mr. R. Gain
Professor Stewart Sutherland

Oxford Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Dr. Stuart Burgess
Non-executive members
Professor Sir David Weatherall
Mr. P. Gell
Mr. N. Ward
Mrs. V. Rubinstein
(Vacancy)

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Mr. P. W. Barker
Non-executive members
Mr. G. Neely
Professor Arthur Lucas
Mrs. J. Rodin
Ms S. Reeve
Dame Wendy Mitchell

South Western Regional Health Authority
Chairman
Ms R. Fritchie
Non-executive members
Mr. U. A. Woodburn

Mr. D. Strachan
Sir John Kingman
Dame Margaret Fry
Ms N. Pain

SOUTH WEST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY
Chairman
Professor Marian Hicks
Non-executive members
Ms S. Stapley
Professor John Lacey
Mr. G. Howe
Mrs. M. McNaughton
Ms L. McGoldrick

TRENT REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY
Chairman
Sir Michael Carlisle
Non-executive members
Mr. M. Dessau
Professor Sir Colin Campbell
Mrs. P. Wildgoose
Mr. G. Clemons
(Vacancy)

WESSEX REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY
Chairman
Mr. A. Service
Non-executive members
Sir Julian Oswald
Dr. Dale Ferguson-Hudson
Mr. P. Waring
Ms F. Sheldon
(Vacancy)

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY
Chairman
Mr. B. Baker
Non-executive members
Mrs. E. Metcalfe
Professor Sir Michael Thompson
Mr. B. Sedghi
Ms J. Cravos
Mr. D. Rhead

YORKSHIRE REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY
Chairman
Sir Bryan Askew
Non-executive members
Mr. J. Fergusson
Professor Stanley Brown
Mrs. J. Barden
Mr. M. Morgan
Mrs. C. Trimmer

Nuts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about the number of people suffering from an allergy to nuts and the number of deaths that have resulted in recent years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Flu Vaccine

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the distribution of flu vaccine for 1993-94; and what relative priorities have been given to asthmatics, children, adults and the retired.

Mr. Sackville: For commercial reasons, a fifth of the expected supply of flu vaccine did not become available until 22 December 1993. Helpfully, however, additional production by licensed suppliers resulted in over 5 million doses being made available to the national health service prior to this date compared with 4·7 million in 1992-93. Supplies of influenza vaccine are still available.

As in previous years, the chief medical officer wrote to all general practitioners in 1993-94 giving advice about available vaccines and about people most at risk for whom immunisation is recommended, including asthmatics. Routine immunisation of children and fit and healthy older people is not recommended unless there are particular risk factors. The final decision in individual cases rests with the GP.

Private Health Care

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about the number of people using private health care *(a)* by region and *(b)* by district health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Patient Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish a regional breakdown of written patient complaints for 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information should be available by the end of March 1994.

NHS Estates

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the terms of reference for the review of the role and functions of the NHS estates; and when she expects the review to be completed.

Mr. Sackville: The terms of reference, including the time scale, for the review of the national health service estates agency are as follows.

REVIEW OF THE NHS ESTATES AGENCY

Terms of Reference

I. To carry out a review of the NHS Estates Agency by the end of June 1994, by

1. evaluating the following:
   (a) the appropriateness of the aims and objectives of the agency
   (b) the agency's performance in meeting its targets
   (c) the appropriateness of the delegations available to the agency
   (d) the efficiency and economy of the agency's internal operations, including its personnel, management and financial systems
   (e) the impact of agency status on the agency's activities in relation to the Department of Health and its Ministers
   (f) the impact of agency status on the agency's and Department's relationship with Parliament and the public;

2. reconsidering the prior options for the status of the agency;
3. depending on the outcome of 1 and 2 above, revising the agency's framework document as appropriate.

II. to report to Ministers according to the agreed timetable, consulting the Office of Public Services and Science and the Treasury as necessary.

Runaway Children

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will direct area child protection committees to undertake monitoring of the scale of the problem of young runaways in each area and ensure that proper inter-agency arrangements are in place to respond effectively.

Mr. Bowis: Government guidance on the role and functions of area child protection committees—ACPCs—is given in "Working Together under the Children Act 1989" and we have no plans to issue specific guidance to ACPCs on young runaways. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the report of the Children's Society on young runaways, a copy of which has been sent to her.

Mr. Bowis: The Department has just received a copy of the report of the Children's Society on young runaways and will study it with interest.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon her departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employer's national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's running costs baseline.

Oldchurch Hospital, Romford

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and nature of representations she has received relating to Oldchurch hospital, Romford.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a petition of some 46,000 signatures and some 17,000 pre-printed letters and postcards from members of the public, as well as a number of letters from individuals and hon. Members.

In-vitro Fertilisation

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement indicating her policy on the use of ova from aborted babies to enable babies to be conceived through in vitro fertilisation; and if she will identify precisely those sections of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 which would effectively prevent the adoption of such techniques.

Mr. Sackville: The Government welcome the consultation document on the use of ovarian tissue, including fetal ovarian tissue, in the treatment of infertility issued on 7 January by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. This wide-ranging consultation will give the public and professional interests time to consider all aspects of this complex and sensitive area. We look forward to receiving advice from the authority in due course, when we can consider what action, if any, is required.

Under Section 3 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, it is an offence to create, keep or use an embryo without a licence. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority stated that no licence would be granted where the in vitro fertilisation involved fetal eggs.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the expenditure on gross redundancy payments for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The information is shown in the table.

Revenue expenditure on gross redundancy payments in England

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Regional Health Authorities	948,202	2,720,438	3,236,599
District Health Authorities	10,789,525	25,875,532	34,805,785
NHS Trusts	Not applicable	3,674,860	14,467,515
Totals	11,737,727	32,270,650	52,509,899

Notes:
Number of trusts as at: 1 April 1991— 57
Number of trusts as at: 1 April 1992—156
Number of trusts as at: 1 April 1993—292

The closure of psychiatric hospitals in connection with "Care in the Community" and management restructuring throughout the national health service are the main reasons for the increase in redundancy compensation payments. Section 45 of the General Whitley Council handbook establishes the redundancy compensation arrangements for NHS staff. Redundancy compensation takes the form of a lump sum dependent on the age and reckonable service of the employee at the date he or she ceases to be employed.

Benefits

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual amount of money paid to claimants by way of health benefits; and how much was paid in each area of entitlement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* Holders of low income scheme charge remission certificates are entitled to receive national health services free or at a reduced cost as and when these are needed during the currency of a certificate; they do not receive a specified financial award. Certificate holders may also be entitled to refunds of travelling expenses incurred when attending hospital for national health service treatment and, within strict time limits, to refunds of charges paid before they claimed help from the low income scheme. Information about expenditure on these refunds is not collected centrally.

WALES

Inward Investment

14. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the Welsh share of inward investment to the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93, Wales had a 20 per cent. share of United Kingdom foreign investment projects. The comparable European figure is not available.

Cardiff Wales Airport (Road Links)

15. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to secure the provision of an improved road link between Culverhouse cross and Cardiff Wales airport.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for securing the good communications which are important to the continued success of Cardiff Wales airport rests with South Glamorgan county council. The Department would be prepared to consider a well substantiated case for transport grant support for major improvement to road links to the airport if the county council considered it of sufficient priority.

Hospital Waiting Lists

16. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest information he has concerning the length of hospital waiting lists at *(a)* six months, *(b)* one year and *(c)* over one year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The most recent detailed information on the length of hospital waiting lists in Wales and the increasing numbers of patients being treated is that shown in the Welsh "Hospital Waiting List Bulletin 1993", No. 2, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Economy

17. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement outlining the prospects for the Welsh economy during 1994.

Mr. Redwood: Welsh industry has extremely high productivity. We have seen a long-term trend of falling unemployment with a further fall of 1,800 in Wales last month; low inflation; low interest rates; and competitive exchange rates. All of these factors have given Welsh companies a competitive edge which they are using to the full. Welsh industry is in a strong position to take advantage of improving trading conditions both at home and overseas, which will be improved even further with the accord reached in the Uruguay round.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The seasonally adjusted number of claimant unemployed in Wales was 126,000 in December 1993. The number has fallen by 7,900 since January 1993.

22. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of male and female unemployment in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Redwood: Seasonally adjusted, there were 99,600 males and 26,500 females who were claimant unemployed in Wales in December 1993.

Hill Sheep Farmers

19. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange to meet leaders of farmers' unions in Wales to discuss the acute problems facing hill sheep farmers.

Mr. Redwood: I meet the farming unions several times each year.

NHS Staff

20. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many managerial, nursing and midwife posts there were in the NHS, including trusts, in Wales in each year from 1988 to date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information given as follows relates to staff numbers and not posts.

	Managerial staff[1]	*Nursing and midwifery staff*		
		Other	*Learners*[2]	*Total*
1988	[3]—	24,583	3,336	27,920
1989	187	24,919	3,118	28,037
1990	416	25,018	3,075	28,093
1991	683	25,028	2,934	27,962
1992	848	25,451	1,970	27,421
1993	1,028	25,206	1,033	26,239

Notes:

Figures given are the whole-time equivalent number of staff employed as at 30 September each year.

Includes staff employed by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority and those Family Health Services Authorities using District Health Authority payroll systems.

The use of locally devised payscales from 1991 onwards may affect the comparability of figures as these staff cannot be allocated centrally to a specific staff group and are not, therefore, included above.

[1] General and senior managers. The growth in the number of these staff arises partly from the extension in 1989 of senior manager terms and conditions of service to second and third level managers including some senior nurses and other professional staff.

[2] Since the autumn of 1991 student nurses have been classified as students and are no longer included in the NHS staff figures. Staff included here are students finishing courses begun before this date. There were some 1,800 Project 2000 student nurses at September 1993.

[3] Comparable figures for years before 1989 are not available.

North Wales Main Railway Line

23. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss improvements to the north Wales main railway line.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend last met Sir Bob Reid on 12 October 1992. They discussed a number of issues including the north Wales main line.

Roads

26. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for further road building in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: On 14 December, my right hon. Friend announced that in 1993-94 work will start on the A465 Aberdulais-Glynneath improvement, the A4042 Llantarnam bypass, and the A40 Llandeilo northern bypass. Work has since started on the first two of these

schemes and tenders for the third are being assessed. In 1994-95 starts are planned for the A470 Pentrebach-Cefn Coed improvement, the A5 Glyn Bends improvement and the A40 Whitland bypass.

My right hon. Friend is reviewing the strategic roads needs of Wales with the aim of accelerating the start of the more important schemes in the forward programme. He plans to make an announcement shortly.

Youth Service

27. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of his local government settlement on the level of youth service provision in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The provisional local government revenue settlement for 1994-95 provides for local government spending of £2,704·8 million, an increase of 4·2 per cent. over 1993-94. The settlement is realistic in the present economic climate.

Local authorities are responsible for determining their priorities for expenditure in the light of available resources and local needs, including the youth service.

Health Authorities (Administration Costs)

28. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the administration of the Clwyd health authority and other authorities in Wales cost in the last year and in 1978 adjusted to 1992 prices.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows. The table gives the cost of administration for health authorities in Wales for 1992-93—the last year for which data are available—and for 1978-79 adjusted to 1992-93 prices.

£ thousands

Health authority	*1992-93*	*1978-79*
Clwyd	3,615	4,198
East Dyfed/Pembrokeshire	2,804	4,687
Gwent	3,729	6,312
Gwynedd	2,080	3,337
Mid Glamorgan	2,372	7,321
Powys	2,248	1,870
South Glamorgan	7,101	6,923
West Glamorgan	2,605	4,584

Source: Summarised Accounts of Health Authorities in Wales.

Note: The figure for the cost of administration is taken to be that covering authority administration and purchasing expenses. This represents the total revenue expenditure on the pay and accommodation costs of staff of all disciplines and their support staff employed at headquarters levels together with the costs of the purchaser function. They exclude administrative support in hospital departments and at other local levels which is regarded as operational expenditure.

Council Spending

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the actual council revenue spending for 1993-94, net of community care, and the planned council revenue spending for 1993-94 and 1994-95, net of community care, for each district and county of Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authority budgeted expenditure, including community care, for the current financial year is published on page 43 of "Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics No. 17 1993", copies of which are in the Library of the House. Information on community care budgets is not available separately. Actual figures for 1993-94 and budgeted expenditure for 1994-95 are not yet available.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of reserves was spent by every county and district council in Wales during the last financial year; and if he will give the totals for all counties and all districts, and the combined total for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The use of reserves by local authorities during the last financial year is shown in the table.

Appropriations from/to financial reserves, 1992-93 revised estimates[1]

	£'000
Alyn and Deeside	1,133
Colwyn	193
Delyn	1,216
Glyndwr	378
Rhuddlan	327
Wrexham Maelor	-283
Carmarthen	-50
Ceredigion	892
Dinefwr	-91
Llanelli	415
Preseli Pembrokeshire	-685
South Pembrokeshire	222
Blaenau Gwent	1,672
Islwyn	725
Monmouth	193
Newport	-1,568
Torfaen	-314
Aberconwy	909
Arfon	58
Dwyfor	241
Meirionnydd	990
Ynys Mon	198
Cynon Valley	568
Merthyr Tydfil	224
Ogwr	-3
Rhondda	-1,104
Rhymney Valley	389
Taff Ely	789
Brecknock	-107
Montgomeryshire	1,134
Radnorshire	-176
Cardiff	-1,529
Vale of Glamorgan	477
Port Talbot	143
Lliw Valley	-9
Neath	3,464
Swansea	4,659
Clwyd	-22
Dyfed	1,030
Gwent	819
Gwynedd	1,002
Mid Glamorgan	-5,496
Powys	2,121
South Glamorgan	898
West Glamorgan	-125
Total Districts	15,690
Total Counties	227
Total Wales	15,917

Source: General Fund Revenue Accounts Return (RA94).

[1] Appropriations from financial reserves are shown as positive and appropriations to reserves are shown as (-). Includes reserves under Local Management of Schools and Local Management of Colleges.

Public Appointments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of members of all public bodies to which he made appointments.

Mr. Redwood: The latest list, showing the position as at 1 December 1993, was deposited in the Library of the House on 16 December 1993.

Youthstart

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the effect on Wales of implementing the Youthstart programme, proposed by the European Commission White Paper on growth, competition and employment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Youthstart is a Community youth guarantee scheme which is still being considered. The Government's youth guarantee scheme already ensures that all young people under the age of 18 who are not in a job or further education are given the opportunity of a suitable place on youth training.

Welsh Language Act 1993

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available in the Vote Office and Library Welsh language copies of the Welsh Language Act 1993.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Yes. I have today arranged for copies of the Welsh translation of the Welsh Language Act 1993 to be available in the Vote Office and the Library of the House.

NHS Managers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of general and senior managers in the NHS in each year since 1986.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

Salary costs of general and senior managers

	£000
1986-87	1,332
1987-88	1,600
1988-89	1,735
1989-90	6,521
1990-91	9,253
1991-92	16,897
1992-93	20,127

Source:
Health Authorities' Annual Accounts/Financial Returns
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust Financial Returns
Notes:
i. Figures include expenditure by Health Authorities, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Pembrokeshire NHS Trust and the Health Promotion Authority for Wales but excludes those of Family Health Services Authorities whose corresponding costs are not identifiable on the same basis.
ii. It should be noted that since 1989 senior managers' terms and conditions of service have been extended to second and third level managers and some senior nurses and other professional staff have also transferred to the senior management grades.

Biodiversity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he received a copy of a report on biodiversity and conservation action, prepared by six environmental groups; and what steps he has taken to evaluate the risks outlined in the report.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have not received a copy of the report although I understand that it broadly accords with the Government's biodiversity action plan which will be published shortly.

Tunnel Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to Friends of the Earth Cymru's inquiry in regard to the standardisation of safety regulations covering the transport of dangerous cargoes through road tunnels.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I replied to a letter from Friends of the Earth on 10 January decribing the measures we have taken to minimise the risk of vehicles carrying hazardous loads using the tunnels on the A55. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

Education Staff

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made for the continued employment of the staff of the Welsh Education Development Committee—PDAG—the Welsh Committee of School Examinations and Assessment Council and the Curriculum Council for Wales following the transference and expansion of the functions of those bodies following the enactment of the Education Act 1993 and the Welsh Language Act 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Decisions on the continued employment of the staff of the Curriculum Council for Wales when it is established as the new Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales/Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru—ACAC—from 1 April will be a matter for the new Authority to consider within the approved staffing structure and resources to be made available to the authority. Discussions are taking place with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in respect of those staff employed on Welsh language functions whose contracts will continue after 1 April 1994. The redeployment of staff currently employed by the Welsh Language Education Development Committee—PDAG—is the responsibility of the Welsh Joint Education Committee which is their statutory employer. Staff currently engaged at PDAG will, however, be free to apply for any post advertised by ACAC, the Further Education Funding Council and the Welsh Language Board.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has in regard to the disposal of radioactive waste by Singleton hospital, Swansea in a local landfill site.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The disposal of radioactive waste from Singleton hospital is authorised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the provisions of the

Radioactive Substances Act 1993. The small volume of waste sent to landfill is mainly in ash form, most of it having already been incinerated, and contains very low levels of radioactivity.

Grant and Subsidy Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been spent in Wales on each different grant and subsidy scheme available to farmers and landowners in each year from 1990-91 to 1993-94; what are his forecasts for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The expenditure on agricultural grant and subsidy schemes in the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 is published in the appropriation accounts for the relevant years, copies of which are in the Library of the House. The latest forecasts for 1993-94 are set out in the supply estimates 1993-94 for vote 1 schemes and, for vote 2 schemes, in the winter supplementary estimates. My plans for spending on agricultural grants and subsidies in Wales for 1994-95 will be set out in the 1994-95 supply estimates. The Government's priorities on and aims for agricultural spending will be set out in the Welsh Office departmental report to be laid before Parliament in March.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress his Department has made in reviewing the boundaries of the Pembrokeshire Coast national park following the public inquiry in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The review has raised complex legal issues which are still being considered. A response is expected to issue in the near future.

Local Planning Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish new guidelines to local planning authorities with regard to the factors which should be considered in permitting out-of-town shopping centres with a potentially detrimental effect on town centre business activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Revised guidelines were published in July last year in planning policy guidance note No. 6. These advise that the scale, type and location of out-of centre retail developments should not be such as to undermine the vitality and visibility of those town centres that would otherwise serve the community well. The guidance is being kept under review.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employer's national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Swimming Pool, Kilkeel

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when funding will be provided to Newry and Mourne district council in respect of the provision of a swimming pool at Kilkeel.

Mr. Ancram: Finance for this project is not currently available.

The position in future years will be determined in the light of the resources available and the priorities which need to be addressed.

Dyslexia

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what changes have taken place in teacher training to ensure that all newly qualified teachers can identify and assist children suffering from dyslexia;

(2) how many teachers in Northern Ireland have been trained specifically to recognise or to assist children with dyslexia and other special educational needs.

Mr. Ancram: Dyslexia can describe a variety of learning difficulties experienced by children. All teachers receive, as part of their initial training, an element designed to enable them to develop the capacity to identify and deal with pupils with learning difficulties. For serving teachers, the education and library boards mount in-service courses with similar objectives, but the numbers involved are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Parole

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were released from prison for Christmas parole; how many returned at the required date and time; and what was the maximum number of years of sentence for any such prisoners.

Sir John Wheeler: In December 1993, a total number of 446 prisoners were released from prison for Christmas home leave; of these, 100 prisoners were serving indeterminate sentences. The number who returned at the required date and time was 436, including all the indeterminate sentence prisoners.

At 14 January, three prisoners were still unlawfully at large and their names have been passed to the security forces.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why Neil Latimer was not released from prison for Christmas parole; how many years he has been sentenced to imprisonment; and how many of these years he has already served in prison.

Sir John Wheeler: Neil Latimer is serving a life sentence. He completed 10 years imprisonment in December 1993. To be eligible for consideration for Christmas home leave a prisoner was required to have served a minimum of 11 years in custody.

Ice Bowl

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the public inquiry was held about the next phase of the development of Dundonalds international ice bowl; when a decision is to be announced; and if he will make a statement about the efficiency of such public inquiries.

Mr. Tim Smith: The public inquiry was held before the Planning Appeals Commission from 5 January until 13 January 1993. Unfortunately, as the presiding commissioner was indisposed for a period following the close of the inquiry, the commission's report is not yet with the Department. I understand that the report should be submitted to the Department next month after which a decision will issue as soon as possible.

Planning inquiries are held to ensure that all representations are fully aired and considered in an open forum before a decision is made. I am content that this system provides a fair consideration of what are often complex planning issues.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Sir John Wheeler: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

Parliament Buildings, Stormont

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the refurbishment of Parliament buildings, Stormont.

Mr. Tim Smith: A contract costing in the region of £2·5 million is to commence at Parliament buildings in February 1994. The work, which will take about a year to complete, will ensure that the building complies with health and safety and fire regulations.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many official Christmas cards were sent in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Sir John Wheeler: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Fine Defaulters

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average prison sentence imposed for defaulting on a fine; what is the average period actually spent in prison by such a defaulter in Scotland; and what is the average cost of such a person's imprisonment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average sentence imposed in 1992 for defaulting on a fine was 23 days. The

average time spent in prison by a fine defaulter was an estimated 13 days and the estimated average cost of the person's imprisonment was £970.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were sentenced to a prison term under each offence category in the latest year for which figures are available; and what number and percentage of the total were fine defaulters.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. The table details the total number of receptions and the number of fine defaulter receptions to penal establishments in Scotland by classification of crime and offence for 1992.

Receptions to Scottish Penal Establishments in 1992 by Crime and Offence

Crime/offence classification	*Total receptions*	*Fine defaulter receptions*	*Fine defaulter' receptions as a percentage of total receptions*
Total crimes & offences	19,923	8,339	42
Total crimes: sub total	12,388	4,044	33
Non-sexual crimes of violence: sub total	1,218	66	5
Homicide	80	2	3
Serious assault etc	718	30	4
Handling offensive weapons	31	12	39
Robbery	354	15	4
Other	35	7	20
Crimes of indencency: sub total	328	158	48
Sexual assault	70	2	3
Lewd & libidinous practices	81	5	6
Other	177	151	85
Crimes of dishonesty: sub total	9,020	3,024	34
Housebreaking	2,345	489	21
Theft by opening lockfast places	547	193	35
Theft of a motor vehicle	825	229	28
Other theft	3,992	1,619	41
Fraud	321	143	45
Other	990	351	35
Fire-raising, vandalism etc: sub total	371	215	58
Fire-raising	41	7	17
Vandalism etc	330	208	63
Other crimes: sub total	1,451	581	40
Crimes against public justice	773	317	41
Drugs offences	651	262	40
Other	27	2	7
Total offences: sub total	7,535	4,295	57
Miscellaneous offences: sub total	5,364	2,994	56
Petty assault	1,082	480	44
Breach of the peace	3,796	2,197	58
Drunkeness	228	139	61
Other	258	178	69
Motor vehicle offences: sub total	2,171	1,301	60
Reckless & careless driving	147	88	60
Drunk driving	390	245	63
Speeding	18	15	83
Unlawful use of vehicle	1,525	873	57
Vehicle defect offences	15	15	100
Other	76	65	86

Agricultural Base Areas

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures in hectares for *(a)* set-aside; *(b)* pulses, *(c)* oilseed rape and *(d)* cereals for 1989, 1990 and 1991 which were used to calculate the base area in Scotland.

(2) if he will list the June census set-aside figures for Scotland for 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* The figures used to calculate the base areas in Scotland are as follows:—

	1989		1990		1991		3 years average	
	LFA	Non-LFA	LFA	Non-LFA	LFA	Non-LFA	LFA	Non-LFA
Set-aside[1]	3,643	7,807	4,919	12,949	6,487	15,796	5,016	12,184
Protein crops	526	4,509	358	4,046	353	3,024	412	3,860
Oilseed rape	7,821	28,244	8,919	36,276	9,896	39,999	8,879	34,840
Cereals	188,780	319,270	178,060	303,383	175,843	292,665	180,895	305,106
Total	200,770	359,830	192,256	356,654	192,579	351,484	[2]195,202	[2]355,990

[1]Figures taken from the five-year and one-year set-aside scheme returns.

[2]Before submission to the EC Commission in September 1992, these figures were adjusted by switching 34,854 hectares from less-favoured areas to non-LFAs giving a base area of 160,348 hectares for the LFAs and 390,844 hectares for the non-LFAs. These figures were further adjusted to reflect the more accurate split between LFAs and non-LFA arable land established from the integrated administration and control system returns, and a further 39,303 hectares was switched from LFAs to non-LFAs giving new base areas of 121,045 hectares for the LFAs and 430,147 for the non-LFAs. These last figures are now accepted by the EC as the Scottish base areas. Throughout, the total base area has remained constant at 551,192 hectares.

The set-aside figures recorded in the June census for 1989 and 1990 were 29,197 and 44,465 hectares respectively. These figures partly reflect land registered for set-aside and are, therefore, higher than the area actually set aside. No specific set-aside questions were asked in 1991.

Negative Equity

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of households with negative equity for the third quarter of 1993; and what this figure represents as a proportion of total owner occupied households.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* We do not hold this information. However, recent studies have shown that the problem of negative equity is less pronounced in Scotland than in other regions of the United Kingdom, affecting only an estimated 1 per cent. of recent homebuyers. It is open to anyone in that position to discuss their situation with their mortgage lender.

EDUCATION

Further Education Colleges

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the members of the governing bodies of the new further education college corporations together with *(a)* their age, *(b)* their gender and *(c)* occupation;

(2) what statistics were held on *(a)* the age, *(b)* the gender and *(c)* the occupations of members of further education college governing bodies prior to the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Boswell: The Department does not hold records of members of further education college governing bodies prior to the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988, nor of members of further education college corporations, since in neither case was the Secretary of State the appointing authority. In the case of sixth form college corporations, my right hon. Friend was responsible for the appointment of the initial members only. Current records are not held by the Department.

Student Loans

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the usual period experienced by full-time students who have no other financial means for the processing of their applications for support from the access fund; and what assistance is available to sustain them during that period.

Mr. Boswell: Access funds are intended to help eligible full-time students in higher and further education who, for whatever reason, face financial difficulties. Arrangements for allocation and payment of funds to students are determined by individual institutions. Under the charters for further and higher education published by my right hon. Friend, students who apply for assistance from access funds can expect a decision normally within four weeks of applying or by a published termly date when the institution considers applications. They can also expect to be paid quickly if their application is approved. It is open to institutions to accelerate the timetable for students in exceptional circumstances.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the usual period experienced by students between the end of entitlement to benefit on the commencement of a full-time course and the actual receipt of maintenance grant from the local education authority; and what financial assistance is available to such students who have no other financial means to sustain them during that period.

Mr. Boswell: Most full-time students in further and higher education are ineligible for income support, unemployment benefit and housing benefit from the date of their enrolment on the course. Students formally enrol at their institution at the beginning of their first term. Local education authorities are responsible for the payment of the grants they make to students. Under the charters for further and higher education published by my right hon. Friend, students have a right to expect the payment of their grant at the start of each term, provided that they have met the authority's application deadline and given such information as the authority requires. Where payment of the full grant is delayed, authorities can make some payment on account. Institutions may use their access funds to give help to eligible students who face particular financial difficulties.

Higher Education

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice he has issued about responses to be made in respect of complaints concerning quality in higher education.

Mr. Boswell: As autonomous institutions, universities and higher education colleges are responsible for providing responses to complaints about the quality of what they

provide. However, the charter for higher education published on 21 September 1993 by my right hon. Friend advises that institutions responsible for service delivery can be expected to reply to complaints within 10 working days.

Assisted Places

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the total cost to public funds of the assisted places scheme at the Royal school, Wolverhampton in each year since 1988-89;

(2) how many pupils have been *(a)* on the roll and *(b)* under the assisted places scheme in each year since 1988-89 at the Royal school, Wolverhampton.

Mr. Forth: Nil. The Royal school, Wolverhampton does not participate in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average household income of children supported by the assisted places scheme in each year since 1988-89 in each English local education authority.

Mr. Forth: Information about the average household income of an assisted place holder is not collected by reference to local education authority areas. The data can be derived only at disproportionate cost. The average household income of assisted pupils in England for each year since 1988-89 is given in the table:

Financial year	*Average household income of assisted place holders* £
1988-89	9,105
1989-90	9,716
1990-91	10,457
1991-92	10,932
1992-93	10,982

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many pupils have been *(a)* on the roll and *(b)* under the assisted places scheme in each year since 1988-89 at Tettenhall college, Wolverhampton;

(2) what was the total cost to public funds of the assisted places scheme at Tettenhall college, Wolverhampton in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Forth: Tettenhall college does not participate in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total cost to public funds of the assisted places scheme; and how many children were supported by the scheme in each year since 1988-89 in each English local education authority.

Mr. Forth: The total cost of the scheme and the number of children supported by it for each year since 1988-89 is given in the following table. The data are not available broken down by each local education authority.

Year	*Total expenditure (financial year) £ million*	*Total number of assisted pupils (academic year)*
1988-89	50·9	27,083
1989-90	56·5	27,008
1990-91	63·4	26,740
1991-92	75·7	27,641
1992-93	[1]92·8	28,674

[1] Includes £4·9 million brought forward from financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average cost to public funds of each place at non-maintained secondary schools under the assisted places scheme in each year since 1988-89 in each English local education authority.

Mr. Forth: Information about the average cost of an assisted place is not collected by reference to local education authority areas. The data can be derived only at disproportionate cost. The overall average cost to public funds of an assisted place for each year since 1988-89 is given in the table:

Academic year	*Average cost of an assisted place* £
1988-89	2,121
1989-90	2,364
1990-91	2,691
1991-92	3,101
1992-93	3,405

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *442*, if he will publish the random audit surveys of income assessments made by his Department for parents of children supported by the assisted places scheme, together with other statistical information collected and referred to.

Mr. Forth: No.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average school fee paid by the parents of children who benefited under the assisted places scheme, in each year since 1990.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the table:

Academic year	*Average fee charged for assisted pupils* £
1990-91	3,267
1991-92	3,703
1992-93	3,996

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total cost of the assisted places scheme for each financial year since 1990.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the table:

Financial year	*Total cost of assisted places scheme £ million*
1990-91	63·4
1991-92	75·7
1992-93	[1]92·8

[1] Includes £4·9 million brought forward from financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children in *(a)* England, *(b)* Cornwall and *(c)* Devon have received funding under the assisted places scheme, in each year since 1990.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the table. The number of assisted pupils in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Number of assisted pupils

Academic year	*(a) England*	*(b) Cornwall*	*(c) Devon*
1990-91	26,740	174	728
1991-92	27,641	178	753
1992-93	28,674	179	774

Sex Education

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans the Government have to ensure that teachers receive adequate initial and in-service training to deliver the new compulsory provision of sex education in secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The new arrangements for sex education, which will come into force in September 1994, will incorporate elements which currently form part of the national curriculum requirements for science; and many secondary schools already teach other elements of sex education too. The Department's grants for education support and training programme for 1994-95 will assist schools in securing any additional in-service training needed to equip teachers to deal with these and other aspects of the new arrangements. My right hon. Friend's accreditation criteria for initial teacher training require that the new arrangements should be adequately covered in all relevant courses.

Surplus School Places

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest available statistics for surplus school places for primary schools and for secondary schools in Essex.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest figures we have for surplus places in Essex are for 1992. In that year the local education authority estimated that there were 18,121 surplus primary and 12,600 surplus secondary places in schools maintained by the county council, representing 13 per cent. of capacity in each sector.

Capital Bids

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the purpose of his Department issuing a list of named schools following the announcement of the decisions on capital bids for local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: The schools named in the announcement are those voluntary aided and special agreement schools where central Government grant is being set aside for projects. The annual announcement of capital allocations also covers the annual capital guidelines given to local education authorities in respect of their county and voluntary controlled schools.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to meet representatives of the national steering committee of the nuclear-free local authorities to discuss their report on the nuclear industry in schools, a copy of which was recently sent to him.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. How nuclear issues are handled in schools is a matter for the individual schools themselves and their local education authorities, within the law.

Student Grants

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the efficiency of payments of grants to students by local education authorities; and if the citizens charter specifies the standard of service students are entitled to in this respect.

Mr. Boswell: Local education authorities are responsible for ensuring the prompt payment of grants to students. My right hon. Friend wrote on 8 September 1993 to the chairmen of all authorities in England and Wales to remind them that students have a right to expect the prompt payment of their grant at the start of term, provided that they have met the authority's application deadline and given such information as the authority requires. The charters for further and higher education published by my right hon. Friend on 21 September 1993 tell students about the level of service they have a right to expect from their authority. The Department is prepared to take up some complaints of significant delay with the authority concerned.

List D Schools

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement in respect of his Department's current proposals for list D schools.

Mr. Forth: There are no list D schools in England.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Boswell: The Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 Competing for Quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Postgraduate Students

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many postgraduate students have successfully completed their doctorates within British universities for each year over the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: The number of students successfully completing doctorates in the former UFC-funded universities in the United Kingdom in the last five years for which information is currently available was as follows:

	Number
1987-88	7,552
1988-89	7,745
1989-90	8,380
1990-91	8,447
1991-92	8,878

University Academic Posts

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what data he holds on the number of academic posts existing within British universities which are *(a)* not wholly funded and *(b)* wholly funded by the institutions.

Mr. Boswell: In the academic year 1991-92, there were 31,226 full-time and 2,532 part-time academic staff wholly funded, and 19,895 full-time and 1,778 part-time academic staff not wholly funded by their institution in the former UFC-funded universities in Great Britain.

Parents Charter

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of his Department's officials involved in the preparation of the parents charter; how many hours this involved; what was the total cost to the taxpayer of *(a)* the involvement of civil servants, *(b)* typesetting and printing and *(c)* circulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on Friday 14 January 1994 at column *280*. The revised parents charter will cover many aspects of the organisation and curriculum of schools in England. The involvement of civil servants in the Department in the preparation of the text reflects their ongoing responsibilities for promoting improved educational standards, and cannot be separately quantified.

Curriculum Advisory Group

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the members of each Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority curriculum advisory group.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for the authority. SCAA announced the members of its advisory groups on 12 January and I have arranged for a copy of its press notice to be placed in the Library.

Asthma

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice he has given to schools to ensure that medication for conditions like asthma are readily available for children to take when necessary; if he will consider publishing guidelines to ensure that medication for conditions like asthma are readily available for immediate use when required; and what representations he has received on this subject.

Mr. Forth: General guidance on health care in schools for children with medical conditions is given in DES circular 11/90, "Staffing for Pupils with Special Educational Needs", and the October 1993 draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. My right hon. Friend has recently received a letter on this subject from the National Asthma Campaign.

Teachers should, in consultation with parents and with appropriate medical advice, do all that is reasonable to enable children with medical conditions to obtain maximum benefit from education and to participate as fully as possible in school life. Where possible, and particularly in cases of asthma or diabetes, it is considered good health care practice to encourage children to manage their own condition as early as is consistent with their development.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Boswell: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

School Premises Regulations 1981

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to publish the results of his Department's review of the School Premises Regulations 1981.

Mr. Forth: An announcement will be made in due course.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Boswell: This information could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

Rail Freight

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many tonnes of freight were carried by BR's Railfreight distribution company in each of the last five years; and how much it is estimated will be carried in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96;

(2) how many tonnes of *(a)* coal, *(b)* petroleum, *(c)* metals and *(d)* construction materials were carried by BR's Trainload freight company in each of the last five years; and how much it is estimated will be carried in (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1994-95 and (iii) 1995-96.

Mr. Freeman: Historic data can be found in table 5.14 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1993", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Traffic forecasts are a matter for BR.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will seek to use freight facilities grant, or other grants, to ensure that fuel oil is once again carried from Stanlow to Aberystwyth by rail.

Mr. Freeman: If the company concerned felt that an application for freight facilities grant or the new track access grant, which will be available from 5 April, could be of assistance in returning this business to rail, I would be happy to consider it.

Marchioness Disaster

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate whether the crew of the Bowbelle had been made aware of the availability of walkie talkies on the night of the Marchioness disaster.

Mr. Norris: The matter was investigated during the marine accident investigation branch inquiry. The master was aware of the presence of hand-held VHF sets on board Bowbelle; sections 8.9 and 17.1 of the chief inspector's report refer. At least one of the seamen on the fo'c'sle was aware that sets were carried.

Thames Bridges

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the co-ordination of works involving Thames bridges as a result of consultation between his officials and the Association of London Borough Engineers and Surveyors.

Mr. Norris: Ways in which the co-ordination of works, including those on Thames bridges, could be improved feature regularly in discussions between officials of the Department and the Association of London Borough Engineers and Surveyors. A "Riparian" group of borough highway authorities, which have responsibility for most river crossings within London, has been set up under the chairmanship of the City of London. One of the main aims of this group, which has now met twice, is to reduce the inconvenience to traffic and pedestrians caused by roadworks on those structures.

Q Plates

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will give, by region, figures for the number of vehicles which have been issued Q plates for each of the last five years; and how many of these vehicles were later found to be stolen.

Mr. Robert Key: The information requested on the volumes of Q plates issued is as follows by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency area command:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*Total*
Scotland and North	1,957	1,834	1,969	2,022	1,930	9,712
Midlands	2,240	2,423	2,037	2,198	2,179	11,077
Southern	2,109	1,993	1,897	1,756	1,701	9,456
South Wales/South West	1,908	1,717	1,375	1,316	1,223	7,539
North and North Wales	2,268	2,305	2,461	2,013	2,070	11,117
London and Eastern	2,141	1,829	1,716	1,434	1,414	8,534
Total	12,632	12,101	11,455	10,739	10,517	57,435

Information on the number later found to be stolen is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Trunk Roads, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what major road improvement schemes on trunk roads in London have been *(a)* completed, *(b)* started or *(c)* planned to start in the current financial year.

Mr. Norris: The information is as follows:—

(a) Trunk road schemes in London completed in 1993-94:
A13 Blackwall Tunnel/Cotton Street "dedicated lane"

(a) Trunk road schemes in London started in 1993-94:
A13 West India Dock Road Junction Final Scheme
A406 East of Falloden Way to Finchley High Road
A406 Dysons Road Phase 2
A406 M1 Junction 1 Improvement
A12 Hackney-M11 Contract 4
A40 Long Lane to West End Road Junction
A13 Heathway—Wennington Advance Works
A13 Butcher Row Junction

(c) Trunk Road schemes planned to start in London 1993-94
A13 Thames Avenue to Wennington
A13 Blackwall Tunnel/Cotton Street Main Works
A406 Dysons Road Phase 1

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what future role that grade of senior executive officer will play in the structure of the vehicle inspectorate; and what will be the significance of the grade's duties.

Mr. Key: Senior enforcement officers (traffic) are and will continue to be key members of the area management teams of the road traffic enforcement division of the vehicle inspectorate. In addition, they provide expert advice on traffic enforcement matters for traffic commissioners, lorry and bus operators and other enforcement agencies.

Tanker Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress made in his review of the safety of tanker transport established after the Braer oil tanker accident.

Mr. Norris: I expect the report of Lord Donaldson's inquiry in the early part of this year.

In addition, the Department made specific proposals on tanker routing to the International Maritime Organisation. These entered into force on 28 November.

Recommended routes will be introduced for the Fair Isle channel subject to the successful completion in 1994 of further hydrographic surveys.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the punctuality performance of each of the Network SouthEast divisions as compared to target performance in the four-week periods ending 3 December and 31 December 1993.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Division	*Punctuality standard Per cent.*	*Performance four weeks ending 3 December 1993 Per cent.*	*31 December 1993 Per cent.*
Great Northern	90·0	86·5	93·8
Northampton Line	90·0	90·6	87·5
Chiltern	90·0	91·3	92·6
West Anglia	90·0	82·1	98·1
Thameslink	89·0	83·2	89·5
South Western Lines	88·0	82·8	87·8
Kent Link	88·0	68·6	81·6
South London Lines	88·0	82·4	84·4
North London Lines	87·0	82·5	87·0
Great Eastern	86·0	80·9	88·7
Solent and Wessex	86·0	76·9	83·6
Thames	85·0	87·7	89·6
London Tilbury and Southend	85·0	88·3	93·2
Sussex Coast	83·0	84·0	78·6
Kent Coast	82·0	70·7	77·1

On average over 1993, 12 out of the 15 groups met or exceeded their punctuality standards.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's proposals for sound reduction measures on existing rail routes that will be part of the network to the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: For some locations on the existing rail routes where the concentration of international traffic will be heaviest, between the channel tunnel and west London, BR has agreed with local authorities jointly funded non-statutory schemes for the provision of noise barriers. Beyond London, international traffic will be spread over a number of routes without the same degree of concentration. The new international rolling stock which is to be introduced on all the routes concerned has been designed so as to minimise noise levels.

A43

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress has been made since July 1993 on improvements to the A43 between Stanton and Corby.

Mr. Key: Tenders have now been returned for the installation of traffic signals at both A6116 junctions with the A43, and for road lighting from south of the southern A43 junction at Stanton northwards to the existing lighting on the Weldon bypass. Work is programmed to start in February.

Indoor Enforcement Office

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the future of the indoor enforcement office as a main prosecution unit or for diversification of its functions.

Mr. Key: The vehicle inspectorate is conducting a review of the future role of the indoor enforcement offices —now called group support offices. This is expected to report by the end of Feburary and decisions about their future will be taken in the light of the recommendations of the review team. Interested parties, including the staff and trade unions are being consulted.

A1(M)

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has published in advance of the outcome of the planning inquiry into Radwell motorway services station concerning the sites of such stations on the A1(M) motorway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We announced on 1 December that the proposal at Radwell was one of 16 potential motorway service area sites in England on which a planning application was under consideration.

Cycle Network, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of the 1,000-mile cycle network in London have now been completed; and what action his Department has taken to speed up its completion.

Mr. Norris: Responsibility for the provision of the 1,000 mile network in London rests primarily with the 33 London boroughs. Cycle schemes on local authority routes are eligible for Government funding support. Approximately a third of the network is in existence or in preparation. We have agreed to provide, where practicable, all the routes that have been proposed for trunk roads as well as cycle crossing points of the trunk road network. We continue to encourage local authorities to provide cycle facilities.

London buses (Privatisation)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information has been presented to him by London Buses Ltd. on the expected impact on mileage following privatisation.

Mr. Norris: None.

British Rail

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the approximate passenger mileage on British Railway's InterCity services travelled by passengers paying *(a)* first-class fares, *(b)* normal standard fares, *(c)* saver and supersaver fares and *(d)* period on fare past tickets, together with the approximate revenue per year for each category of ticket.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of state for Transport if he will publish a table showing his Department's latest estimate of passengers travelling

(a) into, *(b)* out of and *(c)* within (i) South Yorkshire, (ii) Humberside, (iii) North Yorkshire and (iv) West Yorkshire, each day on British Rail; and what are the comparable figures for (1) 1979, (2) 1983 and (3) 1989.

Mr. Freeman: My Department does not hold the information requested. This is a commercial matter for InterCity.

Maritime Collisions (Inquiries)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether the discretion afforded to an inspector appointed by the chief inspector of marine accidents under the regulations concerning the conduct of inquiries into maritime collisions (SI, 1989, No. 1172) is compatible with the open policy objectives of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Tuesday 11 January, *Official Report*, column *135*.

A1-M1

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the A1-M1 link road serving the Dearne valley area to be completed; and what proportion of this highway is currently able to carry traffic.

Mr. Key: Barnsley metropolitan borough council hopes to complete the Dearne towns link road in 1996. About one quarter of this road is already open to traffic.

London Lorry Ban

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to abolish or reduce the existing restrictions on heavy goods vehicles over 16·5 tonnes entering the Greater London restriction zone.

Mr. Norris: I am considering proposals aimed at reducing the bureaucracy associated with the administration of the Londonwide night and weekend lorry ban while maintaining the environmental protection it offers. These will be published shortly.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Norris: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

EC Habitats Directive

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Attorney-General in regard to the implications for areas covered by EC habitats and species directives by his roads development programme.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government are considering the arrangements for implementing the EC habitats directive in United Kingdom law. Draft regulations will be laid before Parliament in due course.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Business Plan and Yearbook (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost of producing the North Yorkshire district benefit agency's 1993-94 business plan and yearbook; how many copies were produced; and to whom they have been given.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, its chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 14 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking details about the cost and production of the North Yorkshire Benefits Agency's 1993-94 Business Plan and Yearbook.

The Benefits Agency requires its District Offices to produce Business plans for external customers. In total 460 copies of the North Yorkshire District Benefits Agency 1993-94 Business Plan and Yearbook were produced and distributed to client representatives in the North Yorkshire Area. Of these 330 copies were distributed to local councillors and Members of Parliament and 65 copies to Statutory and Voluntary organisations, for whom the year book is intended as a reference document. Other copies were distributed internally.

The majority of the preparation work was done locally, all the photographs being provided by the District Office staff and the document was produced on recycled paper. With the exception of 70 copies issued by second class post, all other copies were distributed at nil cost.

Some of the design and artwork was completed by Benefits Agency Publishing House at a staffing cost of £999·42 met from their own budget allocation. HMSO printing costs were covered out of the Benefits Agency's printing budget.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Income Support

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the United Kingdom and by standard region, including Greater London, the number of households and the proportion of all households claiming income support for each year since 1989.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables.

Claimants, Partners and Dependants in receipt of Income Support—May 1989.

Region	*Number of beneficiaries*	*Percentage of Population*
North Eastern	1,179,000	—
London North	1,029,000	—
South Western	419,000	—
Midlands	1,163,000	—
North Western	1,142,000	—
London South	878,000	—
England	5,811,000	12·2
Wales	413,000	14·4
Scotland	799,000	15·7
Great Britain	7,023,000	12·6

Claimants, Partners and Dependants in receipt of Income Support—May 1990.

Region	*Number of beneficiaries*	*Percentage of Population*
North Eastern	1,137,000	—
London North	1,092,000	—
South Western	432,000	—

Region	Number of beneficiaries	Percentage of Population
Midlands	1,150,000	—
North Western	1,103,000	—
London South	907,000	—
England	5,821,000	12·2
Wales	424,000	14·7
Scotland	777,000	15·2
Great Britain	7,023,000	12·6

Claimants, Partners and Dependants in receipt of Income Support—May 1991

Region	Number of beneficiaries	Percentage of population
North Eastern	1,216,000	—
London North	1,289,000	—
South Western	524,000	—
Midlands	1,233,000	—
North Western	1,155,000	—
London South	1,083,000	—
England	6,500,000	13·5
Wales	442,000	15·3
Scotland	805,000	15·8
Great Britain	7,747,000	13·8

Claimants, Partners and Dependants in receipt of Income Support—May 1992

Region	Number of beneficiaries	Percentage of population
North Eastern	1,319,000	—
London North	1,604,000	—
South Western	613,000	—
Midlands	1,414,000	—
North Western	1,269,000	—
London South	1,284,000	—
England	7,502,000	15·5
Wales	496,000	17·1
Scotland	855,000	16·7
Great Britain	8,853,000	15·7

Claimants, Partners and Dependants in receipt of Income Support—February 1993

Region	Number of beneficiaries	Percentage of population
North Eastern	1,443,000	'
London North	1,758,000	'
South Western	702,000	'
Midlands	1,598,000	'
North Western	1,390,000	'
London South	1,537,000	'
England	8,428,000	17·4
Wales	541,000	18·7
Scotland	898,000	17·6
Great Britain	9,868,000	17·5

Sources of all tables:

Income support statistics annual inquiries May 1989 to 1992.
Income support statistics quarterly inquiry February 1993.
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Notes to tables:

1. All figures rounded to nearest thousand. Percentages correct to one decimal place. Figures may not sum due to rounding.
2. ' Indicates that figures are not available.
3. The tables refer to Great Britain only. Figures for Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
4. Information on the number of households claiming income support is not available. The tables show the number of claimants, partners and dependants in receipt of income support.
5. Information on the number of income support claims is not collected by standard regions. The tables show Department of Social Security administrative regions as used by the Department prior to 1988. Population figures for these regions are not available.
6. The latest available figures for numbers receiving income support are taken from the February 1993 quarterly statistical inquiry.
7. The latest population figures available are for mid-1992. Therefore these have been used to calculate both the May 1992 and February 1993 proportions.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department is taking to ensure that claimants with disabling medical conditions are given due consideration in any assessment of eligibility for incapacity benefits; and if he will make it his policy that claimants' existing medical histories will be taken fully into account in these assessments.

Mr. Scott: The proposed new medical incapacity test will accurately assess the limiting effect of all medical conditions on a claimant's capacity for work. In applying the test, all relevant factors, including the claimant's medical history, will be taken into account.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people receiving the new incapacity benefit will be eligible for the income support disability premium from the 28th week of incapacity.

Mr. Scott: The new long-term rate of incapacity benefit, payable after 52 weeks, will act as a passport to the disability premium. For those who have no other means of entitlement to the disability premium, the period of incapacity needed to qualify will be 52 weeks.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the child dependant additions payable with incapacity benefit will be payable from the first day of incapacity.

Mr. Scott: Incapacity benefit will follow the usual rule that child dependency increases are not payable with short-term contributory benefits, unless the beneficiary has reached pensionable age. They will not normally commence until long-term incapacity benefit comes into payment after 52 weeks.

Special Compensation Payments

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for special compensation payments have been made in each of the most recent four quarters for which figures are available; how many were successful; and what was the average amount of each payment in each quarter.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 14 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking for details of the special compensation payments made in the most recent four quarters for which figures are available.

Firstly, I should explain that the Special Compensation Scheme applied to both Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) customers.

Scans of both the DLA and AA computer systems were obtained and these lists of customers were then individualy scrutinised for possible entitlement to compensation under the special scheme.

There were no applications from customers, indeed the first that the vast majority of customers knew about the scheme was when they actually received their compensation payment.

The scheme has now been completed in its entirety but as there were no monthly or quarterly collations of statistics I have provided the total figures for both benefits below.

	Cases examined	*Cases entitled*	*Cases not entitled*	*Cases paid*	*Amount paid £*
DLA	33,539	20,457	13,082	20,457	406,745
AA	44,299	[1]9,564	34,735	[1]9,527	217,105

The average payment made to both DLA and AA compensation recipients was £20.

[1] The difference between AA cases entitled and AA cases paid is 37 and occurred as a result of the death of customers for whom no next of kin could be found.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of invalidity benefit receive an additional pension; and what is the average amount payable.

Mr. Scott: On 4 April 1992, the latest date for which information is available, additional pension was paid to 1,230,000 invalidity benefit recipients[1]. The average weekly amount of additional pension in payment was £13·40[2].

Notes

[1] Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.

[2] Rounded to the nearest penny.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals against a decision that an invalidity benefit claimant was fit for work were received by his Department during *(a)* April to December 1992 and *(b)* April to December 1993; and what percentage of these were found in the claimant's favour.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The available information is in the table.

Appeals registered with Social Security Appeal Tribunals: Invalidity Benefit[1]

Quarter ending	*Appeals lodged*	*Heard and decided*[2]	*Decided in claimant's favour*[2]
30 June 1992	2,593	1,311	681
30 September 1992	2,836	1,236	670
21 December 1992	2,834	1,367	757
31 March 1993	3,245	1,436	782

Notes:

[1] Figures show all invalidity benefit appeals, including those against decisions that the claimant is capable of work.

[2] Includes appeals lodged in an earlier quarter.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female claimants of invalidity benefit are over the age of 45 years where an invalidity allowance is in payment.

Mr. Scott: The latest available information is in the table.

	Invalidity Benefit recipients aged 45 and over receiving invalidity allowance[1]	*Percentage of Invalidity Benefit recipients by gender*
Male	232,000	22
Female	113,000	30

Notes:

[1] Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain at 4 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

[2] Figures do not include people whose entitlement to invalidity allowance is wholly offset by payment of additional pension.

Child Support

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the changes in targets on savings in benefits paid to parents with care following his recent announcement on changes to the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: The changes will have an effect on benefit savings this year, but it is too early to be precise about the impact. We do not intend to alter the target at this stage in the year.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Scott: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

Age-related Rebates

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date he issued the consultative document on age-related rebates; what time scale he laid down for responses; and which bodies and organisations were consulted on the document.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 10 December 1993 at column *408*. Several hundred copies of the consultation document have been issued to a wide variety of interested organisations and individuals.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans the Contributions Agency has for improved standards of service to employers.

Mr. Hague: The Contributions Agency today published a revised employers charter setting out the new improved standards of service employers can now expect. It incorporates the code for enforcement that all enforcement agencies were committed to publish as part of the Department of Trade and Industry's "Working with Business" initiative. Copies are available in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Access to Work Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who would own equipment jointly purchased by employers and the Government for disabled employees under the access to work proposals; and what advice will be issued to companies by his Department on *(a)* the declaration of equipment purchasing within the audited accounts of companies and *(b)* arrangements for insuring equipment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In reaching final decisions about these and other details of the access to work scheme, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend Lord Henley are considering carefully all the representations made by the disability and employer groups whom they have recently met. Our aims, in relation to the issues raised by the hon. Member, will be to ensure that we have arrangements that do not inhibit the movement of people with disabilities into and between jobs and to ensure that procedures are simple and non-bureaucratic.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make the levy upon employers within his access-to-work proposals dependent on the allocated budget being fully spent after one year of the new scheme.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps will be taken by his Department to encourage employers to make the contributions expected of them under the proposed access-to-work scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In reaching final decisions about the details of the access to work scheme, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend Lord Henley are considering carefully a range of representations made by disability and employer groups including representations about the proposed employer contribution. My right hon. Friend hopes to announce decisions soon.

Social Policies (EC Budget)

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on the provision of public money via the European Community budget to promote social policies through the Trades Union Congress which are incompatible with the policies of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are opposed to such subsidies and are considering what steps can be taken to restrict them.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what contribution his Department made to the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in terms of financial support, practical support for particular events, and the provision of information;

(2) in which programmes and events for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations he has been directly involved.

Miss Widdecombe: To mark the end of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity Between Generations my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State joined colleagues at a meeting of the EC Social Affairs Council in November in issuing a declaration of principles confirming the commitment of member states to integrating older people into all areas of the life of the Community.

Throughout the year, Ministers and officials from the Employment Department supported appropriate events, including that on "Investing in Older People at Work" staged by the Health Education Authority in October. In December, I spoke at an international symposium in Dublin on the implications of our ageing population for the work force. I told delegates of the work of my Advisory Group on Older Workers to persuade employers of the benefits of treating everyone on merit, regardless of age. I described our "Getting On" campaign which offers employers a five-point plan to avoid ageism. I also took the opportunity to challenge the European Commission to end its practice of excluding anyone over the age of 35 from applying to work with it or its institutions.

Office Heating Bills

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, columns *737-38*, in what form information in respect of heating bills for his Department's offices is available.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department group occupies some 1,500 buildings nationally. Where the Department is billed direct, which is in the majority of cases, we hold records of electricity, gas and fuel consumption from April 1990 for individual offices. In the remaining offices these costs are part of an overall service charge and details are not available.

There is no mechanism for identifying separately the cost of heating the Department's offices.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in abattoirs in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information on employees in employment in abattoirs is from the periodic censuses of employment and is given in the table:

Number of Employees in employment in Abattoirs[1] in Great Britain, September of each year

Year	Number
1981	10,100
1984	9,900
1987	11,200
1989	10,400
1991	10,400

[1] Activity Heading 4121 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

Training

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a regional breakdown of the number of participants on work-related Government training programmes in each year since 1979; and if he will give the figure as a percentage of the total regional civilian work force in each such year.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is available from June 1983, and can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Astra

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to representations to extend preferential reinstatement arrangements for staff employed by Astra.

Miss Widdecombe: In the light of the representations I have received, I have extended for a further year the previous arrangements to give staff employed in the Skills Training Agency immediately before its sale to the private sector preferential consideration for reinstatement in the Employment Department group.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to what extent the Health and Safety Commission has been able under the auspices of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to rationalise or modernise substantial areas of health and safety law.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Since 1975, the Health and Safety Commission —HSC—using the powers given to it under the 1974 Act has proposed changes endorsed by Ministers which have led to the replacement of around 350 sets of old-style prescriptive sets of regulations with some 100 sets of modern goal-setting ones. This is a substantial programme of achievement, although the Government share the Commission's view that there is scope for simplifying legislation and reducing red tape.

However, the powers in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 are technically deficient and do not allow for regulations to make revocations or repeals of pre-1974 provisions unless they are directly replaced by new requirements in the same set of regulations.

The HSC has requested an amendment to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to permit repeals and revocations without direct replacement where it is satisfied that the overall system of regulations and approved codes of practice in modern legislation properly safeguards standards of health and safety.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive draft publication "The Cost to the British Economy of Work Accidents and Work-Related Ill Health" will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* "The Cost to the British Economy of Work Accidents and Work Related Ill Health", a technical companion to the "Cost of Accidents" report, published in January 1993, is to be published on 9 February.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE were confirmed in the United Kingdom for each month of 1992 and 1993 in cattle that were *(a)* under two years of age, *(b)* aged two to three years, *(c)* aged three to four years, *(d)* aged four to five years, *(e)* aged five to six years, *(f)* aged six to seven years and *(g)* aged seven or more years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I shall write to the hon. Member with the information and arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE were confirmed in the United Kingdom for each year from 1985 in cattle that were *(a)* under two years of age, *(b)* aged two to three years, *(c)* aged three to four years, *(d)* aged four to five years, *(e)* aged five to six years, *(f)* aged six to seven years and *(g)* aged seven or more years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I shall write to the hon. Member with the information and arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE were *(a)* confirmed, *(b)* reported and *(c)* slaughtered in the United Kingdom for each month of 1992 and 1993.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I shall write to the hon. Member with the information and arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money was spent by the Government in respect of BSE on *(a)* research, *(b)* slaughter, *(c)* compensation and *(d)* disposal of carcases for each year since 1985 to the latest available date.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The amounts spent by this Ministey in respect of BSE in Great Britain for the areas requested are as follows:

£ million	Miscellaneous[1] £ million	Compensation[2] £ million	Research[3] (Financial year) £ million
1987			0·2
1988	0·2	0·5	0·3
1989	1·6	2·8	1·0
1990	4·1	9·1	3·1
1991	7·2	16·3	4·9
1992	10·2	29·2	5·7
1993	9·5	38·1	6·1

[1] This includes all expenditure involved in the slaughter, transportation, storage and disposal of carcasses of cattle suspected of being affected by BSE.
[2] The compulsory slaughter of suspects with compensation was introduced in August 1988.
[3] Separate figures on R and D expenditure on BSE before April 1987 are not readily available. The disease was first identified in 1986.

Milk Industry

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been done by the Government to promote a level playing field in the development of competition following the decision to abolish the Milk Marketing Board; and what methods have been employed by the Milk Marketing Board in establishing Milk Marque as its successor.

Mr. Jack: The Government's actions in respect of the proposed changes to the marketing of milk are guided by the provisions of the Agriculture Act 1993. The Milk

Marketing Board has proposed that Milk Marque should be established as its successor body. We have received reports of concern from outside bodies regarding the methods employed by Milk Marketing Board, Genus and National Milk Record staff to persuade producers to sign contracts with Milk Marque.

Food Expenditure

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the percentage of average income spent on food in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany and *(d)* the United States of America for each five-year period since 1965 and for the third quarter of 1993.

Mr. Jack: Information is not available for all four countries for the whole of the period referred to nor in the precise form requested. Details of household expenditure on food as a proportion, first, of total household expenditure on goods and services and secondly, of the total income of households and private unincorporated enterprises for five-year periods from 1966 to 1990 and for the latest available periods are shown in the table.

Household expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages[1] as a percentage of:

	1. Household expenditure on all goods and services				*2. Total current receipts (ie income) of households and private unincorporated enterprises*			
	United Kingdom	*France*	*Germany[2]*	*United States[3]*	*United Kingdom*	*France*	*Germany[2]*	*United States*
1966 to 1970	21·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1971 to 1975	18·9	19·8	25·4	14·3	13·1	12·4	14·5	10·2
1976 to 1980	18·1	18·0	22·9	13·2	12·3	10·6	13·0	9·3
1981 to 1985	15·3	17·7	21·7	11·5	10·4	10·4	12·3	8·0
1986 to 1990	12·7	16·6	20·2	10·1	8·7	10·0	11·2	7·2
1991	12·3	16·2	19·6	9·9	8·1	9·7	10·8	7·1
1992	12·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1993 Q1	11·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1993 Q2	11·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1993 Q3	11·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:
[1] Excludes expenditure in restaurants, cafes and hotels.
[2] Includes expenditure on alcoholic beverages and in restaurants and cafes.
[3] Includes expenditure by private non-profit making institutions.
Sources: OECD National Accounts, CSO National Accounts (Blue Book).

Cereal Production

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the change in *(a)* tonnage and *(b)* percentage terms in cereal production between 1992 and 1993 in (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) the United States of America and (iii) the European Union as a whole.

Mr. Jack: Final estimates for the 1993 harvest in the United Kingdom will be known only when the results of the April cereal production survey become available in May 1994. A similar situation exists in other countries.

The current estimates are shown in the table.

Estimated cereal production

(thousand tonnes)

	1992	*1993*	*Change*	*Percentage change*
United Kingdom	22,063	19,607	-2,456	-11·1
United States of America[1]	344,700	262,100	-82,600	-24·0
European Union	168,059	164,061	-3,998	-2·4

[1] The figures are taken from the latest IWC grain market report—30 November 1993—and do not include rice production. The 1992 figure is an estimate and that for 1993 is a forecast.

Crop Spraying

Ms Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to tighten controls on tractor spraying to bring them into line with aerial spraying; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: In May 1993 the pesticides safety directorate consulted interested parties on proposed amendments to the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 including a new provision requiring any person who uses a pesticide to confine the pesticide to the land, crop, structure, material or other area to be treated. This would effectively extend the existing provision on aerial spraying to all methods of use. The proposed amendments are being considered in the light of comments received with a view to laying a statutory instrument before the House in the near future.

Radioactive Waters

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the aquatic environment monitoring report on "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles 1991" will be published.

Mr. Jack: The report "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles 1991" was published in February 1993. The subsequent edition, with the results of monitoring undertaken in 1992, was published on 6 January 1994. Copies of both reports are in the Library.

Cake Wood

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans her Department has to sell off the part of Cake wood which is owned by the Forestry Commission under its current disposals programme.

Mr. Jack: No decision has been taken to sell any part of Cake wood under the Forestry Commission's disposals programme.

EC Surplus Beef

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each of the metropolitan boroughs of South Yorkshire the designated organisation allowed to distribute surplus beef released by the European Community; and what has been the response to date.

Mr. Jack: A list of all organisations in the United Kingdom that have been designated to distribute canned beef under the EC surplus food scheme in 1993-94 is available in the Library. The 28 organisations designated in south Yorkshire have so far received allocations for over 100,000 eligible people. It is for the organisations to arrange distributions which best reflect their circumstances.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon her departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Jack: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

Agricultural Imports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the value of imports *(a)* into the United Kingdom and *(b)* into the EU of agricultural products analysed by suitable category of product from (i) Russia, (ii) Hungary and (iii) Czechoslovakia in each of the three most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: The value of imports into the United Kingdom is shown in table 1 in thousands of pounds while those for imports into the member states of the European Community are shown in table 2 in thousands of ecus.

Data for the whole of 1993 are not yet available. Prior to 1993 no separate data were collected for Russia.

Value of imports to United Kingdom from countries listed 1990

(£'000)

Division	Former USSR	Hungary	Czechoslovakia
00	56	53	75
01	—	2,667	383
02	—	—	—
03	14,291	8	27
04	33	81	—
05	178	8,156	877
06	—	243	105
07	2,185	122	91
08	285	1,324	171
09	—	25	—
11	1,021	2,903	1,039
22	187	240	—
Section 4	193	53	8

Value of imports to United Kingdom from countries listed 1991

(£'000)

Division	Former USSR	Hungary	Czechoslovakia
00	73	89	14
01	—	1,334	116
02	0	6	1
03	12,077	1	57
04	29	141	—
05	50	6,419	614
06	138	28	95
07	32	145	68
08	230	467	48
09	3	94	—
11	875	3,779	1,592
22	620	295	—
Section 4	475	90	613

Value of imports to United Kingdom from countries listed 1992

(£'000)

Division	Former USSR	Hungary	Czechoslovakia
00	47	50	118
01	36	2,394	—
02	—	1	—
03	22,556	72	58
04	20	68	7
05	43	6,415	696
06	6	21	118
07	20	83	65
08	131	435	—
09	—	51	—
11	992	5,471	2,341
22	747	255	4
Section 4	6	806	20

Data Source: Central Statistical Office—MA 20.

CODE DEFINITIONS:
00 Live animals other than those in '03' definition.
01 Meat and meat preparations.
02 Dairy products and birds' eggs.
03 Fish—not marine animals—crustaceans, molluscs and aquatic invertebrates and preparations thereof.
04 Cereals and cereal preparations.
05 Vegetables and fruit.
06 Sugar, sugar preparations and honey.
07 Coffee, tea, cocoa, spices, and manufactures thereof.
08 Feeding stuff for animals—excluding unmilled cereals.
09 Miscellaneous edibile products and preparations.
11 Beverages.
22 Oil seeds and oleaginous fruit.
4 Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes.

Imports to the EC from the former Soviet Union in 1990

(thousand ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	10,196	12	0	492	1,040	8,250	88	0	313	0	0	1
01	231	17	88	8	0	5	0	40	0	70	0	3
02	3,322	430	1,860	740	262	0	0	0	30	0	0	0
03	127,669	24,370	2,843	6,230	9,577	3,634	20,069	5	32,340	296	6,241	22,264
04	651	0	343	32	150	0	123	0	3	0	0	0
05	18,649	946	603	649	11,852	2,558	384	0	294	749	0	614
06	6,313	0	1	880	5,179	0	0	0	253	0	0	0
07	424	8	12	87	192	0	118	0	7	0	0	0

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
08	1,114	7	0	175	48	0	400	0	1	0	51	432
09	280	12	9	146	19	18	63	0	0	0	0	13
11	25,523	818	438	869	16,663	1,687	1,557	31	90	2,364	25	981
22	7,593	3	931	896	2,723	1,079	258	0	4	1,418	0	281
4	6,212	814	2,186	1,838	1,330	35	9	0	0	0	0	0

Imports to the EC from the former Soviet Union in 1991

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	6,745	101	41	797	745	4,650	105	0	294	0	0	12
01	349	117	0	28	0	145	0	0	2	57	0	0
02	3,159	0	461	1,585	258	442	0	0	369	44	0	0
03	177,822	21,215	2,431	16,930	20,526	3,379	16,510	0	46,782	300	11,960	37,789
04	730	0	181	22	433	0	94	0	0	0	0	0
05	41,659	417	4,192	1,339	31,972	1,972	148	0	337	646	0	636
06	11,064	25	47	936	5,522	15	174	0	4,027	0	0	268
07	438	0	0	93	292	0	53	0	0	0	0	0
08	2,387	0	0	89	608	41	329	0	401	0	124	795
09	341	30	2	276	17	6	0	10	0	0	0	0
11	24,083	698	576	1,487	15,394	1,099	783	26	83	2,526	21	1,390
22	26,136	300	526	1,148	2,240	13,182	893	0	16	4,476	2,540	815
4	4,406	410	9	161	2,718	52	677	0	16	352	0	11

Imports to the EC from the former Soviet Union in 1992

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	1,323	8	0	157	175	915	62	0	0	5	0	1
01	296	0	0	26	0	97	80	0	0	93	0	0
02	1,019	0	227	302	14	282	20	0	174	0	0	0
03	78,615	7,219	1,064	4,865	9,470	1,523	31,215	0	10,601	60	5,080	7,518
04	374	0	0	1	344	0	29	0	0	0	0	0
05	15,925	126	816	96	13,811	501	81	0	230	175	0	89
06	4,357	0	220	22	1,040	24	58	238	2,409	0	0	346
07	345	7	0	116	184	0	34	0	0	0	0	4
08	2,791	0	0	0	31	191	134	0	590	0	75	1,770
09	198	0	0	53	0	145	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	9,266	389	455	442	4,360	559	972	25	6	1,118	0	940
22	30,480	0	0	135	15	23,609	1,054	0	0	1,979	1,019	2,669
4	270	0	11	0	151	0	3	0	0	0	0	105

Source: EUROSTAT.

Imports to the EC from Hungary in 1990

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	71,675	2,478	3,134	668	3,345	57,974	100	0	37	3,399	0	540
01	306,866	48,731	24,487	6,018	121,903	88,476	2,490	0	1,681	7,451	0	5,629
02	6,014	812	470	1,189	713	2,046	0	0	105	580	0	99
03	3,650	15	390	12	1,052	2,028	11	0	9	1	0	132
04	20,041	4,012	942	1,845	9,189	3,715	113	0	7	0	56	162
05	135,980	5,369	3,689	11,191	88,369	8,596	12,089	69	2,929	2,610	178	891
06	13,973	2,185	235	505	6,397	4,074	359	30	33	37	0	118
07	13,170	1,218	159	1,876	9,210	141	190	0	294	0	0	82
08	25,534	608	167	149	4,222	16,906	2,075	292	233	477	0	405
09	3,339	119	24	1,034	2,028	93	34	0	5	1	0	1
11	12,140	330	126	327	7,033	82	3,989	73	146	30	0	4
22	22,906	2,488	889	1,470	12,344	4,757	424	0	199	17	0	318
4	12,143	444	1,074	4,444	2,300	3,209	42	0	303	0	0	327

Imports to the EC from Hungary in 1991

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	92,830	3,092	191	560	9,241	69,587	127	0	14	9,177	30	811
01	351,757	52,584	22,859	4,205	164,373	83,243	1,161	0	2,795	11,711	284	8,542
02	4,752	103	237	854	614	1,609	9	0	11	1,093	0	222
03	3,539	61	266	29	1,054	2,074	1	0	0	0	0	54
04	30,197	3,450	296	1,336	19,266	5,148	267	0	40	38	88	268
05	225,447	8,315	9,505	16,606	154,184	15,492	10,432	0	4,962	2,473	133	3,345
06	11,810	1,374	124	393	5,788	4,034	51	0	5	18	0	23

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
07	14,623	1,041	196	1,791	10,471	279	216	0	315	25	22	267
08	34,730	150	176	737	5,631	24,865	729	164	0	1,975	0	303
09	7,441	26	71	1,092	5,638	459	132	0	12	9	2	0
11	16,395	232	280	376	9,038	36	6,066	86	171	85	0	25
22	30,435	1,954	582	2,073	14,005	10,061	524	0	424	148	0	666
4	17,299	762	2,426	3,848	3,434	4,506	1,293	0	46	0	0	984

Imports to the EC from Hungary in 1992

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	84,740	2,149	175	152	8,080	63,570	66	0	6	10,302	0	240
01	326,171	54,900	13,195	4,366	159,869	69,836	2,519	0	1,134	5,255	218	14,879
02	1,870	112	33	141	712	235	2	0	130	409	0	96
03	4,350	26	217	4	1,691	2,221	102	0	14	72	0	3
04	28,096	2,993	487	1,342	17,500	4,199	133	0	78	806	38	520
05	189,252	5,279	6,284	14,452	134,758	8,237	10,026	22	4,715	1,309	510	3,660
06	10,150	692	141	451	5,660	3,093	30	0	68	14	0	1
07	17,071	1,429	1,327	1,243	12,193	275	118	0	292	0	52	142
08	27,856	479	296	225	5,696	20,051	567	141	3	163	0	235
09	7,335	3	14	795	4,979	1,444	77	0	1	0	22	0
11	21,909	309	428	367	13,192	110	7,112	79	227	62	0	23
22	29,650	1,760	570	2,710	16,111	6,472	700	0	763	29	10	525
4	14,048	1,668	1,116	3,638	3,543	2,577	1,141	0	55	297	0	13

Source: Eurostat.

Imports to the EC from Czechoslovakia in 1990

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	19,064	1,054	173	215	4,280	13,079	105	14	35	99	0	10
01	64,634	5,643	579	1,395	37,381	11,112	433	0	2,349	3,238	439	2,065
02	19,796	4	7,645	6,318	2,169	2,005	0	0	90	1,261	0	304
03	4,665	563	207	51	3,031	701	39	0	7	0	0	66
04	9,588	15	1,691	5,117	2,747	1	0	0	17	0	0	0
05	46,859	369	6,557	1,709	35,002	439	1,046	0	1,067	303	298	69
06	7,201	43	78	18	5,904	818	147	0	0	0	0	193
07	2,187	0	15	296	1,486	4	118	0	0	10	0	258
08	4,751	0	0	0	4,091	29	631	0	0	0	0	0
09	1,329	0	133	119	157	920	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	12,272	133	36	257	8,184	1,614	1,473	0	39	125	0	411
22	1,937	0	0	0	1,936	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	5,796	4	0	1,578	2,966	1,244	4	0	0	0	0	0

Imports to the EC from Czechoslovakia in 1991

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	18,599	822	162	178	6,494	9,871	43	0	24	538	372	95
01	41,958	2,252	825	700	24,312	8,850	456	0	1,036	2,553	0	974
02	11,289	235	1,169	4,152	2,306	920	1	0	68	1,284	80	1,074
03	7,344	725	541	411	4,669	788	81	0	7	0	0	122
04	11,792	0	2,397	2,202	7,129	29	0	0	10	0	0	25
05	78,522	930	7,580	3,522	63,538	394	691	8	639	285	183	752
06	8,377	127	0	23	7,285	320	136	0	57	5	0	424
07	2,585	1	17	414	1,730	92	86	0	0	7	0	238
08	16,744	4	236	241	15,613	391	68	108	2	0	0	81
09	1,235	2	0	23	320	886	0	0	4	0	0	0
11	22,338	181	45	191	16,215	1,993	2,756	1	25	205	0	726
22	3,485	41	0	121	2,704	487	0	0	93	39	0	0
4	9,545	0	11	1,411	7,278	734	29	0	0	0	0	82

Imports to the EC from Czechoslovakia in 1992

(thousands ECU)

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
00	36,323	746	647	116	16,299	14,723	150	0	33	2,865	415	329
01	31,306	1,413	146	19	19,335	8,834	0	0	147	851	233	328
02	4,930	543	135	536	2,955	299	0	0	94	248	0	120
03	9,952	1,004	578	609	6,664	804	82	0	8	1	2	200
04	4,946	9	1,335	185	3,305	100	9	0	2	1	0	0
05	76,363	1,188	4,487	4,186	63,405	460	819	22	1,050	68	154	524

Codes	EC 12 Total	France	Belgium/ Luxembourg	Netherlands	FR Germany	Italy	United Kingdom	Ireland	Denmark	Greece	Portugal	Spain
06	6,337	26	67	97	5,251	312	154	0	14	377	0	39
07	3,749	9	16	685	2,572	139	134	0	7	9	0	178
08	33,706	0	182	353	31,933	739	0	420	0	0	0	79
09	2,673	18	55	1,167	1,027	406,0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	28,321	425	104	388	21,042	2,052	3,192	9	26	341	0	742
22	13,355	6	320	215	8,036	4,685	12	0	73	0	0	8
4	7,039	37	6	1,554	5,223	193	26	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Eurostat.
Code definitions:
00 Live animals other than those in '03' defintion.
01 Meat and meant preparations.
02 Dairy products and birds' eggs.
03 Fish—not marine animals—crustaceans, molluscs and aquatic invertebrates and preparations thereof.
04 Cereals and cereal preparations.
05 Vegetables and fruit.
06 Sugar, sugar preparations and honey.
07 Coffee, tea cocoa, spices and manufactures thereof.
08 Feeding stuff for animals—excluding unmilled cereals.
09 Miscellaneous edible products and preparations.
11 Beverages.
22 Oil seeds and oleaginous fruit.
4 Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes.

Food Labelling

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will bring forward legislation requiring improved food labelling by food manufacturers.

Mr. Jack: The food labelling regulations will be amended shortly to provide a standard format for the provision of nutrition information. We also plan to consolidate these regulations this year, because of the many amendments which have been made to them since 1984. I do not believe that further regulation is necessary in advance of decisions on several labelling issues in the European Community.

Farm and Conservation Grants

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evaluation she has made of the horticultural elements of her Department's farm and conservation grants scheme.

Mr. Jack: An evaluation of the horticultural elements of the farm and conservation grant scheme was completed in May 1993 by Dr. Ilbery of Coventry university and Dr. Bowler of the university of Leicester. A copy of the evaluation has been placed in the Library of the House.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the cost of advertising by her Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Expenditure on advertising by MAFF in the financial year 1982-83 and each subsequent year was as follows:

	£
1982-83	3,000
1983-84	27,000
1984-85	26,000
1985-86	29,000
1986-87	54,000
1987-88	12,000
1988-89	380,000
1989-90	116,000
1990-91	53,000
1991-92	262,000
1992-93	
April	13,000
May	Nil
June	Nil
July	Nil
August	Nil
September	475,000
October	Nil
November	Nil
December	Nil
January	6,000
February	Nil
March	Nil

Figures prior to 1982-83 are not available in this form since they do not distinguish between expenditure on advertising and other paid publicity.

Organic Farming

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will set out, for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available, the balance of trade for organic food produce, both in terms of value in real terms and as a percentage of all foods.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 11 January]:* Trade statistics do not separately identify organic food.

Estimates suggest, however, that about two thirds of organic food consumed in the United Kingdom is imported. Some of this, but it is not known how much, is attributable to such factors as climate. The total organic market is very small, representing less than 1 per cent. of all food sales.

DEFENCE

Exercise Hadrian's Wall

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties by *(a)* helicopters and *(b)* fixed-wing aircraft took place (i) in the Hunterston area and (ii) at other locations during Exercise Hadrian's Wall; and how many of these took place at night.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 117 sorties were flown during Exercise Hadrian's Wall, 104 by helicopter and 13 by fixed-wing aircraft. Of these, four helicopters sorties were flown in the Hunterston area; 41 sorties were flown at night.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received about *(a)* low flying and *(b)* other activity connected with Exercise Hadrian's Wall.

Mr. Hanley: My Department's air staff secretariat received 12 complaints or inquiries about low flying in areas affected by Exercise Hadrian's Wall, not all of which were necessarily connected with the exercise. Two further complaints were received about other activity connected with the exercise.

Departmental Records

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had with the Lord Chancellor's Department in regard to the withholding of departmental records on Anglo-American mutual defence co-operation under section 3(4) of the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, in preparation for the most recent release of official papers from the Public Records Office.

Mr. Hanley: In accordance with the Public Records Act 1958, MOD records withheld under section 3(4) are reviewed, on a rolling programme, every 10 years. Records may be withheld individually or under blanket arrangements, covering certain classes or records such as those relating to security, intelligence and nuclear matters.

Records may continue to be withheld under the blanket arrangements without reference to the Lord Chancellor. Individual records withheld require separate reference to the Lord Chancellor for his approval.

Due to the very large number of records reviewed under these procedures it is not possible to identify, without disproportionate cost, records which may have been withheld under a very broad category such as Anglo-American defence co-operation.

Air Transport (Outsize Loads)

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's current policy on the air transportation of outsize loads, including the Challenger main battle tank, Warrior mechanised infantry combat vehicle and multiple launch rocket system.

Mr. Hanley: Outsize loads are normally transported by sea or land. If these needed to be moved by air, we have a bilateral agreement with the United States for the use of their aircraft and plans for the use of chartered civil wide-bodied aircraft.

West Freugh Airfield

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what night flying facilities are available at West Freugh airfield.

Mr. Hanley: West Freugh airfield is capable of providing all the facilities necessary for night flying; it is equipped with runway, taxi-way and approach lighting and air traffic, crash, fire and refuelling facilities can be made available in support of night flying detachments.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, locations, aircraft types and circumstances of all incidents occurring in each year since 1988 in which a public complaint about low flying led to an investigation which concluded that the aircraft concerned was in breach of low flying regulations.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested could not be provided without disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what comparative statistical information on the safety record of different air forces while flying in Flag exercises underlay the statement in his Department's memorandum to the Committee of Public Accounts inquiry into low flying training—HC 241-i, Session 1989-90, appendix 1, paragraph 7—on the safety record of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Hanley: The statement is borne out by United States Air Force statistical records of all aspects of FLAG Exercise flying. The RAF has been a major participant in these exercises since 1977 during which time it has lost four aircraft. This is some 7·8 per cent. of the total number of FLAG accidents suffered by all participating nations up to October 1990.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date night low level training by Royal Air Force Harrier GR7s re-commenced after the summer of 1993; and what are the projected dates for commencement of night low level training by numbers 3 and 4 squadrons.

Mr. Hanley: Royal Air Force Harrier GR7s resumed night low flying on 28 September 1993. One of the two squadrons mentioned is planned to commence night flying in September 1994 and the other in September 1995; the order has yet to be decided.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the regulations for practice interception of aircraft in the United Kingdom low flying system *(a)* by similar aircraft types and *(b)* by dissimilar aircraft types since the accident to a Royal Air Force Jaguar on 12 September 1990.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures are used to ensure separation of military aircraft, operating without lights at night in the low flying system, from civil aircraft operating in the flight information region.

Mr. Hanley: There are two such procedures: notices to airmen and separation by height.

Laser-guided Bomb

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many tenders have been received for the low-level laser-guided bomb programme; and if he will make a statement on the projected dates for project milestones for this programme.

Mr. Aitken: Three companies responded following the invitation to tender issued last year. Of these, two were invited to submit best and final offers which are currently

under consideration. Project milestones will be established once the weapons contractor has been selected and final negotiations are complete.

RAF Edzell

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel are currently employed at the US Navy facility at RAF Edzell.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently 42 British military personnel employed at the US Navy facility at RAF Edzell.

NATO Infrastructure Programme

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce shared civil-military usage of *(a)* existing military infrastructure facilities funded by the NATO infrastructure programme and *(b)* future NATO infrastructure programme facilities.

Mr. Hanley: Certain military infrastructure facilities funded by the NATO infrastructure programme are already shared with civil users. The possibility of shared usage will be taken into account for all future NATO infrastructure facilities.

Pilot Training

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual continuation training requirement, in hours, for simulator training for *(a)* Tornado GR1/1A pilots and *(b)* Harrier GR5/GR7 pilots.

Mr. Hanley: The annual continuation training requirement for simulator training for GR1/1A and Harrier GR5/GR7 pilots is 20 hours.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the annual continuation training hours requirements for fully combat-ready front-line pilots in *(a)* Tornado GR1/1A pilots and *(b)* Harrier GR5/GR7.

Mr. Hanley: To retain combat-ready status on Tornado GR1/1A and Harrier GR5/GR7, pilots must fly a minimum of 180 hours a year.

Birds (Radar)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to deploy radars in the United Kingdom for the purpose of monitoring concentrations and movements of birds.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently no plans to deploy radars in the United Kingdom for this purpose. However, a trial has established the feasibility of detecting birds on radar and a contract has been let in order to evaluate the development of a bird hazard warning system for the RAF.

Operation Distant Frontier

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military operations areas, instrument flight rules military training routes, visual flight rules military training routes, air-to-ground weapons ranges and electronic warfare ranges to which Royal Air Force aircraft have been granted access by the United States authorities during Distant Frontier deployments to Alaska.

Mr. Hanley: Military operations areas, training routes and ranges to which the RAF has been granted access by the United States authorities during Distant Frontier deployments to Alaska are as follows:

Military Operations Areas
Yukon One and Two
IFR Military Training Route
IR952
VFR Military Training Routes
VR1909 and VR1910
Weapons Range
R2202
Electronic Warfare Ranges
Tactical EW Simulators deployed in Weapons Ranges R2202 and R2205

Jetstream

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration he has given to the purchase of new Jetstream aircraft following his meeting with Jetstream managing director, Allan Macdonald; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has studied carefully the company's proposal to replace RN and RAF Jetstreams with new Jetstream Super 31s. There is, however, no current operational requirement, nor are there other grounds for replacing our existing Jetstreams, which can continue in service into the next century.

HMS Illustrious

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the report on the inquiry into the recent accident aboard HMS Illustrious; and if he will make a statement on the accident.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Illustrious is at present undergoing a refit in Devonport dockyard. On the morning of 7 January 1994 an accident occurred when a member of the ship's company fell into the machinery of the vessel's vertiflo stores lift. He suffered severe facial injuries and was transferred to a local hospital.

An investigation was immediately initiated by the ship to establish the circumstances which led to the accident. The report is an internal document produced for internal use and there are no plans to publish it. However, a copy would be made available to the individual concerned on request.

Empty Properties

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and location of vacant dwellings owned by his Department in the parliamentary constituencies of Plymouth, Drake, Plymouth, Devonport, and Plymouth, Sutton.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 December 1993 the Ministry of Defence owned the following vacant dwellings in the parliamentary constituencies of Plymouth, Drake, Plymouth, Devonport and Plymouth, Sutton:

	Plymouth Drake	*Plymouth Devonport*	*Plymouth Sutton*
Service married quarters	11	205	67
MOD civilian houses	0	5	0
Former married quarters in the process of being sold	27	17	26

	Plymouth Drake	Plymouth Devonport	Plymouth Sutton
TOTAL	38	227	93

The majority of the married quarters are either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation or are already allotted to service families who will be moving in shortly. I am not prepared to give the location of these properties on security grounds.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings are owned by his Department in each parliamentary constituency in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Hanley: Following is the information.

	Service married quarters	MOD civilian houses	Former married quarters in the process of sale	Total
North Devon	20	0	0	20
Exeter	5	0	0	5
Honiton	30	0	3	33
Plymouth Devonport	151	5	17	173
Plymouth Drake	11	0	27	38
Plymouth Sutton	67	0	26	93
Torridge and West Devon	10	0	0	10
Falmouth and Camborne	1	0	0	1
North Cornwall	161	0	0	161
St. Ives	85	0	0	85
South East Cornwall	2	0	0	2

The majority of the married quarters are either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation or are already allotted to service families who will be moving in shortly.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings are owned by his Department; and how many are currently vacant.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 December 1993 MOD owned 71,415 service married quarters of which 10,112 were vacant and at 30 September 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, 677 MOD civilian houses of which 134 were vacant. The majority of the vacant quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, already allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly or held for units returning from overseas as a result of the restructuring of the armed forces. In addition some 2,019 service married quarters, of which 1,275 were vacant and 456 civilian houses, of which 44 were vacant, were in the process of being sold.

HMS Tireless

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the report of the inquiry into the accident which occurred on HMS Tireless on 7 January; and if he will make a statement on the accident.

Mr. Hanley: On the afternoon of 7 January HMS Tireless was preparing for machinery trials in Devonport Dockyard. During this procedure a member of the ship's company was caught in a large spill of very hot water from the ship's propulsion system causing him to suffer burns. He was taken to a local hospital where his condition is now stable.

An investigation was immediately convened to investigate this accident. The report of that investigation is an internal document produced for internal use and there are no plans to publish the report. However, a copy would be made available to the individual concerned on request.

Private Schools

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average cost of the school place provided for the children of service personnel in independent and private schools in each year since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The MOD provides support to service parents for the education of their children by means of boarding school allowance; this is paid to assist eligible service parents in providing a stable education for their children in the face of the domestic turbulence frequently encountered in service life. The average amounts of boarding school allowance paid per service child for the years in question were:

Year	£
1990-91	5,897
1991-92	7,117
1992-93	7,719

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of sending children of service personnel to independent or private schools in each year since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost to the MOD of boarding school allowance for the years in question was:

Year	£ million
1990-91	105·61
1991-92	115·35
1992-93	116·72

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of children of service personnel in *(a)* Devon and *(b)* Cornwall whose place at independent or private schools were paid for by his Department, in each year since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the locations of children of service parents claiming boarding school allowance is not collected annually. The most recent figures, for 1992, are:

	Number
a. Devon	640
b. Cornwall	211

Departmental Properties

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings are owned by his Department in Plymouth.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 December 1993 the Ministry of Defence owned 2,548 married quarters and 11 civilian houses in the Plymouth area. In addition 70 former married quarters and two civilian houses were in the process of being sold.

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers will occupy RAF Brawdy following their arrival in August.

Mr. Hanley: On current plans, the advance elements of the 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers will occupy RAF Brawdy in August 1994 with the remainder of the battalion following in September 1994. The battalion is planned to remain there until 1996.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if RAF Brawdy is still being considered for longer-term Army barracks requirements.

Mr. Hanley: Yes, RAF Brawdy is being looked at as one of a number of options for the Army's longer-term barracks requirements.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Royal Welch Fusiliers will transfer from RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Hanley: On current plans, the 1st Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers will transfer from RAF Brawdy in the first half of 1996.

Army Apprentice College, Chepstow

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the cost of refurbishing the Army apprentice college, Chepstow, accommodation in the next two years.

Mr. Hanley: The latest estimate for refurbishing the Army apprentice college Chepstow to allow reroling as an infantry battalion barracks is approximately £16,000,000.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *918*, if he will give a full breakdown of the total annual support costs for helicopter search-and-rescue operations at RAF Chivenor after *(a)* 31 July 1994 and *(b)* 1 October 1995.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Aitken: The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

RAF Supply Depots

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for an examination by auditors of the findings of the equipment depot supplies report into RAF supply depots.

Mr. Hanley: The findings of the equipment supply depot report have been scrutinised by the senior finance officer of RAF Support Command and are fully open in the usual way to examination by the MOD's internal auditors and the NAO. In addition, and in response to concerns expressed, I have asked senior MOD officials outside the RAF Support Command structure to go over the analysis again on my behalf.

Ukraine

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent agreement reached with the Ukraine to dismantle its nuclear defences.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred to this in the House on 12 January. We warmly welcome this agreement and pay tribute to all the signatories. It is important that it be speedily implemented. I have placed in the Library of the House the text of the statement made on 14 January.

NATO

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the conditions under which countries are eligible to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

There are no fixed criteria for membership of NATO. Article 10 of the Washington treaty allows the members of the alliance, by unanimous agreement, to offer membership to any other European state which is in a position to further the principles of the alliance and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Assaults)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of assaults *(a)* by prisoners on prisoners and *(b)* by prisoners on staff, in each of the last three months, for each prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 17 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking for a list of the number of assaults *(a)* by prisoners on prisoners and *(b)* by prisoners on staff, in each of the last three months, for each prison in England and Wales.

The latest available information for the number of assaults proved at adjudication under the prison discipline system for the last three months is given in the attached table.

Assaults October-December 1993

Prison Establishments, areas	*October 1993*			*November 1993*			*December 1993*		
	Staff and others	*Prisoners*	*Total*	*Staff and others*	*Prisoners*	*Total*	*Staff and others*	*Prisoners*	*Total*
All establishments	268	210	478	311	212	523	256	174	430
North East	11	14	25	23	14	37	13	11	24
Acklington	—	1	1	1	—	1	3	—	3
Castington	2	3	5	2	2	4	—	2	2
Durham	2	—	2	2	2	4	4	2	6
Frankland	1	—	1	5	2	7	—	3	3
Full Sutton	2	3	5	7	2	9	3	1	4
Holme House	3	—	3	2	2	4	3	2	5
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Low Newton	1	7	8	4	4	8	—	1	1
North West	11	14	25	10	18	28	13	15	28
Garth	4	1	5	1	4	5	2	—	2
Haverigg	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hindley	1	8	9	—	4	4	—	7	7
Kirkham	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
Lancaster	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Lancaster Farms	2	2	4	4	6	10	6	4	10
Preston	4	1	5	4	3	7	4	2	6
Thorn Cross	—	2	2	1	—	1	—	1	1
Wymott	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire	8	10	18	17	7	24	10	11	21
Askham Grange	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deerbolt	—	3	3	1	1	2	3	1	4
Everthorpe	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	2	2	—	1	1	—	1	1
Hull	8	1	9	14	2	16	4	3	7
Northallerton	—	—	—	2	1	3	3	3	6
Rudgate	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thorpe Arch	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wetherby	—	4	4	—	2	2	—	3	3
Trans-Pennine	22	10	32	37	8	45	22	9	31
Leeds	8	6	14	8	5	13	12	3	15
Liverpool	5	1	6	4	—	4	2	3	5
Manchester	—	1	1	2	—	2	—	—	—
New Hall	1	—	1	3	—	3	1	1	2
Risley	7	—	7	15	1	16	5	1	6
Styal	—	—	—	4	1	5	2	—	2
Wakefield	1	2	3	1	1	2	—	1	1
East Midlands	18	14	32	21	19	40	11	9	20
Lincoln	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	2
Lindholme	—	—	—	1	2	3	—	—	—
Moorland	14	12	26	15	15	30	8	6	14
Morton Hall	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Sea Camp	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nottingham	—	—	—	2	—	2	1	—	1
Ranby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stocken	3	1	4	2	—	2	1	—	1
Whatton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
Mercia	9	11	20	5	11	16	4	17	21
Brockhill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drake Hall	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shrewsbury	1	2	3	2	1	3	—	2	2
Stoke Heath	3	3	6	—	1	1	3	2	5
Sudbury/Foston	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swinfen Hall	4	1	5	—	3	3	—	—	—
Werrington	1	5	6	3	6	9	1	13	14
Central	34	20	54	33	25	58	26	24	50
Ashwell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Birmingham	2	—	2	5	—	5	2	1	3
Brinsford	9	5	14	5	8	13	6	9	15
Featherstone	—	1	1	2	—	2	2	—	2
Gartree	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	1	1
Glen Parva	6	12	18	9	11	20	8	12	20
Leicester	4	1	5	—	1	1	1	1	2

Prison Establishments, areas	October 1993			November 1993			December 1993		
	Staff and others	Prisoners	Total	Staff and others	Prisoners	Total	Staff and others	Prisoners	Total
Long Lartin	6	—	6	10	2	12	2	—	2
Stafford	6	1	7	1	3	4	5	—	5
Chilterns	20	29	49	22	22	44	19	21	40
Aylesbury	7	7	14	6	4	10	7	3	10
Bullingdon	2	—	2	10	1	11	4	1	5
Coldingley	2	—	2	—	—	—	2	—	2
Huntercombe/Finnamore Wood	—	3	3	—	2	2	1	4	5
The Mount	1	—	1	1	1	2	2	—	2
Onley	5	16	21	4	12	16	1	12	13
Reading	3	3	6	1	2	3	2	1	3
Wales and the West	5	6	11	8	11	19	7	2	9
Bristol	2	—	2	1	—	1	1	—	1
Cardiff	—	3	3	3	7	10	—	2	2
Eastwood Park	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Erlestoke	2	—	2	—	1	1	—	—	—
Gloucester	—	3	3	1	—	1	1	—	1
Leyhill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pucklechurch	1	—	1	2	2	4	4	—	4
Swansea	—	—	—	1	1	2	1	—	1
Usk/Prescoed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wessex	12	7	19	7	5	12	7	5	12
Channings Wood	2	—	2	2	1	3	—	—	—
Dartmoor	3	—	3	3	—	3	1	2	3
Dorchester	1	2	3	—	1	1	—	—	—
Exeter	5	1	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Guys Marsh	—	1	1	—	3	3	3	—	3
Portland	—	2	2	—	—	—	1	2	3
Shepton Mallet	—	1	1	2	—	2	1	—	1
The Verne	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	2
London North	25	20	45	26	24	50	28	11	39
Bedford	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Grendon/Spring Hill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Holloway	7	7	14	5	9	14	5	4	9
Littlehey	3	1	4	1	—	1	2	—	2
Oxford	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pentonville	5	—	5	5	4	9	5	2	7
Wellingborough	—	2	2	—	—	—	1	—	1
Whitemoor	1	2	3	3	3	6	4	3	7
Woodhill	1	5	6	2	7	9	5	—	5
Wormwood Scrubs	7	3	10	9	1	10	6	2	8
East Anglia	17	18	35	21	8	29	12	8	20
Blundeston	2	5	7	2	—	2	—	1	1
Bullwood Hall	3	—	3	—	1	1	2	—	2
Chelmsford	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	3
Highpoint	4	1	5	—	—	—	3	—	3
Hollesley Bay	1	4	5	4	2	6	—	—	—
Norwich	2	6	8	3	4	7	2	3	5
Wayland	4	1	5	11	—	11	4	2	6
London South	23	21	44	33	15	48	41	11	52
Albany	1	3	4	—	2	2	2	1	3
Belmarsh	7	—	7	11	1	12	7	1	8
Brixton	3	6	9	4	—	4	4	2	6
Camp Hill	—	—	—	—	2	2	2	—	2
Feltham	4	10	14	10	8	18	8	6	14
Latchmere House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Parkhurst	1	—	1	1	1	2	9	—	9
Wandsworth	7	2	97	7	1	8	9	1	10
Kent	13	8	21	14	15	29	12	13	25
Aldington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canterbury	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	2	2
Cookham Wood	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	1
Dover	—	2	2	1	2	3	1	4	5
East Sutton Park	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Elmley	3	—	3	2	2	4	1	—	1
Maidstone	1	1	2	—	1	1	2	—	2
Rochester	2	4	6	4	8	12	1	4	5
Stanford Hill	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
Swaleside	6	—	6	4	2	6	7	2	9

Prison Establishments, areas	October 1993			November 1993			December 1993		
	Staff and others	Prisoners	Total	Staff and others	Prisoners	Total	Staff and others	Prisoners	Total
South Coast	12	2	14	5	8	13	15	5	20
Downview	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ford	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haslar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
High Down	6	1	7	4	4	8	8	1	9
Kingston	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewes	1	—	1	1	1	2	2	—	2
Northeye	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Send	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Winchester	4	1	5	—	3	3	5	3	8
Contracted out Prisons	28	6	34	29	2	31	16	2	18
Blakenhurst	26	5	31	24	2	26	14	2	16
The Wolds	2	1	3	5	—	5	2	—	2

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Political Advisers

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the political advisers to Ministers in October 1993 were in which Department; how many were on which salary spine point; how many were aged under 34, 34 and 35 years and above; and how many had served less than two years, two but less than three years, three but less than four years and four years and over.

Mr. Waldegrave: In October 1993, 30 political advisers were serving in 18 departments as shown in table 1. The numbers on each salary spine point is given in table 2. Three advisers were not paid on the normal salary spine points. Of those, two were on secondment and their salary was reimbursed to their employer. The third was paid on a personal basis.

Information on the ages of special advisers is not held centrally.

For severence payment purposes, 18 political advisers had served in their current appointments less than two years, eight had served two but less than three years, three had served three but less than four years and one had served four years and over.

Table 1

Department	Number of political advisers
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	1
Cabinet Office (including Prime Minister's Office, Chief Whips Office, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office)	8
Ministry of Defence	1
Department of Education	1
Department of Employment	1
Department of the Environment	2
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	2
Department of Health	1
Home Office	2
House of Lords	1
Department of National Heritage	1
Northern Ireland Office	1
Scottish Office	2
Department of Social Security	1
Department of Trade and Industry	1
Department of Transport	1
Her Majesty's Treasury	2
Welsh Office	1

Table 2

Spine point	Number on spine point
1	—
2	1
3	—
4	—
5	2
6	1
7	—
8	2
9	1
10	1
11	1
12	—
13	1
14	1
15	1
16	—
17	—
18	1
19	—
20	—
21	2
22	1
23	1
24	4
25	—
26	1
27	—
28	4
29	—
30	1

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 18th January 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many independent inspections of the magistrates courts system he estimates will be employed; and what is his estimate of their annual pay.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The magistrates courts service inspectorate employs the following inspectors:

Chief Inspector
4 Senior Inspectors
12 Inspectors

The inspectorate's annual salary budget in 1994-95 for these 17 individuals will be £867,492.

Magistrates Clerks' Committees

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates' clerks committees the Lord Chancellor has met in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and if he will list each venue he has visited and organisation he has met.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has not attended any formal meetings of magistrates courts committees, nor have all the members of any magistrates' courts committee attended a meeting with him. However, during his visits to magistrates courts, meetings with representative bodies from the service, meeting with magistrates and staff from particular areas and attendance as a speaker at gatherings of magistrates, he has met and talked to members of various magistrates courts committees.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates courts have closed since 1979; how many court closures are currently scheduled.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The provision of magistrates court house accommodation is a matter for the courts committee for the area concerned in conjunction with the local paying authority. The Department has no central record of the number of magistrates courthouses that have been closed or are scheduled to be closed. A local authority that is aggrieved by a decision of a magistrates court committee to close a courthouse has the right of appeal to the Lord Chancellor. In 1993 the Lord Chancellor dealt with six appeals.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his estimate of the annual cost of supporting the courts units of management.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The administrative costs of the magistrates courts service depend on decisions taken by magistrates' courts committees, the local managers of the service, about how the service in their area is organised. It is likely that costs will vary between magistrates courts committee areas, according to their decisions taken in the light of local circumstances.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what principles and objectives he has in mind in the amalgamation of magistrates courts committees.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The objectives of the reforms set out in the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" included yielding improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, and securing maximum co-operation in the management of the service with other parts of the criminal justice system. The Government believe that a reduction in the number of areas from the present 105 to 50 to 60 would provide a good balance between the local character of the service and operational needs.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many individual letters the Lord Chancellor has received from magistrates concerning his court reforms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has received approximately 300 letters from members of the magistrates courts service and other interested bodies, the majority of which were from serving magistrates. However, it is not possible to give an accurate figure of the number of magistrates that have written to the Lord Chancellor since this information is not recorded.

"A New Framework for Local Justice"

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many representations he has received on the White Paper, "A New Framework for Local Justice"; and if he will list each organisation that responded.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In addition to 964 responses to the consultation documents issued by his Department the Lord Chancellor has received in the region of 950 representations on the White Paper, comprising approximately 650 letters from honourable Members and approximately 300 letters from members of the magistrates' courts service and other interested bodies, the majority of which were from serving magistrates. He has also received personal representations from 10 magistrates. A list of the organisations that responded appears at the back of each of the consultation documents. Copies of these documents are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those persons and organisations that have protested to him concerning *(a)* judicial independence, *(b)* chief justices clerks, *(c)* fixed-term contracts and *(d)* performance-related pay.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In addition to 964 responses to the consultation documents issued by his Department the Lord Chancellor has received in the region of 950 letters about the White Paper, comprising approximately 650 from hon. Members and approximately 300 from members of the magistrates courts service and other interested bodies. However, it is not possible to break down these figures into the specific topics requested since the information has not been recorded in this form.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment the Lord Chancellor has made of the extent of consultation on the White Paper, "A New Framework for Local Justice"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since the publication of the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" in February 1992, 11 consultative documents on various aspects of the reforms have been issued. The reforms have also regularly been discussed by the Magistrates' Courts Consultative Council. The Lord Chancellor has taken careful note of respondents' comments in reaching conclusions about how the White Paper will be implemented.

Courts Inspectorate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his estimate of establishing and of running annually the courts inspectorate.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The cost of establishing and of running annually the magistrates courts service inspectorate is estimated to be £1·005 million for the set-up costs in 1993-94 and £1·8 million a year in subsequent years when the inspectorate will be fully operational and undertaking a full programme of inspections. This does not include overhead costs, such as general accommodation and other charges, which are not separately identified and which are met from a central budget.

Magistrates

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement concerning fixed-term contracts and performance-related pay for magistrates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The majority of magistrates are unpaid lay volunteers, so there is no possibility that they could have fixed-term contracts or performance-related pay. There is no proposal that stipendiary magistrates should be placed on fixed-term contracts or that their pay should be linked to their performance.

Courts Inspectorate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the guiding principles in the training of independent inspectors.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since the inspectorate is operationally independent of the Lord Chancellor's Department, the training of the inspectors is being undertaken by the chief inspector and her senior management team. It builds on the existing competencies of the inspectors who have been recruited from a wide range of backgrounds.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq and Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what record has been kept of representations made to the Prime Minister by members of the public in regard to Iraq since 1985.

The Prime Minister: Records of representations from members of the public in the form of correspondence on this and other topics that have been received by my office since November 1990, and to which I or my office have replied, have been retained. No records exist prior to April 1989.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if any request has been made by *(a)* Lord Justice Scott or *(b)* members of the public to Her Majesty's Government to permit cameras and tape recorders to be taken into and used in the Scott inquiry.

The Prime Minister: The procedures of the Scott inquiry are a matter for Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received and from whom in the last six months that the terms of reference or the workings of the Scott inquiry into arms for Iraq should be modified or changed.

The Prime Minister: In the last six months I have answered a written question from the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) concerning a change to the procedures of the inquiry, and a letter from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) seeking an extension to the inquiry's terms of reference. I have received no other requests for changes.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Prime Minister how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* himself, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his office; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

The Prime Minister: The information as requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Arms Sales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what records are held at 10 Downing street of a telephone conversation made between his predecessor and Mr. Frank Machon in regard to arms sales in January 1989.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, there have not been any conversations and there are no records.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a full list of all statements he has made, and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible completion date for the channel tunnel rail link, the dates on which each such statement was made and the possible completion date which was mentioned.

The Prime Minister: I have not made any such statements.

Crossrail

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a full list of all statements he has made and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible completion date for the crossrail project, the dates on which each such statement was made and the possible completion date which was mentioned.

The Prime Minister: I have made no statements nor has my Department issued any press notices which referred to a possible completion date for the crossrail project.

Broadcasting Acts

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what information he has received from the Irish Republic concerning its decision not to renew section 31 of the Irish Broadcasting Act 1960; when he received copies of guidelines issued to the staff of Irish broadcasting organisations following the non-renewal of section 31; what action he proposes concerning section 10 of the Broadcasting Act 1990; what representations he has received concerning households in the United Kingdom receiving television and radio broadcasts originating in the Irish Republic and observing different broadcasting requirements; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Irish Government's announcement of their decision was made immediately available to us, together with relevant background information. So far as the United Kingdom Broadcasting restrictions are concerned, I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 17 January, *Official Report*, column *369*. I have not received any representations concerning the reception of broadcasts originating in the Irish Republic.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what timetable he envisages for the introduction of his proposals for greater democracy in Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: The legislation for the 1994-95 election arrangements in Hong Kong will need to be passed into law by the Hong Kong Legislative Council by the time the Council rises for its summer recess in July.

The Council is currently considering the first stage of the legislation. The timing for the introduction of the second stage has yet to be decided.

Pakistan

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the cases of Salamat, Manzoor and Rehmat Masih, three Christians held in Gujiran-wala central gaol, Pakistan under the blasphemy laws; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There has been continuing parliamentary and public interest in these cases, which we have often raised with the Pakistani authorities. Most recently, I expressed our concern when I visited Pakistan last November. All three Christians have now been released on bail. Dates have not yet been set for their cases to be heard.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Goodlad: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report".

Major General Mohnke

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the German authorities about the possible prosecution of Major General Mohnke.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Jurisdiction in the case of General Mohnke lies with the German authorities, to whom we have given full co-operation in their investigation.

Social Development Summit

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preparations Her Majesty's Government have made for the 1995 World summit for social development in Copenhagen; and what progress has been made on the UN proposals for the establishment of a national committee on the summit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom intends to participate fully and constructively in preparations for the World summit for social development to ensure that it is a success. We are holding inter-departmental discussions to formulate the United Kingdom's approach to the summit, and have submitted a national report to the summit secretariat in New York to feed into the preparatory process.

We have no plans at present to establish a national committee on the summit. We will review this question following the first preparatory committee of the summit in February.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the total number of people killed in former Yugoslavia since the break-up of that country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have seen no reliable figures on the number of casualties since the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, but the numbers are very large.

Tibet

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the occupation of Tibet by China and to the reported human rights abuses there.

Mr. Goodlad: The situation in Tibet is a matter of serious concern. We and our European Union partners regularly raise human rights with the Chinese authorities, urging them to conform to internationally recognised standards of behaviour. We also encourage the Chinese authorities to enter, without pre-conditions, into a real dialogue with the Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, as the best means of achieving greater autonomy for the people of Tibet.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1993 to the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), *Official Report*, columns *968-69*, if he will place in the Library copies of *(a)* the Council's code of conduct governing public access to public documents and *(b)* the Council's code of conduct on the publication of formal votes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following documents have been placed in the Library of the House:

The code of conduct concerning public access to Council and Commission documents agreed by the Council on 6 December;

The Council decision on public access to Council documents, adopted on 20 December;

The amendments to articles 5(1) and 7(5) of the Rules of Procedure, on making votes public, agreed by the Council on 6 December, together with the code of conduct for the implementation of those articles by the Council.

Turkey

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *769*, what progress there has been in obtaining a response from the Turkish authorities to the representations made by Her Majesty's Government regarding the maltreatment of Manchester United supporters by Turkish police officers and others.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In his reply to the letter of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of 2 December the Turkish ambassador reported that details of the main allegations made by Manchester United supporters have been passed to the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara for an inquiry. The ambassador has promised to let my right hon. Friend have the results of the inquiry as soon as they are known.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Data Protection Registrar's powers are such that I do not consider such arrangements are necessary. Should he so wish, the registrar may inspect the one contract we have with an IT services supplier that involves the use of personal data held by my Department.

This relates to the "Charterline" service run on the citizens charter units behalf by IBM (UK) Ltd. at its Havant offices; this service was registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 in June 1993.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Primates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set a target date to end the use of non-EU sources of primates in research.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No target can be set until we can be confident that the EU will be self-sufficient in breeding non-human primates for research.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress made in the European Community in setting a target date after which the use of wild-caught primates in research will be prohibited; and when the group of national competent authorities established under directive 86/609 will make a statement on this subject.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The group of national competent authorities established under directive 86/609 has been giving active consideration to the problems associated with the elimination of the use of wild-caught primates in research, but I cannot at this stage predict what the outcome of their deliberations will be.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made as to the possibility of the EU becoming self-sufficient in breeding primates for its research purposes within the next five years; what resources are available for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The European Commission is now collating statistics on animal use and the availability of breeding stock but it is unlikely that the EU will be self-sufficient within the next five years.

Ford Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the projects now under *(a)* development and *(b)* consideration at Her Majesty's prison Ford, West Sussex, the cost of each project and if funding for each project has been approved and granted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 18 January 1994:

HM Prison Ford

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the projects under development and consideration at HM Prison Ford.

Work is currently being carried out to lay a new floor in the kitchen at an overall cost of £260,000. The sanitary recesses in A Wing are being refurbished at a cost of £10,000 per recess.

Projects under consideration include a new kitchen and dining facility, the options for which are currently being examined; the replacement of the sewage works at a cost of around £1 million; and the upgrading of the hutted accommodation. Design work has also been completed on a new sportshall, the estimated cost of which is £1·1 million. No funding has as yet been allocated for any of these schemes.

Probation

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he will measure efficiency and productivity in respect of future pay rounds in the probation service in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: In reaching a judgment about the productivity and efficiency of the probation service I shall have regard to the service's key performance indicators, as set out in the three year plan for 1994-97, a copy of which is in the Library.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to carry out a review of probation officer basic training in respect of the diploma in social work.

Mr. Maclean: Such a review is timely and I propose to announce its basis and terms of reference shortly.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will conduct the next review of probation national standards; and when the review will be completed.

Mr. Maclean: The review will take place over the first half of 1994 with a view to the publication of revised national standards in September.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the assistant chief officer grade in the probation service in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: I have at this stage no proposals for changes to this grade.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reduce the entry requirements for probation training in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: None at this stage, but I propose to review the qualifying training arrangements and to announce the basis of and terms of reference for the review shortly.

EC Nationals

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if nationals of the European Union and of the European Economic Area have the right to enter the United Kingdom *(a)* without an offer of employment but with the intention of looking for employment, *(b)* without the guarantee of having somewhere to live and *(c)* without having provided proof that they will not have recourse to public funds during their time in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: European Community and other European Economic Area nationals may enter the United Kingdom simply on production of a valid passport or national identity card, but can be refused entry on grounds of public policy, public security or public health.

The rights of nationals of European Community and other European Economic Area member states to reside in the United Kingdom are subject to the conditions and limitations laid down in European Community law, including, in the case of those wishing to reside without working, the requirements to have sufficient resources to avoid becoming a burden on the social security system.

Prisoners' Earnings

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department as to the handing over of money earned by inmates being held in penal establishments in England and Wales who are being deported from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The pay of prisoners awaiting deportation is not liable to be used to help defray the expenses of deportation. Money (apart from pay) belonging to a prisoner awaiting deportation is applied to defray the expenses of deportation and maintenance of the prisoner and his dependants until their departure from the United Kingdom.

Land Byelaws

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which local authorities in England have adopted a byelaw prohibiting the occupation of land within 300 yd of any dwelling house so as to cause injury, disturbance or annoyance to those living in the house.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Our records indicate that, prior to 1969 when the Home Office ceased to offer it to local authorities, this model byelaw was adopted by the following local authorities in England and Wales:

Beaumaris borough council
Bedfordshire county council
Bristol city council
Cornwall county council
Edmonton borough council
Epsom and Ewell borough council.
Evesham borough council
Flint borough council
Flint county council
Glamorgan county council
Harrow borough council
Hendon borough council
Hertfordshire county council
Huntingdon borough council
Leicester county council
Middlesex county council
Rhondda borough council
Southall borough council
Southampton county council
Uxbridge borough council
Wembley borough council
Willesden borough council
Wisbech borough council
Yorkshire (North Riding) county council

Police

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the expenditure *(a)* per officer and *(b)* per 100,000 population (i) in total, (ii) on vehicles, (iii) on buildings and (iv) on communications for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: An answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the capital programmes for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested, which is available only from April 1990, is set out in the table.

Capital Expenditure £ million

Authority	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
				(Provision)	
Avon and Somerset	8·010	7·356	6·097	6·948	10·359
Hampshire	1·523	3·607	3·747	4·867	4·311
Kent	1·532	2·778	3·751	4·068	3·672
Lancashire	2·654	4·133	5·908	4·014	4·607
South Wales	1·056	3·795	3·880	4·053	5·673
Thames Valley	7·325	5·190	5·283	4·806	4·681
All non-metropolitan	74·275	97·759	113·210	116·147	113·573
Welsh (non-metropolitan)	4·189	10·771	11·490	12·190	10·907

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of (i) arrests and (ii) prosecutions *(a)* per officer and *(b)* per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is contained in the tables. Information on prosecutions prior to 1983 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Arrests for all types of offence

	Police force area						*Total non-metropolitan*	
	South Wales	*Thames Valley*	*Kent*	*Lancashire*	*Avon and Somerset*	*Hampshire*	*England and Wales*	*Wales only*
Arrests per police officer								
1979	9	13	12	11	10	14	11	9
1980	10	13	12	12	11	14	11	11
1981	11	13	13	12	12	14	12	11
1982	14	15	13	12	13	14	13	13
1983	15	15	13	14	12	14	13	13
1984	16	14	13	16	13	14	13	15
1985	17	16	14	16	13	16	14	15
1986	14	14	14	15	11	16	13	13
1987	15	14	16	15	12	16	13	14
1988	16	14	16	16	12	17	14	15
1989	17	15	16	16	13	19	15	16
1990	18	16	15	18	14	20	15	17
1991	18	16	15	19	12	19	15	17
1992	18	15	17	19	11	19	15	17
Arrests per 100,000 population								
1979	2,236	2,146	2,324	2,458	2,211	2,608	2,205	2,131
1980	2,512	2,234	2,437	2,881	2,393	2,668	2,382	2,451
1981	2,764	2,365	2,528	2,915	2,669	2,686	2,482	2,569
1982	3,294	2,598	2,639	2,885	2,820	2,806	2,638	2,879
1983	3,503	2,695	2,590	3,270	2,782	2,761	2,708	3,023
1984	3,936	2,620	2,573	3,618	2,901	2,719	2,745	3,316
1985	4,090	2,777	2,783	3,529	2,947	3,079	2,835	3,469
1986	3,466	2,522	2,771	3,347	2,461	3,024	2,595	2,999
1987	3,626	2,508	3,119	3,468	2,601	3,150	2,774	3,195
1988	3,861	2,589	3,165	3,696	2,678	3,271	2,833	3,384
1989	4,042	2,931	3,108	3,845	2,822	3,651	3,037	3,567
1990	4,296	3,015	3,085	4,115	3,001	3,768	3,208	3,775
1991	4,363	2,997	3,146	4,451	2,768	3,717	3,269	3,913
1992	4,344	2,998	3,532	4,422	2,479	3,630	3,275	3,955

Persons proceeded against at magistrates courts for indictable offences

Police force area	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Prosecutions per police officer[1]										
South Wales	6	6	6	5	6	6	5	6	6	6
Thames Valley	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Kent	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Lancashire	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4
Avon and Somerset	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Hampshire	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Total non-metropolitan England and Wales	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Wales only	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Prosecutions per 100,000 population[1]										
South Wales	1,363	1,344	1,366	1,277	1,365	1,396	1,237	1,338	1,446	1,415
Thames Valley	738	665	648	603	608	621	588	699	713	703
Kent	745	665	667	631	674	626	505	571	470	490
Lancashire	1,143	1,157	1,139	1,027	1,105	1,103	959	1,025	1,004	962
Avon and Somerset	895	866	933	901	871	916	808	810	844	789
Hampshire	843	842	899	867	836	842	782	815	822	792
Total non-metropolitan England and Wales	906	886	887	813	855	868	790	838	869	855
Wales only	1,171	1,147	1,152	1,047	1,154	1,177	1,072	1,160	1,173	1,212

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of incidents requiring police deployment *(a)* per officer and *(b)* per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the currently available medical treatment for drug abuse within British prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Butler to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 18 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about medical treatment for drug abuse currently available in British prisons.

In England and Wales policy and guidance on this is set out in Circular Instruction 12/1991 and the resource manual "Caring for Drug Users"—a copy of which is/has been placed in the House of Commons Library. This covers Provision of Detoxification, General Health Care, Management of Drug Induced Psychiatric State, Harm Minimisation, Longer Term Treatment, General Lifestyles, Work etc. and Pre-Release Work.

The Prison Service is currently developing a strategy for dealing with drug misuse in prisons which includes a review of existing policy and advice in this area.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many known drug addicts have been identified within prison establishments in each year since 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Butler to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 18 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of known drug addicts in prisons for the years 1990 to 1993.

The number of prisoners reported by prison medical officers to the Addicts Index at the Home Office as required by the Misuse of Drugs (Notification & Supply to Addicts) Regulations 1993 follows.

Year	*Number*
1990	1,420
1991	1,747
1992	2,586

Data for 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many discoveries of *(a)* heroin, *(b)* cocaine and *(c)* cannabis were made by the Prison Service in each year since 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 18 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about discoveries of heroin, cocaine and cannabis in the years 1989 to 1993.

The following table shows the number of heroin, cocaine and cannabis finds from 1991 to 1993 reported to the Incident Management Support Unit of the Prison Service. Records prior to November 1990 are not held centrally.

	Heroin	*Cocaine*	*Cannabis*	*Total*
1991	72	50	2,333	2,455
1992	99	65	2,081	2,245
1993	156	65	3,371	3,592

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women serving prison sentences in England and Wales for drug offences who were not British nationals as at 10 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 18 January 1994:

DRUG OFFENCES

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women serving prison sentences in England and Wales for drug offences who were not British nationals as at 10 January.

The latest available provisional information is for 30 September 1993. On that date 767 foreign nationals (of whom 623 were male and 144 female) were recorded centrally as being under sentence for drugs offences, excluding any where drugs offences were not the principal offence. These figures include those born outside the UK for whom a nationality was not recorded.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the availability of prescribed methadone maintenance and withdrawal programmes within British prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Butler to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 18 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the availability of prescribed methadone maintenance and withdrawal programmes within British prisons.

In England and Wales policy and guidance relating to these matters are set out in Circular Instruction 12/1991 and the resource manual "Caring for Drug Users".

A detoxification programme should be offered, unless specifically contra-indicated, where a prisoner presents with signs of addiction which are verified by a prison medical officer. In the case of opiates a methadone detoxification programme is advised and details of suitable detoxification schedules are provided.

Current policy and advice is that methadone maintenance is not normally appropriate in prisons.

As with all medical treatment, decisions about individual treatment must be a matter for the clinical judgement of the doctor responsible.

The Prison Service is currently developing a strategy for dealing with drug misuse in prisons and is reviewing policy relating to methadone detoxification and maintenance as part of this work.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison staff have been *(a)* suspended and *(b)* disciplined for the possession or alleged possession or importation of an unlawful drug into prison establishments annually from 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director-General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 18 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of Prison Service staff who have been suspended and/or disciplined for the possession of drugs, or for trafficking drugs into or out of prison, since 1990.

The information available centrally is set out in the table below.

Year	Suspensions	Disciplinary action taken
1990	4	3
1991	5	4
1992	2	1
1993	1	1
1994	0	0
Total	12	9

There are three instances where disciplinary action was not taken. In two cases, the suspension was lifted when the members of staff involved were found not guilty of the criminal charges against them. In the remaining case the member of staff resigned before disciplinary action could be concluded.

Most of these cases concerned incidents away from the prison, and typically involve possession of small quantities of cannabis. In one case a member of staff was found guilty of possession of drugs and trafficking inside the prison.

Homosexual Prosecutions

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place in each of the past three years for which figures are available involving homosexual acts with those *(a)* under 18 years and *(b)* between 18 and 21 years.

Mr. Maclean: Available information on prosecutions under sections 12 and 13 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967, is given in the table.

Number of sales prosecuted for various homosexual offences 1989-92
England and Wales

Offence description/age of offender		1990	1991	1992
Sexual Offences Act 1966, Section 12 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967				
Buggery, including attempt, with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	under 18	38	35	23
	18 to 20	13	22	19
	21+	299	267	312
	Total	350	324	354
Buggery, including attempt, by a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	under 18	3	4	—
	18 to 20	3	1	2
	21+	24	26	38
	Total	30	31	40
Buggery, including attempt, by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 with consent	under 18	—	—	1
	18 to 20	1	2	1
	21+	9	17	12
	Total	10	19	14
Buggery, including attempt, by a man with another male person other than above	under 18	2	2	4
	18 to 20	2	2	2
	21+	10	11	4
	Total	14	15	10
Sexual Offences Act 1956 Section 13 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967				
Indecency by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21	under 18	10	3	2
	18 to 20	15	9	10
	21+	420	182	191
	Total	445	194	203
Indecency by a man with another male person other than above	under 18	10	4	5
	18 to 20	38	22	16
	21+	831	594	550
	Total	879	620	571

Offence description/age of offender		1990	1991	1992
Man of or over the age 21 procuring or attempting to procure or being party to the commission by a man under 21 of an act of gross indecency with another man	under 18	—	—	—
	18 to 20	—	—	—
	21+	71	19	14
	Total	71	19	14
Man procuring or attempting to procure or being party to the commission by a man NOT under 21 of an act of gross indecency with another man	under 18	2	3	—
	18 to 20	11	4	2
	21+	302	217	61
	Total	315	224	63

Note: In some sections the defendant is under the legislative age; this may be due to a recording error or where attempting, conspiring, aiding, abetting, causing or permitting a crime is classified under the heading of the crime itself.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been taken out against men under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 involving a person *(a)* aged between 18 years and 21 years and *(b)* aged between 16 years and 18 years for each year since 1989.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* No prosecutions have been brought under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967. This section amended earlier legislation to make lawful homosexual acts in private between consenting men aged 21 or above.

Available information on prosecutions under sections 12 and 13 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, which were the principal offences amended by the 1967 Act, are given in the table.

Number of males prosecuted for various homosexual offences 1989-1992
England and Wales

Offence description/age of offender		1989	1990	1991	1992
Sexual Offences Act 1956, Section 12 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967					
Buggery, including attempt, with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	under 16	11	18	17	7
	16 to 17	16	20	18	16
	18 to 20	21	13	22	19
	21+	264	299	267	312
	Total	312	350	324	354
Buggery, including attempt, by a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	under 16	—	—	—	—
	16 to 17	1	3	4	—
	18 to 20	2	3	1	2
	21+	23	24	26	38
	Total	26	30	31	40
Buggery, including attempt, by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 with consent	under 16	—	—	—	1
	16 to 17	—	—	—	—
	18 to 20	2	1	2	1
	21+	6	9	17	12
	Total	8	10	19	14
Buggery, including attempt, by a man with another male person other than above	under 16	—	1	1	3
	16 to 17	—	1	1	1
	18 to 20	1	2	2	2
	21+	22	10	11	4
	Total	23	14	15	10
Sexual Offences Act 1956 Section 13 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967					
Indecency by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21	under 16	1	1	1	—
	16 to 17	6	9	2	2
	18 to 20	13	15	9	10
	21+	384	420	182	191
	Total	404	445	194	203
Indecency by a man with another male person other than above	under 16	1	3	2	—
	16 to 17	13	7	2	5
	18 to 20	41	38	22	16
	21+	1,258	831	594	550
	Total	1,313	879	620	571

Offence description/age of offender		1989	1990	1991	1992
Man of or over the age of 21 procuring or attempting to procure or being party to the commission by a man under 21 of an act of gross indecency with another man	under 16	—	—	—	—
	16 to 17	2	—	—	—
	18 to 20	7	—	—	—
	21+	89	71	19	14
	Total	98	71	19	14
Man procuring or attempting to procure or being party to the commission by a man NOT under 21 of an act of gross indecency with another man	under 16	—	1	1	—
	16 to 17	3	1	2	—
	18 to 20	8	11	4	2
	21+	315	302	217	61
	Total	326	315	224	63

Note: In some sections the defendant is under the legislative age; this may be due to a recording error or where attempting, conspiring, aiding, abetting, causing or permitting a crime is classified under the heading of the crime itself.

Ethnic Minority Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of prison inmates, *(a)* men and *(b)* women, being held in prisons in England and Wales who are of an ethnic minority background but are citizens of the United Kingdom as at 10 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 18 January 1994:

ETHNIC MINORITIES

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what is the percentage of prison inmates, *(a)* men and *(b)* women, being held in prisons in England and Wales who are of an ethnic minority background but are citizens of the United Kingdom, as at 10 January.

The latest available provisional information is for prisoners in Prison Service establishments on 30 September 1993. On that date 11 per cent. of males and 11·5 per cent. of females were of minority ethnic origin and were recorded as having United Kingdom nationality.

Ethnic Minority Pupils

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many children in British schools come from new Commonwealth countries;

(2) how many extra children in British schools will be included in the new section 11 brief to include all members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not held centrally in the form requested and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1993, representations regarding the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987 concerned primarily the decision not to extend the provisions of the Act to channel tunnel services and the direct airside transit visa provision which was added by the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. Representations from carriers against the imposition of charges are regularly received by the immigration service.

999 Calls

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of 999 calls made *(a)* per police officer and *(b)* per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Racial Attacks

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to curb the rise in racial attacks and the increasing activity of the British National party.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government have on many occasions expressed their abhorrence of racial violence and harassment and fully support police efforts to tackle racially motivated crime.

Ministers have decided to reconvene the inter-departmental racial attacks group, chaired by the Home Office. The group provides a forum in which different agencies can examine the issue of racial violence at a national level, and co-ordinate a broad-based response. The first meeting is due to take place in February 1994.

The views of the British National party are as repugnant to the Government as they are to the public at large. If the activities of this group or its members breach the law, they are liable to be dealt with by the police under public order and criminal legislation, and a number of prosecutions of BNP members have been mounted in the past.

Video Rentals (Children)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many proprietors of video rental outlets were prosecuted for supplying films with an 18 rating to children in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 11 January at column *139*.

Immigration

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the status in relation to entering the United Kingdom of citizens of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Kiribati, Lesotho, the Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Somoa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans for any such changes.

Police Overtime (M11)

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost in 1993 of the police overtime payments and other costs related to the security and policing for the M11 link road through Wanstead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the total manpower costs in 1993 of security and policing for the M11 link road through Wanstead amounted to £256,211. Information on the cost of support services and other resources involved is not available.

Police Vehicles

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the vehicle replacement policies in terms of mileage and age for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

	South Wales	*Thames Valley*	*Kent*	*Lancashire*	*Avon and Somerset*	*Hampshire*
General purpose vehicle	70-100,000 miles	80,000 miles/ 4 years	100,000 miles/ 3 years	70,000 miles/ 3 years	75,000 miles/ 3 years	80,000 miles
Traffic vehicle	120,000 miles	100,000 miles/ 3 years	120,000 miles/ 2 years	70,000 miles/ 3 years	100,000 miles/ 2·5 years	120,000 miles
CID general vehicle	70-100,000 miles	100,000 miles/ 5 years	100,000 miles/ 5 years	70,000 miles/ 3 years	100,000 miles/ 2·5 years	100-120,000 miles
CID Special vehicle	70-100,000 miles	80,000 miles/ 3 years	100,000 miles/ 3 years	70,000 miles/ 3 years	100,000 miles/ 2 years	80,000 miles
Special Vehicle	70-100,000 miles	Dependent on age and condition	5-7 years	Dependent on age and condition	150,000 miles/ 10 years	80,000 miles
Motor-cycle		80,000 miles/ 6 years		80,000 miles/ 4 years	45,000 miles/ 4 years	65,000 miles

Where no age criterion is given, forces replace vehicles on the basis of mileage alone. Each force reviews its policy regularly to take account of operating experience and other factors.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of information technology services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers in compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers under the Data Protection Act 1984 to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Prisons (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department in seeking to give specialist training to prison officers whose work involves them with foreign nationals serving prison sentences in prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no formal specialist training provided centrally for those working with foreign nationals, but all new officers receive race relations training which includes awareness of minority cultural, linguistic, spiritual and dietary needs.

Responsibility for meeting the needs of foreign nationals is often co-ordinated by the race relations management team and liaison officers in establishments. Information on "best practice" in relation to foreign prisoners has been disseminated through the Race Relations Liaison Officers' Newsletter and their 1993 national conference.

Training has been provided in this area for all staff at HM Prison Haslar (a specialised detention facility for deportees) by Prison Service College consultants.

There has also been a number of other initiatives to assist those working with foreign prisoners including translating the prisoners' information pack into 14 lanugauges; support for the Nuffield interpreters project to encourage accredited interpreters; introducing Language Line, a telephone interpreting service, into all prisons; and publication of the foreign prisoners' resource pack to provide information and guidance for staff working with foreign nationals, and the prisoners themselves.

Ethnic Minority Grants

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he proposes to meet the shortfall in services caused by the proposed cuts in section 11 funding.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following discussions with local authorities, section 11 grant will now be distributed as a cash sum, rather than a percentage of expenditure. This will ensure maximam take-up of available funding, and it remains open to local authorities to provide additional resources in the light of their assessment of relative local priorities.

Immigration Guidelines

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now publish his Department's guidelines for immigration officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. It is not the normal practice to publish internal instructions.

Paramilitaries

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all members of *(a)* proscribed loyalist and *(b)* proscribed republican organisations who are convicted prisoners in custody in England and Wales, giving in each case the date of their original conviction, their offence or offences, the length of sentence given and their paramilitary affiliation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A Butler to Mr. Harry Barnes, dated 18 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking for details of convicted prisoners in custody in England and Wales who are members of proscribed organisations.

It is not the practice to discuss the claimed or suspected affiliation of individual prisoners to particular organisations.

Leave to Remain

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out his policy for issuing travel documents to individuals who have been granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer to my reply to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 16 December at column *791*, which indicated that officials were writing that day setting out changes to be introduced on 1 January. A copy of the letter was placed in the Library. The new arrangements clarify policy and practice in the issue of Home Office travel documents, including the issue of documents to those granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy with regard to allowing re-entry to the United Kingdom to those individuals who have been granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom and have been granted a travel document, and who then seek to re-enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A person granted exceptional leave to remain will normally be re-admitted on return to the United Kingdom before the expiry of the period granted if the immigration officer is satisfied that the circumstances which led to the granting of that leave still apply.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the numbers of *(a)* recorded crime, per police officer, *(b)* recorded crime per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authorities.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is contained in the following table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police

Police force area	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Recorded crimes per police officer[1]														
South Wales	21	23	24	27	27	29	30	33	33	35	35	42	49	51
Thames Valley	26	23	25	28	28	30	31	33	32	29	32	39	49	50
Kent	18	17	18	21	21	23	24	24	25	25	26	32	43	49
Lancashire	16	16	18	20	20	22	22	24	25	26	24	29	33	35
Avon and Somerset	17	18	20	22	22	24	26	30	32	31	31	40	48	55
Hampshire	21	20	23	25	25	27	28	30	30	28	30	36	43	45
Total non-metropolitan England and Wales	19	19	21	23	24	25	26	28	28	27	29	35	41	44
Wales only	19	19	21	23	24	25	26	28	29	29	29	34	40	42
Recorded crimes per 100,000 population[1]														
South Wales	5,077	5,432	5,749	6,468	6,543	7,089	7,191	8,089	8,222	8,576	8,617	10,205	11,932	12,355

Police force area	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Thames Valley	4,079	3,960	4,267	4,798	4,941	5,347	5,607	6,057	5,968	5,481	6,060	7,446	9,340	9,938
Kent	3,500	3,463	3,468	4,195	4,152	4,427	4,670	4,762	4,926	4,936	5,231	6,509	8,797	10,102
Lancashire	3,777	3,739	4,120	4,720	4,689	4,927	4,947	5,390	5,854	6,041	5,587	6,686	7,600	8,209
Avon and Somerset	3,616	4,065	4,500	4,922	4,814	5,277	5,656	6,529	7,012	6,788	6,895	8,784	10,662	12,075
Hampshire	3,941	3,912	4,391	4,886	4,901	5,175	5,373	5,603	5,755	5,351	5,716	6,966	8,360	8,770
Total non-metropolitan England and Wales	3,881	4,022	4,395	4,859	4,875	5,180	5,388	5,726	5,908	5,712	5,948	7,293	8,673	9,353
Wales only	4,234	4,407	4,700	5,237	5,340	5,783	5,941	6,403	6,570	6,583	6,496	7,625	9,043	9,602

[1] Excluding offences of criminal damage value £20 and under.

South Wales Police

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the basis for the categorisation this coming year of South Wales as a semi-rural police authority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Concentration of population is one of a number of factors which have been used in reaching decisions on the allocation of increases in police force establishments. As my right hon. Friend has made clear, however, available resources will not allow for further increases to establishments in 1994-95.

Secure Training Centres

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his target date for the opening of each of his proposed secure training centres; (2) what target date he has set by which he intends that all five secure training centres shall be open and accepting referrals.

Mr. Maclean: The centres will open as soon as possible after Royal Assent to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column 952, whether he will now identify the region in which each of his five proposed secure training centres is to be sited and list the counties to be served in each case.

Mr. Maclean: Final decisions have not yet been reached. The notice recently placed in the *Official Journal* of the European Community invited expressions of interest from companies to finance, design, build/refurbish, operate and maintain secure training centres either on Home Office land or on alternative sites which they would themselves propose. The deadline for receipt of applications is 11 February 1994.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether all the running costs of his proposed secure training centres will be met by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: Running costs will be met by the contractor(s), who will be reimbursed by the Home Office.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people under the age of 25 years are not included in the electoral register.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of people under 25 included in, or missing from, the electoral register is not collected. However, research carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys after the 1991 Census suggested that approximately 12·1 per cent. of people aged 18-19, 19·5 per cent. of people aged 20 and 20·6 per cent. of people aged 21-24 were missing from the register.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department is spending on *(a)* electoral registration in the United Kingdom, *(b)* electoral registration of EC nationals in the United Kingdom and *(c)* electoral registration of overseas voters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Electoral registration officers are appointed by district and London borough councils in England and Wales and receive their funding through their local authority. The Home Office undertakes an annual publicity campaign in support of electoral registration in England and Wales. Some £620,000 has been spent on television advertising in support of the canvass for the 1994-95 electoral register. We have no plans for expenditure on overseas electors publicity. We are currently considering ways of letting European Community nationals know about their new voting rights.

Schools-Police Liaison Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Wales police authority in relation to the priority to be given to the schools-police liaison service in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police authorities operate a schools-police liaision authority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is not held centrally in the form requested. Arrangements for police liaison with schools are the responsibility of chief officers of police. Some police forces have dedicated schools liaison personnel, others employ officers with wider youth and community liaison duties to undertake schools liaison.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in relation to the schools-police liaison service of the South Wales police authority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Child Cruelty

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when and where he first announced his intention to extend the prosecution right of appeal to cases of child cruelty and indecent assault; and if he will list the occasions on which he has since made a similar announcement *(a)* to the House, *(b)* via Home Office press release, statement or communication or *(c)* otherwise.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend first announced the Government's intention to extend the scope of the Attorney-General's power to refer unduly lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal in a speech at the Conservative party conference on 6 October. Since then, my right hon. and learned Friend has referred to this intention on a number of occasions in response to questions from hon. Members and the public, and in explaining the Government's overall strategy on law and order. On Thursday 13 January this year the Home Office public relations branch issued a press release giving further details of the offences to be covered and the proposed date of implementation, to coincide with the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave in the House on that day to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim).

Deported Jamaicans

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost, including plane charter, of returning to Jamaica on 25 December 1993, Jamaican nationals refused entry to the United Kingdom on 21 December 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The figure was £126,765, including the cost of the charter and of in-flight escorts but excluding the cost of in-country escorts which have yet to be finalised.

Peanut Allergy

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deaths are known to have been caused in England and Wales by peanut-related food allergy in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

For the latest 10 years, 1983 to 1992, for which data are available, there were no deaths registered where allergy to peanuts was the assigned underlying cause.

Fine Defaulters

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average prison sentence imposed for defaulting on a fine; what is the average period actually spent in prison by such a defaulter; and what is the average cost of such a person's imprisonment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. William Ross, dated 18 January 1994:

Fine Defaulters

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking about the average prison sentence imposed for defaulting on a fine; the average period actually spent in prison by such a defaulter; and the average cost of such a person's imprisonment.

The latest available information is for 1992 when the average length of sentence imposed for fine default in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales was 22 days. The average period served was 7·5 days. Information relating to the average cost of imprisonment specifically for fine defaulters is not available. The average net operating cost for prisoners in local prisons and remand centres in 1992/93, however, was £526 per week.

Community Charge (Fines)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December of the number of people imprisoned for non-payment of outstanding community charge and in each case specify the length and cost per person of imprisonment; and what proportion of those imprisoned are in receipt of benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Walley, dated 13 January 1994:

NON PAYMENT OF OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY CHARGE

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of people imprisoned in April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December for non-payment of outstanding community charge, and for each case the length and cost per person of imprisonment and what proportion of those imprisoned are in receipt of benefit.

Provisional data is given in the attached table for the months April to October 1993. Because of the number of cases identified it is not possible to detail the length of sentence imposed in each cage. Information relating to the cost per person of imprisonment specifically for these cases is not available. The average net operating cost for prisoners in local prisons and remand centres in 1992/3, however, was £526 per week. The average sentence applied was 34 days of which just under half would normally be served. Information on the proportion of those imprisoned who are in receipt of benefit is not available centrally.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of community charge[1]: April-October 1993

Month	*Number*
April	25
May	28
June	21
July	36
August	35
September	27
October	35
Total	207

[1] Includes small numbers recorded as non-payment of rates.

WALES

Health Service

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps employees in Wales of health service bodies, local authorities or voluntary organisations may take to raise concerns relating to patient or client treatment, to malpractice or to fraud.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the NHS, employees are encouraged to take up their concerns through all levels of management within the employing authority or NHS trust in accordance with local procedures designed to ensure such concerns are dealt with fairly and thoroughly. A copy of guidance issued last June is in the Library of the House.

Every local authority has to appoint a monitoring officer who has a duty to prepare a report to the authority if it appears to him/her that an action or omission by the authority is or is likely to be illegal or amount to maladministration. The authority must consider his/her report before deciding what action to take. A local authority's chief finance officer has a similar duty with regard to matters of financial propriety. An employee of an authority could bring his or her concerns to the attention of the monitoring officer or the chief finance officer.

It is also open to any person, including employees of a particular local authority, to approach the independent external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission to that particular authority.

No central guidance has been issued to voluntary organisations. Since these are independent, employees are bound by the terms of their contracts of employment.

Schools Inspection

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the difference between the total value of the tenders placed in the financial year 1993-94 for the inspection of secondary schools in Wales and the sum of £933,000 transferred from the rate support grant to county councils to the Office of Her Majesty's chief inspector for Wales was spent on appointing staff to the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None of the money transferred from the revenue support grant to the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales was spent on appointing staff to that office.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the attendance figures for 1993 reported by the National Museum of Wales, including its outstations, with the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1992.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A total of 951,982 people visited the National Museum of Wales during 1993, an increase of 9·7 per cent. over the attendance reported for 1992.

Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru—National Museum of Wales
Twelve months review—January to December 1993—Visitors numbers

Branch	*Actual*	*1992*	*1992*	*Variance per cent.*
Main Building, Cathays Park	266,743	255,601	11,142	4·4
Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans	413,840	349,164	64,676	18·5
Amgueddfar Gogledd, Llanberis	77,079	77,082	(3)	0·0
Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum	67,971	66,521	1,450	2·2
Roman Legionary Museum, Caerleon	47,181	39,079	8,102	20·7
Museum of the Welsh Woollen Industry, Dre-fach	23,026	21,835	1,191	5·5
Segontium Roman Fort Museum	10,571	10,127	444	4·4
Graham Sutherland Gallery	10,551	10,457	94	0·9
Turner House, Penarth	10,855	13,012	(2,157)	(16·6)
Welsh Slate Museum	24,165	25,065	(900)	(3·6)
Total	951,982	867,943	84,039	9·7

Ambulance Staff

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that health authorities and ambulance trusts in Wales make arrangements to allow ambulance personnel to retire at age 55 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend is to consider what arrangements might be introduced to facilitate the early retirement of long-serving ambulance staff in Wales.

SCOTLAND

Rural Medical Care

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the report of the review of medical care in rural Scotland, chaired by Sir Thomas Thomson.

Mr. Stewart: The report of the working party has not yet been received, but it is understood that it is at final draft stage and will be submitted early next month. It will thereafter be considered and a decision taken about publication.

Government Papers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislation applying to Scotland similar to the 30-year rule regarding the release of Government and Cabinet papers.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for introducing legislation to provide for the public release of Scottish Office governmental papers; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Office papers have for many years been released as a matter of course under arrangements which mirror administratively

those which apply statutorily in England and Wales. I have no plans at present to place the system on a statutory footing.

Glenochil Prison

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who granted permission for the visit in December 1993 of Mr. Roger Kendrick, former governor, and Mr. Walter Litherard to Glenochil prison; and how many staff and prisoners they interviewed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have asked Mr. E. W. Frizzell, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to arrange for a reply to be given to the hon. Member.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 18 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about who granted permission for a visit in December 1993 by Mr. Roger Kendrick, former governor, and Mr. Walter Litherard, to Glenochil Prison, and how many staff and prisoners they interviewed.

Mr. Kendrick telephoned Mr. L. McBain, Governor-in-Charge, HM Prison, Glenochil, and asked if he could visit to discuss a number of matters and Mr. McBain agreed.

Mr. Litherard did not visit the establishment.

Mr. Kendrick subsequently visited. The purpose of the visit was to advise the Governor of the existence of a new electronic drug detection unit that Mr. Kendrick's company was marketing. Mr. Kendrick also met with a Governor involved in the prison industries complex to ask if Glenochil Prison would be interested in seeking a contract to supply his company with items of prison industries output. No staff and no prisoners were interviewed by Mr. Kendrick.

Football

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish League clubs together with the total season's attendance at *(a)* matches played in the Scottish Premiership and Leagues and *(b)* matches played in the Tennant's Scottish cup, Skol cup and B and Q cup with the total numbers of (i) arrests, (ii) ejections and (iii) arrests plus ejections as a percentage of the total attendance at each category of such matches, accurate to four decimal places for the seasons 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will make a statement on attendance rates and arrest rates at each category of such matches.

Sir Hector Monro: This information is not held centrally and cannot, therefore, be assembled in the time available. I shall write to the hon. Member and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will make a statement on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: Ministers will await the advice of the forestry review group before deciding what action, if any, should be taken in relation to the ownership and management of the Forestry Commission's woodlands.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what undertakings he has made to the forestry unions to guarantee the future of the Forestry Commission; and if he will place them in the Library.

Sir Hector Monro: Forestry Ministers have given no undertakings to forestry unions in respect to any matter in relation to the Forestry Commission.

Bulk Shipping

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what tariff rebate subsidy will be applied to the bulk transport of timber; and what plans the Government have to reduce the rate or abolish the scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The bulk transport of timber currently attracts a TRS rate of 40 per cent. Arrangements for 1994-95 have not yet been finalised.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made as to the number of extra timber loads which will be transported by road in the west highlands following the termination of ship freight services; what assessment he has made of the cost in terms of repair and maintenance of trunk roads resulting from such extra loads; what studies he has made of the economic and environmental effect of such extra traffic on the areas concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is my understanding that Glenlight Shipping Ltd. is continuing to transport timber by sea within the highlands and islands area using the company's timber barge system. Glenlight Shipping Ltd. will continue to receive subsidy on such cargoes. In addition, other bulk shippers operating within the TRS scheme are eligible to receive subsidy for the carriage of timber.

Given the continuing operation of Glenlight's timber barge system as well as the availability of other bulk shipping operators to carry timber, it seems unlikely that there will be any significant transfer of timber transport to road in the west highlands area.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) which bulk shipping operators will be undertaking the transport of goods which were previously carried out by Glenlight Shipping; when he expects the commencement of the service by alternative operators; what level of subsidy they are receiving; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what discussions his Department has had with freight shipping services following the collapse of the Glenlight Shipping company regarding the provision of life line shipping services to the Isles; if he will list the shipping services which have shown an interest in the routes currently served by Glenlight; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultation has been initiated or entered into by his Department with bulk shipping companies in order to operate the routes relinquished by Glenlight Shipping Services Ltd; on what dates these meetings took place; and which ministers or officials were involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Glenlight Shipping Ltd. has not collapsed. The company is still operating but has taken the commercial decision to discontinue bulk shipping operations in the highlands and islands area apart from the carriage of timber. The Scottish Office is continuing to provide tariff rebate subsidy to the company on the basis of eligible cargoes carried. In addition to Glenlight there are four other bulk shipping operators within the TRS scheme operating on the west coast. The

relevant companies are: Easdale Island Shipping Line, Gardner Shipping (Scotland) Ltd., Roderick Cunningham (Scalpay) Ltd. and Dennison (Shipping) Ltd. I understand that at least two of these shipping companies are already carrying cargoes for customers who were previously served by Glenlight Shipping Ltd. The Scottish Office maintains regular and frequent contact with shipping operators within the TRS scheme to discuss variations in traffic levels, the redistribution of TRS resources and other matters. In recent months the Scottish Office has had extensive discussions with Glenlight Shipping Ltd. and also with Easdale Shipping Line and Gardner Shipping (Scotland) Ltd., the two west coast bulk shipping operators that are most likely to carry the traffic previously carried by Glenlight.

The general rate of TRS subvention on the west coast is 40 per cent. for cargoes originating from the mainland and 30 per cent. for cargoes originating from the islands. Each company's TRS allocation is based on the company's estimates of traffic to be carried within the specified period and on previous years' actual traffic carried as compared with forecasts. Individual bulk shipping operators' allocations are commercially confidential. In 1993-94 provision of £3·130 million is being made available for bulk shipping services and £6·768 million for P and O Scottish Ferries Ltd., giving a total TRS provision of £9·898 million.

Local Government Reform

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect local government reform will have on projects currently being planned and undertaken by existing local authorities and specific requests for assistance of objective 1 funding; what guidelines his Department has drawn up or plans; what discussions his Department has had with local authorities regarding the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Local government reform will not affect the ability of local authorities to compete for objective 1 funds. Any rights, liabilities and obligations of existing authorities resulting from grant awards before the new local authority structure comes into effect will be inherited by relevant successor authorities, as provided for in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. No specific guidelines are planned in relation to the European structural funds; and my Department has had no discussions with local authorities regarding the matter.

Crosshouse Hospital

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *84*, if he will make a detailed statement on the facilities which have been closed in Crosshouse hospital by the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust.

Mr. Stewart: There have been no reductions in service but there are two wards for which there are planned changes in use.

In its first six months the trust has treated 400 more in-patients, 1,900 more day patients and 1,500 more out-patients compared with the same period last year. In orthopaedic surgery and gynaecology, changes in service delivery patterns have meant that fewer in-patient beds are required to meet an increased demand for services.

Orthopaedic day surgery has increased by 83 per cent. and in-patient activity by 11 per cent. following the appointment of an additional consultant orthopaedic surgeon and the opening of a £1 million purpose-planned day surgery unit. As day surgery patients no longer require to be cared for in a hospital ward, a 30-bedded orthopaedic ward will now be used to provide expanded and improved in-patient facilities for renal and haematology patients.

Gynaecological day surgery has increased by 20 per cent. compared with last year and this improvement in clinical practice means that consultants require 26 fewer gynaecological in-patient beds to treat an increased number of patients. A gynaecology ward will shortly become available for use as a decanting facility which will ensure that the planned programme of ward upgrading at Crosshouse hospital can proceed without inconveniencing patients and with no reduction in the number of patients treated.

Land Valuation

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding amending revaluation forms under the Land Valuation Acts to simplify the procedure for business in Scotland by eliminating the need to provide detailed financial information about the business concerned; what are the implications for the arrangement of the commitment to reducing bureaucracy, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received three letters on this subject since 1 January 1993. Under section 7 of the Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act 1854, as amended, an assessor is authorised to call upon any ratepayer within his area to supply him only with such information as is reasonably required in order to value the property concerned. This is to ensure that the property is valued as accurately as possible with the objective of minimising the need for an appeal and the consequent additional costs for the ratepayer.

Tourist Boards

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the consultation exercise into tourist boards in Scotland concerning the proposed new board covering Argyll and Bute; what suggestions have been made with regard to the geography of that tourist board area; when he expects the conclusion of the exercise; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish tourist board has submitted a recommendation on a new area tourist board structure to my right hon. Friend. This is being considered carefully and an announcement will be made in due course.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now direct that the salaries of general managers of NHS trusts be made public; and if he will arrange for the members of the boards of NHS trusts to declare any financial interests and that a register of such interests be made available for public scrutiny.

Mr. Lang: These issues are under consideration following publication for consultation in England of draft codes of conduct and accountability for NHS boards and their members.

Shipping Operators

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which companies presently receive tariff rebate subsidy; what is the extent of tariff rebate subsidy for each shipping operator; what are the current guidelines for receiving the subsidy; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The companies currently operating within the tariff rebate subsidy scheme are as listed. Each company's TRS allocation is based on the company's estimates of traffic to be carried during the year concerned as well as on previous years' actual traffic carried as compared with forecasts. Individual shipping operators' claims are monitored monthly against the TRS resources available. Individual bulk shipping operators' allocations are treated as being commercial confidential. In 1993-94 provision of £3·130 million is being made available for bulk shipping services and £6·768 million for P and O Scottish Ferries Ltd., giving a total TRS provision of £9·898 million. The TRS scheme operates on the basis of providing for reduction in shipping operators' normal commercial tariffs. The shipping operator determines tariffs on a normal commercial basis for the carriage of particular cargoes, and, if the cargo and the destination are eligible for subsidy under the scheme, the operator reduces the commercial tariff by a percentage decided by the Scottish Office. The Scottish Office pays subsidy to the shipping operator to compensate for tariff reductions. Before becoming eligible for assistance under the tariff rebate subsidy scheme a shipping operator is required to enter into an undertaking with the Secretary of State for Scotland to provide approved shipping services within the highlands and islands area.

Companies operating within the TRS scheme:
P & O Scottish Ferries
Orcargo
Orkney Line Ltd
Shetland Line Ltd
Dennison (Shipping) Ltd
Easdale Island Shipping Line
Gardner Shipping (Scotland) Ltd
Glenlight Shipping Ltd
Hay & Company (Lerwick) Ltd
Roderick Cunningham (Scalpay) Ltd

Student Awards

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what conclusions he has reached about the future administration of student awards in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that student awards branch of the Scottish Office Education Department should become an executive agency of the Secretary of State for Scotland, under the "next steps" initiative, with a proposed launch date of 5 April 1994.

Mountain Deaths

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people died during 1993 as the result of incidents on Scottish mountains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The information requested for 1993 should be ready by April 1994. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available. Meanwhile, the number of deaths from such incidents in the most recent 10 years are given in the table.

Deaths[1] as the result of incidents on Scottish mountains

	ICD Code			
	E884.1 Falls on mountains	*E908-909 Blizzard or avalanche*	*E901.0 Hypo-thermia*	*Total*
1983	24	—	1	25
1984	20	—	2	22
1985	11	3	—	14
1986	23	4	1	28
1987	21	3	—	24
1988	22	—	—	22
1989	16	1	1	18
1990	18	—	—	18
1991	24	1	—	25
1922	19	1	3	23

[1] Excluding deaths from pre-existing medical conditions (eg heart attacks).

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress being made on Her Majesty's Government's review of tourism support arrangements in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* Good progress is being made in implementing the decisions announced by my right hon. Friend on 29 June 1993 following the tourism review.

To ensure collaboration at the national level, my right hon. Friend has appointed representatives of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to the board of the Scottish tourist board. I hope to announce shortly the measures we are taking to strengthen the Scottish tourism co-ordinating group and the Scottish Confederation of Tourism. I expect the first national strategic plan for tourism to be published in the spring.

Arrangements for the Scottish tourist board's assumption of Highlands and Islands Enterprise's tourism marketing and visitor service functions with effect from 1 April 1994, for the consolidation of business support within the enterprise network, and for the relocation of some of the board's functions to Inverness are well advanced.

The provisions of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill confirm the important role which local authorities have in supporting the tourist industry and provide for the establishment of a co-ordinated and coherent network of area tourist boards covering the whole of Scotland.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he will announce the Government's intentions regarding the future of tourism support in Scotland;

(2) what reduction the Scottish tourist board has proposed in the number of area tourist boards in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The Scottish tourist board has submitted a recommendation on a new area tourist board structure to my right hon. Friend. This is being considered carefully and an announcement will be made in due course.

Teacher Training

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people graduated or qualified in teacher training in each of the Scottish teacher training colleges and universities in 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The available information is set out in the table:

College/University	*Number of Graduates in 1993 (provisional)*
University of Paisley	180
Strathclyde University	758
Moray House Institute of Education	539
Northern College of Education	455
St. Andrew's College of Education	420
University of Stirling	31
All	2,383

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many newly qualified teachers were appointed to permanent teaching posts by each of the regional and island authorities in Scotland in 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* Surveys to ascertain the first destination of newly qualified teachers are undertaken in September of the graduation year and in the following March, the later survey tending to give a more comprehensive picture of employment rates.

Such information as is available from the September 1993 survey about teachers who qualified in 1993 is set out in the following tables. The high non-response rate—34 per cent.—to the survey questionnaire means, however, that the figures are of limited reliability.

Table 1
First destination of teacher training graduates[1]

Destination at September 1993	*Number*
Number in teaching posts	
(a) In Scotland	
Permanent	377
Temporary/supply	507
Contract unknown	39
Total	923
(b) Elsewhere	75
Employed non-teaching	168
Studying	9
Unemployed	405
Unknown	[2]803
Total output	2,383

Table 2
Number of newly qualified teachers known to have been appointed to teaching posts in Scotland[1]
(September 1993)

Employer in Scotland	*Permanent*	*Temporary/ supply*	*Type of contract unknown*	*All*
Borders	4	5	5	14
Central	14	17	1	32
Dumfries and Galloway	12	17	0	29
Fife	35	30	7	72
Grampian	37	33	0	70
Highland	8	8	0	16
Lothian	54	36	9	99
Strathclyde	148	322	3	473
Tayside	38	20	3	61
Islands Authorities	9	8	3	20
Independent or other schools	18	11	8	37
Total	377	507	39	923

[1] The figures include an element of estimation in cases where only partial information is known.
[2] Information on the 31 Stirling University graduates is not available in this form. These students are categorised as having unknown destination in Table 1.

A7

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to publish the route action plan for the A7 trunk route south of Hawick.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer of 10 December 1993.

Ambulance Personnel

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what recent discussions he has held with representatives of ambulance staff and Unison in connection with plans for early retirement of ambulance personnel; (2) what recent discussions he has held with representatives of the national Whitley council to look at provisions for early retirement schemes for ambulance personnel.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* Early retirement was discussed in the ambulance council of the national Whitley council in October last year.

On 13 January my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State announced a special scheme for this financial year to enable some ambulance staff aged 60 and over to retire early with the full pension rights which they would have accrued by age 65.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much the EC plans to spend in the current financial year on its agricultural policy; and by what percentage this has changed over the past five and 10 years.

Mr. Jack: Expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom in the current financial year—1993-94—is estimated at £3,011 million. This represents increases of 118 per cent. and 74 per cent. over expenditure in the 1988-89 and 1983-84 financial years respectively. Of this, £2,727 million represents the estimated expenditure on the CAP in the United Kingdom.

Rare Livestock

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support the Government are giving to individuals preserving rare breeds of farm livestock.

Mr. Jack: Individuals rearing rare breeds of farm livestock are eligible for the same support under the common agricultural policy as other livestock producers. In addition, the European Commission has made a proposal on the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture which may prove helpful to organisations concerned with rare breeds: and my Department is planning a study to establish the extent to which rare breeds contribute to genetic diversity.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she is encouraging conservation agencies to use rare breeds of livestock in conservation grazing schemes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: None of the conservation schemes for which this Department has responsibility specifically encourages the use of rare breeds. However, a recent change to the EC set-aside rules has introduced the possibility of limited grazing of set-aside land in the autumn, including grazing by rare breeds.

Rockingham Forest

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to sell any woods owned by the Forestry Commission in the Rockingham forest.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission is currently selling or considering the sale of the following woodlands in Rockingham forest:

Woodland	*Area (hectares)*
Bolt Wood	27
Hayes Wood	2
Hewson's Spinney	2
Launde Big Wood	41
Launde Park	55
Owston Wood	104
Salome Wood	23
West Wood	29

Farming

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers there are in Britain; and how many acres of land are farmed *(a)* in absolute terms and *(b)* as a percentage of the total land area.

Mr. Jack: The number of farmers, partners and directors working on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom at 1 June 1993 was 278,700. The absolute area of land being farmed in the United Kingdom at 1 June 1993 was 45·7 million acres, which was about 77 per cent. of the total land area.

Notes:

1. *Source:* Provisional results from the 1993 June agricultural and horticultural census. Final results are expected to be published towards the end of January.
2. Estimates for minor holdings are included for England and Wales but not for Scotland and Northern Ireland.
3. Figures exclude the wives/husbands of farmers, partners and directors, even though they themselves may be partners or directors.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total of all subsidies paid to farmers in Britain in the most recent year for which figures are available *(a)* by the British Government and *(b)* by the European Union, in sterling terms; and if she will give the total for each subsidy.

Mr. Jack: Table 9.1 of "Agriculture in the United Kingdom: 1992"—pages 78-79—provides details of public expenditure on market support measures and on other grants and subsidies paid in the United Kingdom. Receipts from the European Union are set out at the foot of page 79. A copy has been deposited in the Library of the House of Commons.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will make a statement about the future of the Agricultural Wages Board.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) on 11 January at column *50.*

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to her Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Jack: A total of 2,750 charity Christmas cards were purchased at a cost of £1,633 and sent out by MAFF Ministers and senior officials in 1993. The cost of sending these cards is not known. A combination of delivery by hand and by postal system was used.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will apply flexibility in enforcing the closing date for the sheep annual premium, suckler cow premium and arable payments in cases of obvious hardship.

Mr. Jack: Rules which apply to claims received after the closing dates both for individual schemes and for the area aid application, required under schemes covered by the integrated administration and control system, are laid down in EC legislation. The explanatory literature connected with all these schemes makes it clear that it is the farmer's responsibility to get the claims in by the due date. However, we will look sympathetically at cases where it is claimed that delay is the result of force majeure.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish a table of farm incomes for each of the years 1982-83 to 1992-93 showing the figures at 1992-93 prices for the dairy farm, lowland livestock farm, cropping farm and hill and upland livestock farm sectors.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of the average net farm income at 1992-93 prices are provided in the following table. The method of farm classification has been changed and results are available only on the new classification from 1986-87. Year-to-year comparisons can best be made by reference to the indices shown in the table; these are based on results from identical samples between successive years.

Averages of net farm income by type of farm in England[1]

	Farm type							
	Dairy		*Cattle and sheep (lowland)*		*General cropping*		*Cattle and sheep (LFA)*	
	[2]*£'000s per farm*	[3]*Index in real terms*	[2]*£'000s per farm*	[3]*Index in real terms*	[2]*£'000s per farm*	[3]*Index in real terms*	[2]*£'000s per farm*	[3]*Index in real terms*
1986-87	21·7	96	4·7	154	31·7	92	9·5	103
1987-88	25·5	113	8·5	278	12·1	35	12·8	139
1988-89	34·2	142	9·6	262	8·2	23	16·3	169
1989-90	28·6	121	6·0	129	31·3	120	10·8	112
1990-91	21·9	88	2·6	60	30·0	95	7·2	76
1991-92	23·2	91	5·0	112	27·3	85	9·1	112
[4]1992-93	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—	12·9	156

[1] Sample averages for farms larger than 8 ESU. The system of classifying farms by type and size is set out in appendix 3 of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom, 1991-92".
[2] 1992-93 prices deflated by the retail prices index—all items.
[3] 1989/90–1991/92=100.
[4] Provisional.
[5] Some information on incomes on these types of farm will be published on 31 January.
Source: "Farm Business Survey".

Cattle Conference

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how her Department was represented at the Cambridge conference on cattle.

Mr. Jack: Representatives from the State Veterinary Service and ADAS were present at the international conference of the British Cattle Breeders' Club held at Cambridge between 10 and 13 January 1994.

Oilseeds

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) of 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *1071-72*, if she will list all those member states whose area of oilseeds exceed a level calculated by reference to the 1989-91 average area; for what reasons the Council decided to extend the moratorium on the use of bovine somatotropin for one year only; and what was the Commission's recommended moratorium on bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Jack: The EC-US oilseeds agreement does not apply until the crop for harvest in 1994 nor will penalties apply unless total plantings throughout the Community exceed the EC's total base area. The member states with areas planted to oilseeds in 1993 in excess of their 1989-91 average area are Germany, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The Commission's proposal was that the marketing and use of BST within the Community should be prohibited for the duration of milk quotas, that is currently until 31 March 2000. The Council decided however, to extend the moratorium on the marketing and use of bovine somatotropin for a further year only, so that it could consider the implications of a long-term ban, including the consequences for international trade, and the new situation created by the recent decision of the United States to approve the marketing of BST from the beginning of February 1994.

It remains the United Kingdom view that the final Community decision on BST should be based firmly on scientific principles, taking into account the need to avoid international trading problems, to encourage Community based research industries, and to maintain the competitiveness of the Community's agriculture and food industries. Nonetheless, we accepted that it was sensible to extend the current moratorium for not more than one year, so that the Council could consider these new developments and experience overseas.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Works of Art (Export Licences)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the items for which the issuing of export licences was withheld on the recommendation of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art during the half year ended 31 December 1993, specifying

in each case the valuation and whether an item was exported or retained, with particulars in the latter event of the acquiring institution; if he will list any items for which licences have been withheld but the final disposal of which is not yet decided, specifying in each case *(a)* the valuation and *(b)* the relevant time limit; and whether a press notice will be issued by his Department covering the information given in his reply, including that relating to the outcome in individual cases.

Mr. Sproat: The information is as follows:

Description of item	*Valuation (£)*	*Outcome*
A gold, silver-gilt, lapis-lazuli and enamel exhibition clock, by Gustave Baugrand, 1867	86,000	Export licence refused
A limestone relief fragment from Persepolis, Archaemenid, first half 5th century BC	1,038,961	Decision deferred until after 30 April 1994
A drawing, 'The nursing of Cyrus', by Salvator Rosa (1615-1673)	166,250	Export licence granted
A painting, 'The courtyard of a house in Delft with a young woman and two men drinking and smoking', by Pieter de Hooch, 1658	5,000,000	Export licence granted
A drawing, 'A woman's head in profile wearing an elaborate head-dress, by Jacopo Ligozzi (1547-1626)	130,000	Export licence granted
A drawing, 'The meeting of the Infant Baptist with the Holy Family', by Michalangelo, c.1532	4,469,750	Export licence granted
A painting, 'Colonel Mordaunt's cock-match', by Johann Zoffany, c.1784-86	800,000	Decision deferred until after 5 May 1994
A statue, 'the Three Graces', By Antonio Canova, 1817	7,600,000	Reviewing committee's recommendation under consideration
A Roman statue base with a *cursus* inscription, 2nd-3rd century AD	45,000	Decision deferred until after 18 March 1984
A group of paintings from the Farquhar collection of flora and fauna from Malacca	1,365,112·50	Decision deferred until after 18 March 1984

Full details of the items on which decisions were deferred were given in press releases issued following the decisions on the reviewing committee's recommendations. A further press release giving the outcome of cases will now be issued.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half year ended 31 December 1993 of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic or artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax, together with information, where applicable, as to conditions or wishes expressed in the matter of allocation by testators or executors; and if he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of inheritance tax.

Mr. Brooke: The information the hon. Member requests is as follows:

Item	*To whom allocated*	*Conditions/wishes expressed*
Charles I silver-gilt cup and cover	Victoria and Albert Museum	Wish
A Brogyntyn manuscript	National Library of Wales	Conditional
The Wrest Park Papers	Bedfordshire Record Office	Wish
The Richmond Race Cup	National Trust	Conditional
Schudi Harpsichord	National Trust	Conditional
Painting by Eileen Agar	Tate Gallery	Conditional
Portrait by Romney	Abbot Hall, Kendal	Unconditional
Barrington Papers	British Library	Unconditional
Model Gun Ship	National Maritime Museum	Wish

Items awaiting allocation	*Date of acceptance*
Portrait by Nicholas Hilliard	15 December 1993
Painting by J. F. Herring	15 December 1993
Lucas albums	15 December 1993
Two paintings by Vuillard	21 July 1993

Unicorn Heritage plc

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what criteria the English tourist board made a grant of £200,000 to Unicorn Heritage plc.

Mr. Sproat: In considering the application from Unicorn Heritage plc, the English tourist board applied its standard criteria for making grants under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. These were as follows: the grant must be additional—that is, the project would not go ahead without the section 4 grant; there should be a clear market need for the project, and reasonable prospects for its success; the project should where possible be innovative; and the section 4 grant should constitute only a small proportion of the total funding.

The English tourist board commissioned a report on the Unicorn Heritage project from consultants with particular expertise in developing visitor attractions. Drawing on this

report and its own assessment, the board concluded that the project met the section 4 criteria. Unicorn Heritage was treated in exactly the same way as any other company would be in such circumstances.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what date his Department was notified of the demise of Unicorn Heritage plc; on what date it was recognised that a grant was reclaimable; on what date it started action to recover the grant; what form that action took; how many months it took to refer the file to the Treasury; and what were the reasons for the time taken to refer the file.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The grant referred to was made by the English tourist board. The board has discretion to secure payment of any grant if the grant recipient becomes bankrupt or, in the case of a company, is wound up. The board was notified of the failure of the Unicorn Heritage plc shortly after the company went into liquidation on 25 June 1990. On 11 September 1990 the board agreed to raise a debt of £200,000, and proof of debt was submitted to the liquidators. On 12 October 1990 the liquidators replied stating that there was no prospect of any payment of any dividend to the board.

The board kept the case open for some time because of the remote possibility that an unexpected dividend might have been forthcoming as the liquidators' work proceeded. This did not prove to be the case, so on 13 August 1992 the English tourist board recommended to my Department that this debt should be written off.

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which his Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Sproat: My Department let the contracts shown in the chart to accountancy firms and merchant banks in 1992 and 1993. Many of these contracts were with the management consultancy arm of the firm concerned rather than their accountacy arm. The total value of these contracts to date is approximately £0·71 million.

CONSULTANT'S NAME AND CONSULTANCY DESCRIPTION

Coopers and Lybrand
- Innovation Workshop in preparation for National Seminar

Ernst and Young
- Review of Market Testing at the British Museum
- Facilities Management Survey—to review systems for the management of buildings in the 16 DNH sponsored museums and galleries
- Feasibility study into the Development of a Heritage Management Database

Hill Samuel
- Financial advice on the National Lottery (let by DNH on behalf of the Director General of the Office of the National Lottery)

KPMG
- Performance indicators—to review systems of performance management in the 16 DNH sponsored museums and galleries
- European Co-Production Fund Evaluation Review—to establish the results so far achieved by the Fund
- The Royal Parks Agency—development of Computerised Information Systems

Price Waterhouse
- Review of the Arts Council
- Financial audit of the British Library St. Pancras Project
- Financial appraisal of new building options for DNH

Stoy Hayward
- Practical advice to the 16 DNH sponsored museums and galleries on the introduction of consolidated accounts

Touche Ross
- Review of the Television Licence Fee
- Management Review of the National Film and Television School

Grant Write-offs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all companies which have had grants from his Department written off since June 1992 and set out his reasons for the decisions.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* My Department has not written off any grants which it administers directly.

Under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969, the English Tourist Board has given financial assistance to projects providing or improving tourist amenities and facilities in England. As permitted by Act, the board attached conditions to the grants which allowed them to be recoverable, including bankruptcy/insolvency of the recipient. The board is required to surrender to my Department all the sums recovered. Any amount which proves to be irrecoverable has to be written off by the Department. Treasury approval is required where the amount is over £100,000 and for 20 per cent. of the value of cases assessed.

Since June 1992, grant reclaimable debts have been written off in respect of the following companies. The debts were irrecoverable by reason of receivership, liquidation or because the company was wound up:

Receivership
- Ashbourne Lodge plc
- Badgerealm Ltd.
- Border Developments Ltd.
- Callow Park Ltd.
- Grosvenor Arms Hotel (Pulford) Ltd.
- Marshall of Luton (Builders) Ltd.
- Theme Holdings Ltd.
- Wessex Farm Horse Centre Ltd.
- White Lion Hotel (Banbury) Ltd.

Liquidation
- Backbrook Ltd.
- Betternatural Ltd.
- Brighton Rackets Club Ltd.
- E & P Hotels Ltd.
- Horsley Hall Ltd.
- National Jazz Centre Ltd.
- Sal Investments Ltd.
- Unicorn Heritage plc
- West Country Transport and Plant Hire Ltd.

Voluntary wound up
- Oxford Area Arts Council Ltd.

In addition to the English tourist board, the Department sponsors a number of non-departmental public bodies which make grants available as part of their activities. Responsibility for determining to whom grants are given, and the conditions attached, rests with the individual bodies. Where appropriate, these include the need for the recipient to repay the grant where compliance with the conditions has not been met. Responsibility for writing off any irrecoverable debts arising within certain limits rests with the sponsored bodies. Details of these are not held centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. No cases outside the delegated limits have been submitted to the Department for approval.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in how many cases since 1987 tourist board grants have been written off as irrecoverable; how many were between £100,000 and £150,000, £150,000 and £199,000 and £200,000 or over; and what is the highest single amount written off.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The figures for debts relating to grants made under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 are shown separately for England, Scotland and Wales.

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*
Debts written off since 1987	53	39	13
£100,000 – £150,000	3	2	1
£150,000 – £199,000	3	0	0
£200,000 or above	2	0	0
Highest amount written off	£759,039	£124,447	£100,000

Royal Armoury

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the progress made to date in the removal of the Royal Armoury to Leeds.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The new Royal Armouries museum in Leeds, scheduled to open in spring 1996, has won all the private sector support it needs to go ahead, and work has begun at the Clarence dock site. This prestigious enterprise is a leading example of a joint venture between the public and private sectors bringing benefits to Leeds, the armouries and the tourist. A consortium of investors has formed the Royal Armouries (International) plc which is putting £14 million into the project in addition to £20 million from my Department and contributions from Leeds development corporation and Leeds city council. The new museum will allow a far greater proportion of the armouries' unique collection to be displayed to the public and will make the Royal Armouries accessible to a much larger section of the population. The Royal Armouries will maintain a substantial display at the Tower of London, focused on the tower's rich history.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset, at least in part, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional cost will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

DEFENCE

Exercise Hadrian's Wall

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the newspapers and other media concerns and *(b)* the hon. Members to whom prior warning was given of Exercise Hadrian's Wall.

Mr. Hanley: Since most of the activity took place in Scotland, a number of Scottish newspapers were informed on 3 December 1993 that the exercise was taking place. The list of these is as follows:

Daily Record
Scotsman
Herald
Galloway News
Galloway Gazette
Wegtown Free Press
Dumfries and Galloway Standard
Lennox Herald
Helensburgh Advertiser
South West Advertiser

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the hon. Member and to the right hon. and hon. Members for the following constituencies on 24 November 1993 informing them of the exercise:

Salisbury
Westbury
Devizes
Hampshire North West
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
Dunfermline East
Angus East
Argyll and Bute
Ross, Cromarty and Skye
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber
Caithness and Sutherland

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the role of Hunterston power station during Exercise Hadrian's Wall.

Mr. Hanley: Hunterston power station had no role in the exercise. A small amount of activity did, however, take place at the disused British Steel direct reduction plant at Hunterston.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties during Exercise Hadrian's Wall entered the airspace *(a)* within one nautical mile of Hunterston power station, *(b)* within the Glasgow airport control zone and *(c)* within the Scottish control zone; and what permissions were obtained from the relevant authorities for this activity.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of sorties which entered the specified areas were as follows:

	Number
Within one nautical mile of Hunterston Power Station	4
Within the Glasgow Airport Control Zone	7
Within the Scottish Control Zone	29

My Department consulted Scottish Nuclear and Hunterston power station before granting permission for flights within the provost marshal's prohibited area which affords special protection to the power station. Normal air traffic control clearances were obtained from airspace controlling agencies in the case of flights within the Glasgow airport and the Scottish control zones.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature and purpose of Exercise Hadrian's Wall in December 1993; what locations were used during the exercise; how many personnel and aircraft were involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Exercise Hadrian's Wall was designed to test aspects of the land, air and maritime skills of the armed

forces. The locations used were RAF Boscombe Down, RAF West Freugh, Oban, Mallam Charles camp, Barry Budden camp, Aldourie Castle estate, Rosyth dockyard, Hunterston and some stretches of the Caledonian canal. The exercise involved 450 personnel, seven helicopters, two Hercules transport planes and two Tornados.

Hercules

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many flight crew members are required to operate the C-130K Hercules aircraft; and what are their responsibilities.

Mr. Hanley: A minimum of five flight members are required to operate a Hercules C130K aircraft; the captain, co-pilot, navigator, air engineer and air loadmaster. The captain is a pilot and responsible for the overall safety of the aircraft; the co-pilot assists the captain with flight management and acts as a safety pilot in the event of incapacity of the captain; the navigator is responsible for the safe navigation of the aircraft in all phases of flight; the air engineer is responsible for all aircraft systems and the air loadmaster is responsible for all aspects of freight, passenger safety and security within the aircraft.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria, in addition to value for money, his Department will use in coming to a judgment on whether to replace half the existing fleet with the new C-130J Hercules or to opt for refurbishment.

Mr. Aitken: The basis on which we evaluate bids for military equipment is affordability, value for money, and technical considerations. In considering overall value for money, my Department will consider, with the DTI and Treasury, wider economic factors.

Anti-personnel Mines

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action the Government are taking to end the supply of anti-personnel mines to any faction attempting to buy them; and what attempts are made to halt the general trade in other weapons to sources outside the law.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom supports responsible international efforts to control trade in defence equipment. We also adopt a responsible approach to the export of defence equipment and have one of the most rigorous systems for scrutinising licence applications. The United Kingdom has not produced or exported conventional anti-personnel landmines for some time.

"Front Line First"

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department's "Front Line First" review will include study of tactical aircraft; and if the study would go beyond basic air trooping.

Mr. Aitken: The DCS is not examining tactical combat aircraft, but is looking at the provision of air transport aircraft in all roles, including basic air trooping, as part of a wider study of procurement projects and practices.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he, or his predecessors, have held since 1982 with his counterpart in the United States, or with officials in the United States Department of Defense in regard to *(a)* the implications for United Kingdom policy of the United States removing Iraq from its priority list of terrorist states and *(b)* the provision of arms, military equipment or defence-related technology to Iraq by the United States or its allies.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1982, my right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors have had frequent discussions with their United States counterparts covering a wide range of security and defence issues. The topics in question may have been included, but it would involve disproportionate cost to establish the details of such discussions.

Pregnant Women (Radiation Exposure)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research has been conducted or sponsored by his Department into the effects of radiation exposure on pregnant women and their foetuses.

Mr. Hanley: We are not aware of any such research being conducted or sponsored by this Department.

Persian Gulf

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he received from his counterparts in the Gulf Co-operation Council in regard to decisions taken at the GCC meeting in Riyadh on 20 to 22 December 1993 affecting British forces in the Gulf.

Mr. Hanley: During his recent visit to the Gulf, my right hon. and learned Friend discussed a wide range of defence-related matters, including the outcome of the GCC meeting in December. The GCC plan for an expansion of the Peninsula Shield force does not affect British forces.

Small Battlefield Arms

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department gave to the production of the "Horizon" programme on the human impact of small battlefield arms, broadcast on 10 January.

Mr. Hanley: Mr. Martin Freeth, the senior producer in the BBC science and features department responsible for the "Horizon" programme, was given a number of unclassified background briefings while examining the feasibility of the programme. When a decision was taken by the BBC to proceed to make the programme, further unclassified briefings and interviews were provided.

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom's Trident missiles will be more accurate than the Polaris ones they replace.

Mr. Hanley: Yes.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the warheads deployed on the United Kingdom's Trident missiles will be independently targetable.

Mr. Hanley: Yes.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of Trident missiles being purchased by the United Kingdom are to form part of a processing margin.

Mr. Aitken: On current plans, about 5 per cent. of the total number of United Kingdom's Trident missiles will form part of a processing margin.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans any demonstration that the Trident deployment will not involve any increase in strategic nuclear warheads above Polaris levels.

Mr. Hanley: In keeping with the practice of successive Governments, we do not make public the number of warheads actually deployed on our submarines. The question of verification does not arise.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to deploy conventional warheads on the United Kingdom's Trident missiles.

Mr. Hanley: The Government have no such plans.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum number of warheads assumed to be carried by each United States Trident D5 missile under the terms of the strategic arms reduction treaties.

Mr. Hanley: The details of the START I and START II treaties are a matter for the parties to those treaties. Under the memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the data base relating to the treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms—START I—deployed United States Trident II ((D5) missiles are attributed with eight warheads. START II sets additional limits on the overall number of warheads attributed to deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles and modifies the rules established under START I for reducing the number of warheads attributed to deployed missiles.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on revealing the number of missiles and warheads deployed on the United Kingdom's Trident submarines; and in what circumstances the policy is reconsidered.

Mr. Aitken: It is our policy to be as open about the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent as is possible without revealing information which might diminish the effectiveness of the system. For that reason we do not make public the number of missiles or warheads actually deployed on our submarines.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will apply a maximum ceiling to the number of warheads carried on any individual Trident missile.

Mr. Aitken: No. Overall, each Trident submarine will deploy with no more than 96 warheads.

Chevaline

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Chevaline has been fitted to every Polaris missile.

Mr. Aitken: All in-service United Kingdom Polaris missiles are fitted with the Chevaline modification.

Submarines (Fishing Vessels)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received regarding a complete ban on the movement of submarines in designated fishing areas; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he intends to initiate with appropriate organisations and Her Majesty's Navy following the recent incident involving a fishing vessel and HMS Valiant;

(3) what discussions he has had with the Royal Navy regarding the alleged breaching of guidelines on separation distances between submarines and fishing vessels;

(4) when he expects to receive the report of the Royal Navy inquiry into the incident involving HMS Valiant during naval exercise off Cape Wrath; and if he will make a statement on this incident.

Mr. Hanley: I have received no representations in the last 12 months regarding a complete ban on the movement of submarines in designated fishing areas.

I should, however, like to report that, during a training exercise off the coast of north-west Scotland on 8 November 1993, the submarine HMS Valiant's towed sonar array was lost after it apparently caught on the trawl of the fishing vessel Audacious. Communications were at once established with the fishing vessel, which reported that all was well.

A full investigation was immediately put in hand. This is not yet complete, but preliminary findings have concluded that HMS Valiant accidentally breached the 4,000 yard separation distance laid down in the submarine and fishing vessel code of practice. However, as soon as this was realised, HMS Valiant, in accordance with the requirements of the code, immediately reduced speed, returned to periscope depth and established communications to ensure the safety of other vessels. The towed array which HMS Valiant lost is a lightweight plastic tube and, as such, presents no hazard to the other vessels.

I have instructed that the report be concluded as soon as possible and its findings made available to the members of the Department of Transport's fishing industry safety group sub-group on submarine and fishing vessel interaction, which includes representative of the fishermen's federations. It does appear that, while the code of practice was accidentally breached, its subsequent observance prevented a possibly more serious incident. Nonetheless, the issue of safety at sea is one which I take very seriously and I shall be considering what lessons might be learnt for the future.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what detailed investigations have taken place into alleged incidents between submarines in Scottish waters and fishing vessels within the past 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: Other than the surface collison which occurred between HMS Opossum and the FV Amber Rose in poor visibility on 14 July 1993, in which no one was hurt and only minimal damage sustained, the only incident to have occurred in or close to Scottish waters within the last 12 months is that between HMS Valiant and the FV Audacious.

The surface collision between Opossum and Amber Rose, which is not covered by the code of practice as this governs the conduct of dived submarines, was investigated by the MOD and the marine accident investigation branch of the Department of Transport.

The incident between Valiant and Audacious is currently the subject of an internal MOD investigation, the findings of which will be made available as soon as possible to members of the Department of Transport's fishing industry safety group sub-group dealing with submarine and fishing vessels matters.

Competition Shooting

Sir James Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Army's policy on competition shooting.

Mr. Hanley: A major review of the Army's policy on training in shooting skills, including the role of the Regular Army skill-at-arms meeting, has recently been completed. The RASAM, which involved eight shooting days, was highly manpower intensive. Against the background of the Army's very heavy commitments at a time of restructuring and reducing numbers, I have taken the view that RASAM should be replaced by a one-day event, to be known as the Regular Army Queen's Medal competition. The new competition will continue to encourage excellence in Army shooting and meet the terms governing the award of the Queen's Medal. Competitors will be selected from divisional and district meetings, to be held under new guidelines issued by the Inspector General, Doctrine and Training. These guidelines will be designed to ensure a high standard of marksmanship throughout each Army unit, and that resources are available to improve the less proficient as well as enhance the skills of those who are already excellent shots.

The Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the Royal Air Force will continue to hold their own central skill-at-arms meeting, overlapping with the new Army competition. This will be run by the Royal Air Force on behalf of the other services. International competitors will be able to take part, as before, in the various service and National Rifle Association competitions as well as in the international match on the last day of the meeting.

The Territorial Army skill-at-arms meeting and the combined cadet force (schools) and the inter-service cadet rifle meeting will take place as before.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of the Government on involvement of the United Kingdom in strategic nuclear arms control negotiations.

Mr. Hanley: Our policy continues to be that if, in time, the United States and former Soviet arsenals were further reduced substantially, and there had been no significant improvements in defensive capability, we would consider what further contribution we might make to nuclear arms control in the changed circumstances.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *527*, if an increase in accuracy of delivery allows a reduction in the number of warheads deployed or the yield of the warheads deployed.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *527*.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any nuclear arms control treaties have measured nuclear capability according to comparative explosive yield of the weapons involved.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom is not party to all nuclear arms control treaties, most of which are bilateral between the nuclear super-powers, but we are not aware of any that measure nuclear capability in this way.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when his Department originally determined the total procurement buy for the RAF of the European fighter aircraft;

(2) what are the implications of the recently announced reductions in frontline RAF combat aircraft for the total procurement buy of the Eurofighter 2000 for the RAF.

Mr. Aitken: A decision on the number of Eurofighter 2000 aircraft to be procured for the RAF is not required until 1995. However, for planning purposes, we have assumed—and declared to our partners—an offtake of 250 aircraft, with deliveries commencing in 2000.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Air Force combat aircraft types are due to be replaced by the Eurofighter 2000.

Mr. Hanley: Our current plan is to procure 250 Eurofighter 2000s to replace RAF Tornado F3s and Jaguars. The scope for replacing other RAF aircraft by the Eurofighter 2000 remains under consideration.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what slippage has occurred in the expected initial delivery date of the Eurofighter 2000 to the RAF since the inception of the programme; and what are the cost implications.

Mr. Aitken: The initial delivery date of the Eurofighter 2000 to the RAF has slipped by some two years from that envisaged at the start of development. Most of this results from the decision which the four partner nations took in December 1992 to delay the commitment to production. The cost implications of this delay will depend on the outcome of negotiations with industry on the necessary contract changes.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 12 January, *Official Report*, column *156*, if he will list the planned time scale for the project to move the Procurement Executive to Abbey Wood; by which date the decision on new computers will be taken; and what is his Department's latest estimate of the cost of the new computer equipment and software.

Mr. Aitken: The Procurement Executive's future corporate IT system is planned to replace the PE's existing IT system from the completion of collocation. A final decision will be taken later this year when the definition stage is complete.

It would be prejudicial to the tendering process to disclose the current estimates.

TRADE

Iran

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations have been made to his Department following the announcement by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 1 March concerning the Government's export licensing policy towards Iran.

Mr. Needham: We have received a number of representations about export business which was entered into before the moratorium on export licences was imposed on 17 December 1992. An exception has been made in one case to date: this concerns completion of a contract for repair and overhaul of non-lethal aircraft components, for which the company concerned held a valid export licence issued before the moratorium was announced. For reasons beyond its control the company was unable to complete the work within the time frame of the extant licence, which we have now renewed.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to amend the rules applying to the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The small firms loan guarantee scheme was improved significantly twice during 1993. There are no current plans further to amend the rules applying to the scheme.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the take-up rate for the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The DTI is currently guaranteeing an average of around 240 loans each month. From its inception in June 1981 to 30 September 1993 a total of 34,689 loans have been guaranteed under the scheme.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what adverse representations he has received concerning the attitude of banks involved in the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Complaints are received frequently from businesses unable to obtain a loan under the small firms loan guarantee scheme. The vast majority of these are from businesses which either fall outside of the scope of the scheme or whose proposals have been rejected by lenders on commercial grounds. With both public and lender funds at risk, successful applications under the scheme must be assessed carefully as commercially viable and meet fully the other conditions of the scheme.

Fire Safety

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make the recommendations of the construction task force, and the evidence upon which they are based, public; and if they will form the basis of a consultation exercise between his Department, the fire and emergency planning department of the Home Office and organisations representing the fire service;

(2) if he will provide details of the findings and recommendations of the construction task force with regard to the provision and enforcement of the current fire safety laws and regulations in England and Wales.

Mr. Heseltine: The recommendations of all seven business task forces will be published shortly and the working documents on which they are based will be made available. The recommendations of the construction task force and other views will help inform any wider consideration of fire safety matters.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make arrangements for the data protection registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Eggar: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary by this Department for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Eggar: Factors which led to an increase in the cost of ministerial cars were *(a)* an increase in the rate of VAT from 15 per cent. to 17·5 per cent. which accounted for an additional £12,000, *(b)* an increase in the weekly rate charged for cars by the Department of Environment which accounted for £38,500 and *(c)* the costs relating to two additional Ministers, since April 1992, which amounted to £105,400 for a total increase of £156,000. Against this can be offset reduced expenditure of £210,000 on cars following the amalgamation of the Department of Energy with the Department of Trade and Industry.

Telecommunications Licences

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the outstanding applications for new telecommunications licences, together with the date of the placing of the application with him.

Mr. McLoughlin: The "Register of Licence Applications" which is published weekly by OFTEL lists all applications for new telecommunications licences which have been made since the publication of the duopoly review White Paper in March 1991. The register does not list the dates on which the applications were made; these are provided in the table for all applications under consideration appearing on the register as at 14 January 1994.

Since publication of the White Paper, 35 licences for new telecommunication systems have been issued.

Name of applicant	*Date of application*
National Network Ltd.	30 July 1991
Mercury Personal Communications Ltd.	11 November 1991
Atlantic Telecom	19 November 1991
Millicom Holdings (UK) Ltd.	4 December 1991
Atlantic Telecommunications Ltd.	13 December 1991
Sprint Holding (UK) Ltd.	3 January 1992
Hutchison Microtel Ltd.	5 February 1992
WorldCom International Inc.	11 February 1992
BRT Ltd.	28 February 1992
Taxi Rank Telephones Ltd.	18 March 1992
Atlantic Telecommunications Ltd.	20 March 1992
Telecom Securicor Cellular Radio Ltd.	2 April 1992
SAT-COM	29 June 1992
Amera Tela Communications (UK) Ltd.	22 October 1992
East Midlands Telecommunications Ltd.	23 November 1992
ANT Nachrichtentechnik GmbH	3 December 1992
Telstra (UK) Ltd.	8 January 1993
Transline Europe Ltd.	10 February 1993
Telia International UK Ltd.	8 March 1993
INCOM (UK) Ltd.	25 March 1993
Midlands Cable Communications Ltd.	30 March 1993
AT&T (UK) Ltd.	15 April 1993
NORWEB plc	23 April 1993
Yorkshire Cable Group Ltd.	5 May 1993
Videotron City and Westminster Ltd.	13 May 1993
Securicor Datatrak Ltd.	30 June 1993
Premium Phone Services Ltd.	6 July 1993
Videcom Customer Services Ltd.	26 July 1993
United Artists Communications (North Thames Estuary) Ltd.	27 July 1993
Racal Network Services Ltd.	16 August 1993
INCOM (UK) Ltd.	27 September 1993
Midland Network Services Ltd.	16 November 1993
Services Sound and Vision Corporation	1 December 1993
NEWCO (BT/MCI joint venture)	23 December 1993
BT	*
Mercury Communications Ltd.	*

* Applications for licences to provide terrestrial flight telecommunication services dating from before the Duopoly Review. They are being taken forward following allocation of radio spectrum at the 1992 World Administrative Radio Conference.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the size of the unused tranche of ECGD support for large defence contracts when this facility was withdrawn in August 1991.

Mr. Needham: It was £392 million.

European Space Year

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to European Space Year 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: There was no European Space Year 1993 with which the Government was involved. However, the United Kingdom made a significant contribution to International Space Year 1992, which did much to raise awareness of space through a wide variety of events and activities.

Radio Frequencies

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what restrictions are imposed on those allocated radio frequencies regarding hiring these out to third parties.

Mr. McLoughlin: Licences issued by the Radiocommunications Agency under the Wireless Telegraphy Acts authorise the licensee to use one or more radio frequencies for specified purposes. Licences are not transferable and do not permit the licensee to hire out radio channels to third parties except for certain types of licences issued to radio dealers and manufacturers to meet the temporary needs of their customers.

Military Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the most recent date on which his Department's export licence unit manual of instructions was revised in respect of weapons or technology used in the manufacture of weapons or military equipment.

Mr. Needham: All staff in the licensing units of the Export Control Organisation were issued with new and very detailed working instructions in March 1993. These instructions are continually brought up to date to reflect changing requirements and circumstances. For example, in the context of arms exports they have just been amended to reflect the use of the new standard document required to accompany consignments of arms transferred between member states of the EC. The ECO will also shortly issue to all its staff a new handbook which will, among other things, consolidate into a single volume many existing separate items of higher level guidance on all aspects of the conduct of the ECO's business.

Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy on commercial reprocessing of nuclear fuel of the extra-territorial mandate to the United States President, contained in United States congressional resolution 1163 as part of the amended Defense Authorisation Bill 1994 (HR 2401) to take action to encourage the reduction of and cessation of civil nuclear reprocessing world wide.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have taken note of this resolution, which is not binding on the United States Administration.

Company Accounts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost to his Department of the advertising campaign on Classic FM regarding the submission of company accounts; and at whose instigation the campaign was undertaken.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject has been delegated to the chief executive of Companies House, for which my Department is responsible. I have, therefore, asked Mr. David Durham to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Durham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 14 January 1994:

On 12 January you tabled the following Parliamentary Question:

"To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost to his department of the advertising campaign on Classic FM regarding the submission of company accounts, and at whose instigation the campaign was undertaken."

Following the answer given by the President of the Board of Trade, I am replying as Chief Executive of Companies House Executive Agency.

In the current financial year, Companies House has spent £47,000 on radio advertising with Classic FM with a further £23,500 committed.

This figure includes VAT and covers radio advertising paid for directly by Companies House. The campaign was instigated by Companies House.

The introduction of Late Filing Penalties in July 1992 has provided a major boost to the completeness of the company register. However, many companies appear to remain unsure of their filing obligations and continue to file late. Companies House recognises that awareness of the legal obligations, which include dates by which company accounts must be filed, is an important aspect of the process of enabling companies to meet their obligations under the Companies Acts. We see it as our duty to ensure that we use all reasonable means to make the business community aware of the deadlines for filing the accounts and the mandatory penalties which apply. Independent market research is commissioned to monitor the effectiveness of our communications.

I hope this is helpful to you.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *36*, when the hon. Member for Don Valley can expect to receive a list of biographical details and relevant dates of appointment of members of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have now written to the hon. Member with the information requested. I apologise for any inconvenience caused to the hon. Member by the delay in providing this.

Heating Bills

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *681*, in what form information in respect of the annual heating bills to his Department's offices is available.

Mr. Eggar: The costs of energy consumption disaggregated by building or by use are not available. Overall expenditure on energy has been:

	£ million
1990-91	5·16
1991-92	5·95
1992-93	5·49

These figures include estimated apportionments of costs in multi-occupancy buildings, and include former Department of Energy buildings throughout. We do not have comprehensive data before 1990-91 and data for 1993-94 have not yet been collated.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Royalties

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what would be the expected net inflow to the United Kingdom recording rights owners of a harmonised European private copying royalty on blank tapes and recording equipment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The European Commission has not submitted any proposal for harmonised European private copyright royalty, nor is it clear whether or when it will do so. It is therefore not possible to say what money flows involving the United Kingdom would occur, since these would be determined by factors which cannot be known in the absence of a proposal, in particular the rate of royalty and whether payments are to be made to nationals of countries outside the European Union.

Television Relay Masts

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average cost of *(a)* erecting and *(b)* maintaining local low-power television relay masts in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average cost of erecting a low-power broadcaster's television relay station is in the order of £40,000, with maintenance costs of about £3,000 per year. However, these costs can be markedly affected by factors such as site rental and access, laying-on of electricity at remote sites, and mast erection and equipment housing.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) of 12 January, *Official Report*, column *167*, if he will give the basis for his statement on the number of jobs dependent on THORP.

Mr. Eggar: The employment figures given in that answer derive from estimates set out in the British Nuclear Fuels plc document "The Economic and Commercial Justification for THORP". A copy of this document has been placed in the Library of the House.

Accounts Service Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the Accounts Service Agency.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on 29 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *805*. The review of the Accounts Services Agency has recently been concluded. I hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Rechar 2

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to support the EU Rechar 2 initiative in areas that have suffered substantial job losses in the mining industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: No such initiative yet exists. Precise Commission proposals for the future of the structural fund's community initiatives are still awaited.

Car Prices

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of price differentials wthin the European Community between vehicles made by European Community-based manufacturers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The issue of differences in car prices within the European Community has been looked at by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the European Commission. Neither concluded that the difference in prices was the result of anti-competitive practices but both agreed that the market should be kept under review. Car manufacturers now provide details of car prices to the Commission, which publishes comparative EC price lists for selected vehicles twice a year. The latest data relating to the situation on 1 November 1993 indicate that manufacturers have tended to reduce price differentials for most of their models.

Plutonium Reprocessing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy on the storage of surpluses of plutonium from reprocessing foreign spent fuel at Sellafield and the length of time that those surpluses will be stored.

Mr. Eggar: Plutonium recovered from reprocessing by British Nuclear Fuels plc will be stored at Sellafield on behalf of the company's customers until transferred to them under safeguards for recycling or other civil purposes. In the meanwhile, storage will be undertaken subject to stringent safety, security and safeguards procedures.

GM Buses-North

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date his Department received the recommendation of the Director-General of Fair Trading regarding the proposed acquisition by British Bus plc of GM Buses-North; what was the substance of the Director General of Fair Trading's recommendation; and when he intends to make a decision on the possible referral of the decision to the Monopolies and mergers Commission.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I understand that the proposed acquisition by British Bus plc of Greater Manchester Buses North Ltd. is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. Ministers in due course shall need to take a decision on whether or not to refer the acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, taking account of advice from the Director General. The substance of his advice is confidential. I can, however, assure the hon. Member that all relevant factors will be taken into account in considering the case.

Post Office

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding the review of the Post Office; when his Department is expected to announce the findings of the review; what consultation his Department has undertaken with other countries during the review; what has been the total cost to date of the review exercise; what is the total number of staff employed and resources devoted to the exercise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received numerous representations on the subject of the Post Office review, including from the Post Office itself, hon. Members, members of the public, other customers of the Post Office, trade unions and other interested parties.

No decisions on the review have yet been taken. We shall make an announcement when they are.

In the course of the review Ministers and officials have looked at the experience of a number of countries in the postal sector, including among others the Republic of Ireland, Sweden, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Australia and Canada.

I gave the outturn costs for consultancy work on the Post Office review and the sale of Parcelforce in 1992-93 to the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Central (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, 5 November 1993, column *513-14*.

I gave the figures for the staff employed on the review in my Department in the reply to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), *Official Report*, 25 November 1993, column *111*.

Quangos

Mr. Meale: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of all individuals who are or were members of the House of Lords who since 1979 have been appointed to any quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, excluding appointments as justices of the peace, giving in each case the title of the post, any salary payable and the duration of the appointment.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The table sets out the information available:

Name	*Post*	*Salary*	*Duration*
Viscount Chelmsford	Member of the Simple Trade Procedures Board	Unpaid	1 November 1992—31 October 1995
Lord Justice Mustill (now Baron Mustill)	Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Arbitration Law	Unpaid	1985 to December 1989
Lord Rockley	Member of the Design Council	Unpaid	12 December 1987—20 December 1993

Name	Post	Salary	Duration
Earl of Limerick	Chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board	£5,000 per annum	1979 to March 1983
	Member of the British Overseas Trade Board	Unpaid[1]	November 1984—1991
Earl Jellicoe	Chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board	£7,500 per annum[2] £7,726 per annum[3] £7,988 per annum[4] £10,000 per annum[5] £10,760 per annum[6] £11,515 per annum[7]	April 1982 to 1985
Lord Bridges	Member of the British Overseas Trade Board	Unpaid[1]	1979—1982
Lord Selsdon	Member of the British Overseas Trade Board	Unpaid[1]	1983—1985
Baroness Miller	Member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission	£12,735 per annum	3 March 1992—31 December 1993

[1] Unpaid (was able to claim expenses when he attended meetings).
[2] 1 April 1983—31 March 1984.
[3] 1 April 1984—31 October 1984.
[4] 1 November 1984—31 December 1984.
[5] 1 January 1985—30 June 1985.
[6] 1 July 1985—28 February 1986.
[7] 1 March 1986—15 July 1986.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to be in a position to announce the final EC agreement on those areas within the United Kingdom which will be eligible for objective 5b funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* Shortly.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he now intends to announce the scope and terms of reference of the nuclear review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *759*.

British Coal

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the cost to public funds of the support which is to be available to assist private individuals or companies to prepare bids for the purchase of British Coal collieries and property.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* We announced on 25 March 1993 that up to £1 million would be available to assist management and employee buy-out teams preparing to bid for pits offered for licence or main privatisation.

Patenting of Human Genes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *152*, if he will set out those criteria which will be used to determine which sequences of nucleotides of specific industrial application, which may be derived from human genes, will be suitable to be patentable.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* Since the law does not specifically preclude patents for genetic sequences, judgments need to be made on any applications for patents in this area by the patent examiner dealing with a particular application. These judgments will turn on the individual circumstances of the case and the law provides that they can be tested in the courts. It is therefore not possible for the Patent Office to set down specific criteria to determine which sequences may be patentable.

As explained in the answer of 7 December 1993, normal criteria of novelty and inventive step are used to determine when a sequence of nucleotides is patentable. This means, for novelty, that the sequence must not have been disclosed anywhere before the filing of the application and, in relation to the inventive step, that the patent examiner must make a judgment on the degree of ingenuity involved in locating the gene of interest and any subsequent cloning or sequencing work.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Employees

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will publish details of the numbers employed full and part time in the Palace of Westminster; and if he will break this down by main divisions.

Mr. Beith: Details of those staff employed by the House of Commons Commission are as follows:

Department	Full-time permanent staff	Part-time permanent staff	Fixed term appointees	Secondments
Speaker's Office	11	1	Nil	1
Clerk's Department	170	17	15	5
Serjeant's Department	311	69	1	3
Finance and Administration Department	105	2	5	1
Library	153	33	Nil	1
Official Report	94	5	13	Nil
Refreshment Department	280	36	2	Nil

Fire Regulations

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee when the fire regulations for the Palace of Westminster were last reviewed; and what assessment has been made of their adequacy.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Home Office fire service inspectorate recently reviewed the fire precautions in the Palace of Westminster and recommended additional measures. Works are progressing and a new fire certificate is expected to be issued later this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Forensic Laboratory

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the site of the former forensic science laboratory at Newtownbreda will be sold; what proposals he has for the future of this site; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: It is not known at present if the Newtownbreda site will be sold. The site is no longer required by the Northern Ireland Office and its future use is currently under consideration.

Defaulters

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average prison sentence imposed for defaulting on a fine; what is the average period actually spent in prison by such a defaulter in Northern Ireland; and what is the average cost of such a person's imprisonment.

Sir John Wheeler: The average prison sentence imposed for fine defaulting in Northern Ireland is 18 days and the average period actually served by such a defaulter is seven days. These figures have remained constant in recent years.

The current weekly cost of a prisoner, inclusive of all categories, in the Northern Ireland prison system is £1,238. No separate figure for fine defaulters is available.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Sir John Wheeler: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Strip Searches

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will refer the practice of strip searching to the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

Sir John Wheeler: No. The issues for consideration by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights must be for the commission to determine.

Ulster Museum

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the attendance figures for 1993 reported by the Ulster museum, including its outstations, with the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1992.

Mr. Ancram: In 1993 a total of 268,300 people visited the Ulster museum and the Armagh County museum—a decrease of 40·5 per cent. on the attendance figure for 1992.

Irish Broadcasting Act 1960

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will arrange for a copy of the guidelines issued by broadcasting organisations in the Republic of Ireland arising from the non-renewal of section 31 of the Irish Broadcasting Act 1960 to be placed in the Library; and how many households in Northern Ireland he estimates are able to receive television and radio broadcasts originating from the Irish Republic.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is not considered appropriate to place a copy of the guidelines in the Library. It is estimated that approximately 20,000 television sets can receive signals from the Republic in Northern Ireland; radio signals can be received in any interference-free area in Northern Ireland.

"Next Steps" Initiative

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the departments of the Northern Ireland civil service and the Northern Ireland Office are responding to the "next steps" initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: The response of the Departments of Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Office to "next steps" forms an important component of the overall programme of civil service management reform in Northern Ireland.

In the province the important work of the administration has continued in spite of the many difficulties faced by our civil servants, in common with the private sector work force. The "next steps" programme is designed to enhance effectiveness and efficiency, and to improve standards of service and value for money. "Next steps" is the vehicle for providing, through those executive agencies which serve the public in Northern Ireland, the improved quality which is necessary if we are to meet our citizens charter commitments.

In line with the progress reported by the Government recently in the White Paper on the fourth "Next Steps Review" (Cm 2430), agency coverage in Northern Ireland has been increasing steadily. There are now nine agencies in place covering some 30 per cent. of the work force.

We have plans to look at the scope to extend this coverage to include the remaining significant executive activities, and in doing so to establish, on a case-by-case basis, that these activities continue to be appropriate for the civil service.

There is no presumption that every existing business unit must be an agency. We will wish to confirm, by way of prior options studies, that an activity remains necessary, and also to consider whether it should be pursued through privatisation, or contracting out. Four such studies are coming close to completion and are looking in depth at the Public Records Office, the Estate Services Directorate of the Management Executive for HPSS, the Industrial Research and Technology Unit, and the Forensic Science Laboratory. If agency status is agreed for any of these I will make a further announcement.

The schedule set out lists additional studies for which a timetable is now settled. I am still considering further possibilities, and will make another announcement to the House in due course.

Schedule

Dept.		*Departmental proposed completion dates*
DED	Insolvency Service	by January 1995
DED	Health and Safety	by December 1994
DED	Trading Standards	by April 1994
DFP	Departmental Information Systems Units	by September 1994
DFP	Telecommunications	by May 1995
DFP	Civil Service Superannuation (in conjunction with HPSS Superannuation)	by March 1995
DFP	Business Development Services	by March 1994
DFP	Statistics, Census Office, GRO	by March 1994
DHSS	HPSS Superannuation	See DFP, Superannuation above
DHSS	Health Service Information Systems	by June 1994
DOE	Roads Services	by December 1994
DOE	Environment Services	by December 1994
DOE	Land/Deeds Registration	by December 1994
DOE	Planning Service	by December 1994
NIO	Prison Service	by June 1994

NATIONAL FINANCE

Works of Art

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue is forgone by having a lower VAT rate of 2½ per cent. rather than 17½ per cent. on imported works of art; and if he will make a statement on the impact of the seventh VAT directive on this.

Sir John Cope: At present works of art are exempt from VAT at importation into the United Kingdom. Under a derogation from the seventh VAT directive agreed in principle at ECOFIN on 13 December the United Kingdom will apply the standard rate of VAT to one-seventh of the value of works of art at importation. This is expected to yield in a full year about £2 million. To apply the standard rate to the whole value would yield more if the market were unaffected but in practice the amount would depend on the effects of such a measure on the United Kingdom art market.

1993 Budgets

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average percentage loss of annual income due to the March and November 1993 Budgets for the 10 per cent. lowest income group and the 10 per cent. highest income group.

Mr. Dorrell: Relative to indexation, the main tax-related measures taking effect before the next Budget will cost the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest net incomes, adjusted for family composition, just over 1 per cent. of their net income on average and the 10 per cent. of households with the highest net incomes just under 2 per cent. of their net income on average.

Alcohol

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most recent estimate as to the amount of revenue lost through the purchase of beer made on the continent and sold in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: At this stage Customs and Excise estimate that the revenue loss through illegal sales in the United Kingdom of alcohol and tobacco purchased in other EC member states does not exceed £35 million. The bulk of this is on hand rolling tobacco.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations underlie the practice of destroying alcoholic drinks confiscated by the Customs.

Sir John Cope: Customs destroy seized alcoholic drinks when they judge it necessary to safeguard the

Revenue, or to protect the market for legitimate United Kingdom traders, and there is no acceptable alternative means of disposal.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action is being taken to reduce the amount of beer and wine purchased in France for own consumption and then sold in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: The law prescribes severe penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment for anyone attempting to defraud the Revenue in this way. In addition, goods imported by offenders and the vehicles used are liable to seizure. Customs and Excise are using excise verification officers to detect and prosecute the individuals involved. A range of controls are applied, which include checks made at retail outlets. In the 11 months to November 1993, EVOs made 1,016 detections involving £1,624,543 revenue.

Widow's Bereavement Allowance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Government will save from the reduction in the tax allowance on widow's bereavement allowance.

Mr. Dorrell: At 1994-95 income levels, the full-year yield from restricting the widows' bereavement allowance to 20 per cent. is about £6 million. Restricting this allowance to 15 per cent. as announced for 1995-96, would yield an estimated further £9 million.

Football Pools Betting Duty

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the Government's total income from the football pools betting duty for each of the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 and as a total over the same period.

Sir John Cope: Receipts from pool betting duty were as follows:

	£ million
1991-92	319·5
1992-93	318·2
Total	637·7

Relocation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants were located in Greater London at the beginning of *(a)* 1964, *(b)* 1974, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1994; and what he expects the figure to be in 2004.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of civil servants, full-time equivalents, located in Greater London, was 131,451 at January 1984 and 111,252 at 1 April 1993, latest available. Data for earlier years are not available; nor are projections made by location.

Unicorn Heritage plc

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what precise grounds *(a)* Cork Gully recommended that the debt owed by Unicorn Heritage plc be written off and *(b)* the Treasury accepted that the debt could not be repaid by the directors of the company.

Mr. Dorrell: Cork Gully, as liquidator of Unicorn Heritage plc, assessed the assets and liabilities of the company and on 12 October 1990 informed the English tourist board that there was no prospect of any payment of a dividend to unsecured creditors. As a result on 16 April 1991 the English tourist board decided that it would seek approval for the debt to be written off from the Department of National Heritage and the Treasury, and wrote to the Department of National Heritage on 12 March 1992. In the light of the information provided by Cork Gully and the ETB, the Treasury on 14 May 1993 accepted that there was no prospect of a dividend. As Unicorn Heritage plc had limited liability status the directors were not personally responsible for the debts incurred by the company.

Air Passenger Duty

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made regarding the revenue derived from air passenger duty per annum in respect of *(a)* scheduled passenger flights to and from airports in Scotland, *(b)* charter flights to and from airports in Scotland; and *(c)* scheduled passenger flights to and from airports operated by Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.

Sir John Cope: On the basis of statistics provided by the Civil Aviation Authority, the total revenue yield from air passenger duty from passengers departing from Scottish airports is estimated to be around £20 million. Around 55 per cent. of this total is from scheduled flights and 45 per cent. from chartered flights. No separate estimates have been made for arriving passengers as this can give rise to double counting. The revenue yield is likely to be similar to that from departing passengers.

We estimate that around £1 million will be paid from passengers departing from highland and island airports.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which passengers will be exempt from air passenger duty; what types of aircraft will be exempt; what plans there are to exempt users of aircraft flying to and from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Finance Bill proposes that passengers will be exempt from air passenger duty if they are on the return leg of a domestic return ticket; if they are transferring at a United Kingdom airport to another aircraft or a further flight on the same aircraft; or if they are under two years of age and are not allocated a separate seat before entering the aircraft. Passengers on aircraft taking off from airports outside the United Kingdom will not be within the scope of the duty. Aircraft will be exempt if they have a maximum take-off weight of under 10 tonnes or if they seat fewer than 20 passengers. There are no plans for an exemption for all passengers flying to and from the highlands and islands of Scotland.

Grants

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the grants of over £50,000 for commercial and industrial ventures that his Department has written off as not recoverable in the past three years.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* None.

HEALTH

Primary Care Projects

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the projects in primary care under "London: Making the Best Better" that have been financed by the London implementation group and the cost of each project.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1993-94, £40 million has been made available to fund primary care development plans produced by each of the 12 family health services authorities—FHSAs—within the London initiative zone —LIZ. A list will be placed in the Library of projects contained within those plans which are being progressed in 1993-94. Detailed management and monitoring of development programmes is carried out by FHSAs, and costings for individual projects are therefore not available centrally.

Pathology Services

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the private tendering of pathology services in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: It is for trusts to take account of the range of options available for the provision of pathology services, including provision by the independent sector, in securing the best service for patients.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the time scale for the Government review of pathology services.

Mr. Sackville: The strategic review of pathology services began in November 1993, and is expected to report to the Department in June this year.

Hepatitis B Vaccinations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of surgeons have been vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally, but surgeons have been among the high risk groups recommended to receive hepatitis B vaccine since its introduction in 1982. Guidance to health authorities and trusts was reinforced last August by the issue of the booklet "Protecting Health Care Workers and Patients from Hepatitis B", with accompanying health service guidelines. These guidelines ask provider units to aim to immunise and check the immunity of all surgeons by the middle of 1994. Copies of the booklet and guidelines are available in the Library.

Air Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place a copy of the third report of the advisory group on medical aspects of air pollution episodes, produced in December, in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 December at column *720*.

Food Safety

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures are taken in food poisoning investigations to determine sources of infection; and what assessment she has made of the extent to which these measures are adequate;

(2) when the proposed draft guidelines on the investigation of food poisoning will be released for consultation.

Mr. Sackville: It is for the authorities involved to decide upon the structure and priorities of any investigation undertaken regarding an outbreak of food poisoning.

Guidance on the management of such outbreaks will be released for consultation shortly.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library the detailed protocols of the research into the incidence and sources of salmonella food poisoning being administered by the steering group on the microbiological safety of food.

Mr. Sackville: Copies of a background note summarising the protocol for the steering group's study of infectious intestinal disease in England will be placed in the Library. The study will provide information on the incidence, but not the sources, of salmonella food poisoning. More detailed information about the protocol will be available when the results of the study are published after its completion in 1995.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis the research funding administered by the steering group on the microbiological safety of food has been, or will be, awarded; and whether the research work has been advertised to independent laboratories and research groups, on a tender basis.

Mr. Sackville: The steering group makes decisions on the need for new microbiological food safety surveillance projects on the basis of available epidemiological data and other data on food, food processes and food hygiene. Contracts are awarded by officials in the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on behalf of the steering group to organisations in the public and private sectors with the relevant expertise. Neither of the national projects currently under way was appropriate for tender procedures, given their complexity. It is envisaged that suitable projects will be advertised in the future and subsequent contracts awarded on a tender basis.

Television and Radio Interviews

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the television and radio interviews, and the topics covered, by her and her departmental Ministers between 18 December and 10 January.

Mr. Sackville: The subjects on which Ministers at the Department gave television and radio interviews between 18 December and 10 January are:

Home Alone Children
In vitro Fertilisation
Services for Juvenile Delinquents
Smoking
Reforming London's Health Services

Accident and Emergency Services
Patient's Charter
Drugs Campaign Launch
Family Values—International Year of the Family

Detailed records of individual interviews are not kept. Ministers responded to requests on the topics listed as they were received.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures she can take to prevent the use of in vitro fertilisation as a mechanism for social engineering as in the fixing of foetus characteristics such as sex or ethnicity; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what measures she can take to prevent the use of in vitro fertilisation in respect of post-menopausal women; and if she will use such measures;

(3) what measures she can take to prevent the use of in vitro fertilisation in circumstances such as the mixing of the ethnicity of donor and recipient.

Mr. Sackville: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority established by Parliament in 1990 under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act regulates centres carrying out in vitro fertilisation.

The authority maintains a code of practice setting out its requirements for the proper conduct of licensed activities. The code is approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and is laid before Parliament. It makes clear the age of the prospective parents is one factor which should be considered when deciding whether or not in vitro fertilisation should be offered. Where donated eggs or sperm are used in treatment, it is good practice to try to match the physical characteristics of the donor to those of the couple being treated. The use of sex selection techniques in centres licensed by the authority is permitted only for medical reasons. An essential feature of the 1990 Act and the activities regulated under its provisions is the welfare of any child born as a result of treatment.

Mentally Ill Patients

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order independent inquiries into every death caused by patients discharged under medication from mental illness hospitals.

Mr. Bowis: New guidance to the national health service on the discharge of psychiatric patients, issued for consultation on 12 January, states that it will always be necessary to hold an inquiry which is independent of service providers in cases of homicides involving mentally ill people.

NHS Contracts

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she intends to take in the event of a dispute between a contractor and a national health service trust, when that dispute is outside the terms of the National Health Service Contracts (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 1991, to ensure that the trust has acted wholly within the law.

Mr. Sackville: National health service contracts between purchasers and providers are subject to the National Health Service Contracts (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 1991. Where a purchaser or provider contracts with the independent sector these contracts will be legal contracts and therefore subject to the proper legal process.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what levels of savings in purchasing and administrative costs have been targeted by the NHS Supplies Authority for the years 1994 to 1996.

Mr. Sackville: The authority is preparing its business plan for 1994-95, and the national health service management executive has not yet, therefore, agreed purchasing or running cost savings targets with the authority for that or subsequent years. The NHS management executive will, however, require the authority to build significantly on the purchasing savings of £57 million which it is on target to achieve in 1993-94, and further to reduce its warehousing and distribution costs through the new logistics strategy currently being prepared.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent to which the NHS Supplies Authority's financial savings and efficiency targets could be improved or accelerated by transfering it to the private sector; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: After taking independent, specialist consultancy advice, our assessment is that privatisation of the National Health Service Supplies Authority in its present form would not offer the prospect of increased financial savings or increased efficiency, and would risk diverting management effort from the significant service improvements and cost reductions which are being planned. However, the core function of the authority is acknowledged to be purchasing and contracting. Its other activities, particularly warehousing, distribution, and information technology services, could gain added value from more extensive use through market testing of private sector skills, experience and resources. This will be taken forward by the authority as it develops its new logstics and IT strategies.

Psychiatric Hospital Closures

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where published copies of the handbook of good practice in psychiatric hospital closures prepared by the mental health task force are available.

Mr. Bowis: The handbook of good practice will be available shortly and copies will be placed in the Library.

Blood Donors

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *811*, whether the screening tests required for blood or plasma collected overseas for processing into blood products to be imported are conducted in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: It is a requirement throughout the European Community that all plasma donations used in the manufacture of blood products marketed in the European Community must be screened for hepatitis B, hepatitis C,

HIV 1 and HIV 2. Such testing is performed in the country of origin. For all products which are to be marketed in the United Kingdom, however, samples of plasma pools are submitted for independent testing in the United Kingdom by the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control.

Mental Health

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by the mental health task force towards its strategic objective of developing a vision of the shape of the market for mental health services in years to come.

Mr. Bowis: On 4 October 1993, a conference was held at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre, London on "Mental Health—Visions for the Future". It was organised jointly by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Mental Health Task Force. I gave the keynote address and over 200 health service managers and others attended.

The task force support group, which includes many of the major interests in the field, held a seminar in November which sought to anticipate developments in mental health services over the next 20 years. The issues identified by participants and suggestions for further work during 1994 are being considered.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the report of the review of mental health nursing.

Mr. Bowis: Shortly.

AIDS Support Grant

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when is the deadline for London boroughs to apply for AIDS support grant for 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The local authority circular LAC(94)3, explaining arrangements for continuation in 1994-95 of the AIDS support grant scheme has been issued and invites authorities to submit their expenditure plans to the Department by 18 February. Copies of the circular are available in the Library.

Oral Health

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department commenced work on the proposals for an oral health strategy.

Dr. Mawhinney: Work on an oral health strategy started in October 1991, with the setting up of an oral health strategy group, chaired by the chief dental officer.

Lister Hospital, Stevenage

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what inquiry she has conducted into the placing of the control by North Hertfordshire health trust to manage the pathology services for the Lister hospital, Stevenage.

Mr. Sackville: It is for the trust to determine which source of pathology provision provides the best service for patients, and to specify and monitor the standards to be met in contracts.

Embryology

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken or will take to encourage the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to prevent research into the use of foetal eggs from aborted foetuses for human reproductive purposes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The consultation document on donated ovarian tissue in embryo research and assisted conception issued on 7 January by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority invites comments on whether eggs or ovarian tissue from foetuses should be used in research. The Government welcome this wide-ranging consultation. We look forward to receiving advice from the authority in due course, when we can consider what further action, if any, is required.

Health Care, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding is being allocated on 1994-95 to regional health authorities to purchase health care in London; and what was the figure for 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: Allocations are made to the four Thames regions and it is they who allocate to district health authorities in London. For 1993-94 and 1994-95, the main regional allocations were:

£000's

	1993-94	*1994-95*
North West Thames	1,320,749	[1]1,352,165
North East Thames	1,490,187	1,561,379
South East Thames	1,439,276	1,519,821
South West Thames	1,116,107	[1]1,163,130

[1]The allocations are not directly comparable because of boundary changes.

In addition, the Thames regions will have received during 1993-94 further allocations for specific purposes, some of which will have been deployed in London. Similar allocations will be made during 1994-95.

Information on allocations for 1994-95 is not yet available centrally. The 1993-94 revenue allocations to London DHAs are as follows:

Region and District Health Authority	*£,000's*
North West Thames	
Barnet	99,709
Hillingdon	72,384
Brent and Harrow	151,175
Ealing/Hammersmith/Hounslow	193,428
Kensington/Chelsea/Westminster	127,078
North East Thames	
Barking and Havering	118,879
Camden and Islington	185,044
East London and The City	243,662
New Rivers	170,366
Redbridge/Waltham Forest	159,278
South East Thames	
Bexley	68,422
Greenwich	86,135
Bromley	97,490
South East London	299,968
South West Thames	
Croydon	102,565

Region and District Health Authority	£,000's
Kingston and Richmond	150,538
Wandsworth	87,243
Merton and Sutton	122,744

NHS Trusts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued to trust hospitals on their pension fund investment policies.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. For an occupational pension scheme to obtain Inland Revenue approval the rules on scheme investment would have to meet Inland Revenue criteria.

Abortion

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking in respect of re-approval of private sector places to carry out termination of pregnancy under the Abortion Act 1967 when the current approval period ends at the end of January.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be extending by six months from 1 February 1994 current private sector approvals to carry out termination of pregnancy under the Abortion Act 1967, as amended. This will allow the Department of Health to complete a review of current arrangements for approving and monitoring places so approved. Any changes will be introduced from 1 August 1994. All places currently approved under section 1(3) of the Act are being informed.

Staffordshire Ambulance Trust

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will meet employees of the Staffordshire ambulance trust to discuss patient transport services.

Mr. Sackville: I have no plans to do so. Employee relations in national health service trusts are the responsibility of NHS trust boards.

Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the relocation plan on which she approved the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham;

(2) when she gave her approval to the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham.

Dr. Mawhinney: Agreement to the permanent closure of the Birmingham accident and the Royal orthopaedic hospitals was given on 1 February 1993. In order to effect the closures, trauma, orthopaedic, plastic surgery and burns services were to transfer to the Birmingham general hospital and later relocate to the Selly Oak hospital site. In order to make sufficient space at the general hospital, general surgery and general medicine were to be transferred to the Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak hospitals.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received to change the relocation plan associated with the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since South Birmingham district health authority put forward suggestions for the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital and reprovision of these services on the Selly Oak hospital site, we have received 12 letters from hon. Members and 51 from members of the public.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the South Birmingham health authority financial review into the Royal orthopaedic hospital compiled by KPMG Peat Marwick, a copy of which has been sent to her.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for the South Birmingham district health authority, which commissioned this report, to consider what response, if any, to make to it.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the financial grounds on which she gave her approval to the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham.

Dr. Mawhinney: At the time the proposal for the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital was considered in February 1993, concerns were expressed about a possible loss of income to the hospital as a number of health authorities were signalling their intention of reducing contracts with it. However, the financial position of the hospital was only one of the issues which was considered. The main reason for agreeing the closure of the Royal orthopaedic hospital and reprovision of orthopaedic services on to one site was to improve the quality of care available to patients.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers a health authority has to alter a relocation plan for a hospital scheduled for closure under a different plan approved by her.

Dr. Mawhinney: When a health authority proposes to make significant changes to proposals for hospital closures and service reprovision which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed, we would expect them to consult on their new proposals.

Gene Therapy Advisory Committee

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the terms of reference of the Gene Therapy Advisory Committee.

Mr. Sackville: The terms of reference for the Gene Therapy Advisory Committee are:

"To consider and advise on the acceptability of proposals for gene therapy research on human subjects on ethical grounds, taking account of the scientific merits of the proposals and the potential benefits and risks.

To work with other agencies which have responsibilities in this field, including local research ethics committees, and agencies with statutory responsibilities—the Medicines Control Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of the Environment.

To provide advice to United Kingdom Health Ministers on developments in gene therapy research and their implications."

Crownhill Hospital, Plymouth

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of converting the former Crownhill hospital in Plymouth into offices for Plymouth and Torbay health authority.

Mr. Sackville: Information is available centrally on schemes with a cost of over £1 million. The Crownhill conversion was below this figure and the hon. Member may therefore wish to contact Mrs. Judith Leverton, chairman of the Plymouth and Torbay health authority, for details.

Health Authorities

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether each health authority seeks or holds details of the political affiliations of people nominated to or appointed to it.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are not aware that any health authority either seeks or holds such information.

Ambulance Personnel (Retirement)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements exist in England to allow ambulance personnel employed by district health authorities or NHS trusts to retire at 55 years.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service pension scheme for England and Wales provides for retirement below the age of 60 on grounds of ill health, organisational change, redundancy and in the interests of the efficiency of the service. The employer meets the additional costs involved in cases other than ill health, and resources have been made available in 1993-94 for the ambulance service in England to cover the costs of a limited programme of early retirement.

Pay Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of dedicated NHS pay bed units, their location and number of beds contained in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Clothier Inquiry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what external public relations staff from *(a)* the private sector or *(b)* other NHS bodies have been employed by (i) Grantham and Kesteven district general hospital, (ii) South Lincolnshire district health authority or (iii) Trent regional health authority to assist with work relating to the Clothier inquiry; and what was the cost of any of these contracts.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Trent regional health authority, Sir Michael Carlisle, for details.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost to date of the Clothier inquiry.

Dr. Mawhinney: Up to 14 January, £96,574.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to oppose in the World Health Assembly the withdrawal of resolution WHA4640 of 14 May 1993 on the request to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on the legal status of the use by a state of nuclear weapons in armed conflict.

Dr. Mawhinney: The agenda for the May 1994 World Health Assembly has not yet been published. We are unaware of any proposal for a resolution which would negate resolution WHA 46.40.

NHS Beds (Private Use)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the costs to public funds that arise through the provision of authorised NHS beds for private use, listing each separate budget head, and the total costs thereby incurred by each hospital with authorised beds.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1 April 1991 health authorities, on behalf of directly managed units, and trusts have, subject to certain safeguards, been able to determine their own private patient activity. National health service private patient charges are calculated at the appropriate commercial rate generating valuable income for improving services for all patients.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the location and number of authorised NHS beds for private use in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 16 March 1992 at columns *857-66* for the latest available information. Since 1 April 1991 health authorities, on behalf of directly managed units, and trusts have, subject to certain safeguards, been able to determine their own private patient activity.

Health Spending, North Essex

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the percentage increase in health spending in the North Essex health authority area in 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The 1994-95 revenue cash limit for North Essex health authority represents a 5·3 per cent. increase over 1993-94. The allocation is made by North East Thames regional health authority.

Brook Hospital

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the South East Thames regional health authority authorised the purchase of a second-hand mobile MRI scanner for use at the Brook hospital; when the authority had paid a non-refundable deposit; what was the total cost paid for the scanner and the amounts borne by *(a)* the authority and *(b)* Greenwich Healthcare Trust; when the scanner was delivered to the Brook hospial; when it became operational; how many NHS patients have been scanned with this equipment; what consultation took place with consultants at the Brook hospital prior to the purchase of this equipment; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Barker, chairman of South East Thames regional health authority concerning its involvement in the purchase of the MRI scanner at Greenwich Healthcare national

health service trust and Mr. Neville Thompson, chairman of Greenwich Healthcare NHS trust about the installation and use of medical equipment at the trust.

GPs (Suspension)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of whether the actions of the Greenwich and Bexley family health services authority were appropriate and satisfacory in dealing with complaints against the doctor concerned in the recent case raised with her by the hon. Member for Woolwich; and whether the actions of the General Medical Council were appropriate and satisfactory in dealing with the complaints.

Dr. Mawhinney: It would not be right to comment on the actions of Greenwich and Bexley family health services authority in this case until proceedings to which the family health services authority is a party have been formally concluded.

The General Medical Council is an independent statutory body whose constitution and functions are governed by the Medical Act 1983. The council has sole responsibility for the registration and regulation of the medical profession and it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to intervene in the way that it carries out its responsibilities under the Act or to comment on individual cases in which the council has directed the removal of a doctor's name from the register.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Suffragan Bishops

Mr. William Powell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if he will list those suffragan bishops for whose salary the Commissioners are responsible, with their dates of appointment, and such suffragan sees as are currently vacant.

Mr. Alison: The suffragan bishops whose stipends the Commissioners are empowered to pay and their dates of appointment are as follows:

See	*Suffragan See*	*Bishop*	*Date of appointment*
Bath and Wells	Taunton	John Lewis	3 July 1992
Birmingham	Aston	John Austin	3 September 1992
Blackburn	Lancaster	John Nicholls	25 April 1990
Bristol	Malmesbury	Peter Firth	30 November 1983
Canterbury	Dover	Richard Llewellin	9 October 1992
	Maidstone	Gavin Reid	9 October 1992
Carlisle	Penrith	George Hacker	10 October 1979
Chelmsford	Barking	Roger Sainsbury	17 January 1991
	Colchester	Michael Vickers	2 February 1988
	Bradwell	Laurence Green	23 February 1993
Chester	Birkenhead	Michael Langrish	2 March 1993
	Stockport	Frank Sargeant	25 January 1984
Chichester	Horsham	Lindsay Urwin	30 November 1993
	Lewes	Ian Cundy	3 July 1992
Coventry	Warwick	Clive Handford	5 December 1990
Derby	Repton	Henry Richmond	30 January 1986
Durham	Jarrow	Alan Smithson	21 September 1990
Ely	Huntington	Gordon Roe	1 November 1980
Exeter	Crediton	Peter Coleman	2 July 1984
	Plymouth	Richard Hawkins	29 June 1988
Gloucester	Tewkesbury	Jeremy Walsh	29 January 1986
Guildford	Dorking	David Wilcox	1 February 1986
Hereford	Ludlow	Ian Griggs	1 August 1987
Lichfield	Shrewsbury	John Davies	5 February 1987
	Stafford	Michael Scott-Joynt	1 September 1987
	Wolverhampton	Michael Bourke	29 September 1993
Lincoln	Grantham	William Ind	23 October 1987
	Grimsby	David Tustin	25 January 1979
Liverpool	Warrington	Michael Henshall	1 February 1976
London	Fulham	John Klyberg	25 March 1985
	Kensington	John Hughes	26 October 1987
	Stepney	Richard Chartres	22 May 1992
	Willesden	Graham Dow	22 May 1992
	Edmonton	Brian Masters	20 December 1984
Manchester	Hulme	Colin Scott	13 September 1984
	Bolton	David Bonser	13 September 1991
Norwich	Thetford	Hugo de Waal	17 January 1992
Oxford	Buckingham	Simon Burrows	18 October 1974
	Dorchester	Anthony Russell	2 February 1988
	Reading	John Bone	4 October 1989
Peterborough	Brixworth	Paul Barber	25 January 1989
Ripon	Knaresborough	Malcolm Menin	2 December 1986
Rochester	Tonbridge	Brian Smith	2 November 1993
St. Albans	Hertford	Robin Smith	25 January 1990
St. Edmunds and Ipswich	Dunwich	Jonathan Bailey	3 December 1992
Salisbury	Ramsbury	Peter Vaughan	21 April 1989
	Sherborne	John Kirkham	1 December 1976
Sheffield	Doncaster	Michael Gear	2 March 1993
Southwark	Kingston	Martin Wharton	3 November 1992
	Woolwich	Peter Hall	29 November 1984

See	Suffragan See	Bishop	Date of appointment
	Croydon	Wilfred Wood	25 July 1985
Southwell	Sherwood	Alan Morgan	1 September 1989
Truro	St. Germans	Graham James	23 February 1993
Wakefield	Pontefract	John Finney	14 May 1993
Winchester	Southampton	John Perry	5 February 1989
Worcester	Dudley	Rupert Hoare	29 September 1993
York	Hull	Donald Snelgrove	28 May 1981
	Selby	Humphrey Taylor	1 September 1991
	Whitby	Gordon Bates	9 June 1983
Europe	Europe	Edward Holland	22 July 1986

The following suffragan sees are currently vacant but will be filled by the person named on the date indicated:

Blackburn	Burnley	Martyn Jarrett	2 February 1994
Manchester	Middleton	Stephen Venner	2 February 1994
Norwich	Lynn	David Conner	2 February 1994
St. Albans	Bedford	John Richardson	23 February 1994
Winchester	Basingstoke	Geoffrey Rowell	2 February 1994

EDUCATION

Education Assets Board Recommendations

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will describe in general terms the nature and use of the premises at each educational establishment where his determination of an Education Assets Board recommendations is awaited;

(2) how many recommendations from the Education Assets Board are awaiting a decision by his Department; if he will list them; and for how long each of them has been with his Department.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are 17 cases awaiting determination by my right hon. Friend. They are:

Institution	Date received
Grant-Maintained Schools	
Abbotswood School, Hampshire	October 1993
Arnewood School, Hampshire	November 1993
Dartford Grammar School for Girls, Kent	December 1992
Epsom and Ewell High School, Surrey	March 1993
Great Barr School, Birmingham	August 1992
Kingsley Park School, Northamptonshire	September 1992
Pate's Grammar School, Gloucestershire	November 1991
Reading School, Berkshire	April 1993
Ringwood School, Hampshire	November 1993
St. George's School, Lincolnshire	July 1993
Thamesview School, Kent	March 1993
Wilson's School, Sutton	June 1993
Wymondham College, Norfolk	December 1992
Higher Education Institutions	
Falmouth College of Art and Design	September 1991
University of Greenwich	September 1991
University of West of England; Bath College of HE	November 1991
Further Education Institutions	
Lincolnshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	December 1993[1]

[1] Appeal received.

Note: Under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Education Assets Board (EAB) may determine the transfer of property, rights and liabilities in respect of further education institutions where it appears that agreement between the parties is unlikely to be reached. Under the 1992 Act both the institution and local authority have the right of appeal to the Secretary of State against determinations made by the EAB.

Of the 17 cases being considered by my right hon. Friend, 13 involve the transfer of land and/or property. They are:

GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Abbotswood School, Hampshire—A dispute with Hampshire county council concerning the ownership of an area of land which acts as an access road to the school and another of the council's properties.

Arnewood School, Hampshire—A dispute concerning the ownership of a recreation centre and land used by the school and community.

Dartford Grammar School for Girls, Kent—A dispute between the school and Kent county council over (i) transfer of an area of playing field, (ii) pedestrian rights of access and (iii) transfer of a further area of land.

Great Barr School, Birmingham—A dispute between the school and Birmingham county council over the ownership of an adjacent sports hall and an area of playing field which is used by both the school and the local community.

Kingsley Park School, Northamptonshire—A dispute between the school and Northamptonshire county council over the transfer of a gymnasium block in a building on the school site which is also used by another of the Authority's schools.

Pate's Grammar School, Gloucestershire—A dispute between the school and Gloucestershire county council over the transfer of the site of a former secondary school which had been leased to Pate's grammar school whilst major building work was carried out on their own school site.

Ringwood School, Hampshire—A dispute concerning the ownership of a recreation centre and land used by the school and community.

St. George's School, Lincolnshire—The dispute with Lincolnshire county council concerns the ownership of a property the school shares with the county's adult education and library services and an area of land which is also used by a local scout group.

Thamesview School, Kent—A dispute between the school and Kent county council concerning the transfer of a house occupied by a teacher at the school.

Wilson's School, London Borough of Sutton—This dispute concerns the authority's refusal to sign documents transferring ownership of property to the school pending clarification of the authority's continued use of a swimming pool owned by the school's Trustees.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Greenwich—A dispute between the London borough of Wandsworth, which inherited ILEA's education responsibilities in the area, and Thames polytechnic (now the university of

Greenwich) over the transfer of the freehold of property known as Manresa house, and the grounds surrounding this property. Wandsworth use part of Manresa house for adult education.

Falmouth School of Art and Design—A dispute between Cornwall county council and Falmouth school of art and design over the transfer of properties in Falmouth and Camborne, used by the school.

FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Lincolnshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture—This appeal case concerns the Education Assets Board's determination that ownership of a veterinary investigation centre which was used prior to 1 April 1993 under a lease between Lincolnshire county council and the Minister of Public Buildings and Works should transfer to the college.

Student Awards

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, column 72, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the comparable figures on the percentage of dependent students receiving full and nil maintenance given in the "Statistics of Education Student Awards" volume for 1988-89 to 1990-91; and what is the reason for the differences between those figures and the data given in his previous answer.

Mr. Boswell: Figures on the percentage of dependent students receiving full and nil maintenance published in the Statistics of Education Student Awards Volume show scale 1 and scale 2 contributions as follows:

Percentage of dependent students receiving full and nil maintenance in England and Wales.

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[1]
Scale 1			
full maintenance	28·8	27·3	27·5
nil maintenance	30·7	33·0	32·4
Scale 2			
full maintenance	29·6	27·4	27·0
nil maintenance	23·1	25·8	28·3

[1] Calculated from subset of LEAs able to provide data.

The figures given in the reply of 11 January, *Official Report*, column 72 differed from these in that they represented the combination of the two scales.

Education Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to issue vouchers to parents to pay towards education costs.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have no present plans to do so.

Higher National Diploma Courses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ensure that students who are entitled to a mandatory grant for a higher national diploma course are allowed to continue to receive that grant for a degree at another institution while continuing to study the same subject.

Mr. Boswell: A student who has already received a mandatory award for an HND course and who goes on to study for a first degree will normally be eligible for a further, modified mandatory award for the final year or years of a designated first degree course, depending upon its duration. Local education authorities can make discretionary payments in respect of any other year. It is for individual institutions to decide whether to give exemption from any part of the course to students enrolling on a first degree course who have already completed an HND in the same subject.

Further Education

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area continued in full-time education in each year since 1988.

Mr. Boswell: The numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds in the Doncaster LEA continuing in full-time education in each year since 1988 are shown in the table.

16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education in the Doncaster LEA Area Age as at 31 August at the start of the academic year

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
16 Year Olds	1,824	1,873	1,934	1,987
17 Year Olds	1,280	1,278	1,332	1,444

Pupil Numbers

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in England have fewer than 20 pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: In January 1993, 200 schools in England had fewer than 20 full-time equivalent pupils.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the Registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Boswell: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Schools, Wandsworth

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the oral answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) of 14 December 1993, *Official Report*, column 825, how many children at

the latest available date in the borough of Wandsworth were *(a)* in attendance in nursery classes or nursery schools, *(b)* in reception classes in primary schools under school starting age and *(c)* in other pre-school groups; how many (i) qualified nursery teachers, (ii) qualified nursery nurses and (iii) other qualified or non-qualified teachers and nurses, were employed in the borough on nursery education at the latest available date; and what is the latest estimate of the number of children aged three and four years currently resident in that borough.

Mr. Robin Squire: In Wandsworth, in January 1993 —the latest date for which information on schools is available—there were nearly 2,400 pupils below compulsory school age in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in maintained primary schools. A further 1,700 pupils below compulsory school age were in infant classes in maintained primary schools. Information on reception classes only is not collected centrally.

The maintained nursery schools and nursery classes were staffed by 71 full-time equivalent teachers, of whom two were unqualified 75 full-time equivalent qualified nursery assistants and a further 26 full-time equivalent unqualified nursery assistants and other education support staff.

As regards other pre-school groups, we are informed by the Pre-school Playgroups Association that their member playgroups in Wandsworth had nearly 400 three and four-year-olds in attendance in mid-1992, the latest date for which such information is available. Information on other forms of pre-school group provision, such as day nurseries, is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Information on nursery classes in independent or special schools is not collected centrally.

In January 1993, the estimated three and four-year-old population in Wandsworth was just over 6,000. I should perhaps add that Wandsworth now has a policy of offering a nursery class place to all parents who want one for the year before entering compulsory education. This policy is not yet fully reflected in the figures available.

University Expenditure

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what amount of university student fees was paid by Her Majesty's Government in the academic years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; what is the expected level of expenditure for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and how much was spent per registered student in each of the years;

(2) what was the level of Government expenditure on student grants in *(a)* higher and *(b)* further education in the academic years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; what are the expected levels of expenditure for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and how much was spent per registered student in each of the years.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend pays 100 per cent. specific grant to local education authorities—LEAs—in England and Wales in respect of their expenditure on mandatory awards in respect of students who are domiciled in their areas. Mandatory awards, which cover both maintenance grants and fees, are available to eligible students attending full-time or sandwich courses provided by institutions including universities in the United Kingdom and leading to a first degree or comparable qualification, or to a diploma in higher education or the higher national diploma. They are also available for full-time and part-time courses of initial teacher training. Mandatory awards are not availble for further education courses. LEAs may give discretionary awards to students on such courses and to students who are personally ineligible for a mandatory award but must meet the expenditure themselves.

Departmental records of expenditure and plans relate to financial years. It is not possible to distinguish expenditure on fees to universities from fees for other higher education institutions. The actual expenditure on mandatory awards and the average expenditure per award holder in the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93 are shown in the table. The table also shows the total announced expenditure for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland are responsible for Government expenditure on support for students domiciled in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. The table therefore relates to expenditure in England and Wales only.

	Total Expenditure		*Average per Student*[1]	
	Fees £ million	*Maintenance £ million*	*Fees £*	*Maintenance £*
1990-91	593	701	1,228	1,451
1991-92	1,172	813	2,178	1,511
1992-93	1,559	985	2,467	1,559
[2]1993-94	1,534	1,098		
[3]1994-95	1,171	1,145		

[1] Average per award holder.
[2] Announced expenditure including Winter Supplementary Estimate.
[3] Planned.

Student Loans Company

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much has been spent on the administration of the Student Loans Company; how many people are employed by the company; and how many cases of non-repayment have been legally pursued under *(a)* Scottish law and *(b)* English and Welsh law.

Mr. Boswell: These are matters for the Student Loans Company. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the pupil to teacher ratio as at January 1993 for each local education authority in *(a)* the primary sector, *(b)* the secondary sector and *(c)* overall.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Pupil: teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools and overall in each local education authority in England

	Primary (including self-governing (GM) schools) (1)	*Secondary (including self-governing (GM) schools (1)*	*Overall maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools (2)*
Corporation of London	15·2	n/a	13·9
Camden	20·8	15·6	16·4
Greenwich	20·4	16·7	16·6
Hackney	19·9	14·6	15·1

	Primary (including self-governing (GM) schools) (1)	Secondary (including self-governing (GM) schools (1)	Overall maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools (2)
Hammersmith and Fulham	19·8	15·1	14·4
Islington	19·8	15·0	14·1
Kensington and Chelsea	17·6	13·3	14·5
Lambeth	19·4	15·5	15·9
Lewisham	21·1	16·5	17·2
Southwark	21·6	16·9	17·3
Tower Hamlets	17·8	14·0	14·2
Wandsworth	19·9	14·7	15·0
Westminster	17·2	14·5	13·7
Barking and Dagenham	22·1	17·0	18·0
Barnet	21·1	15·0	16·1
Beley	23·4	16·7	18·5
Brent	21·6	15·3	16·6
Bromley	23·3	16·3	17·8
Croydon	21·5	16·0	17·5
Ealing	20·7	15·3	17·5
Enfield	21·3	16·3	17·1
Haringey	20·8	14·5	17·1
Harrow	21·3	15·7	17·1
Havering	22·8	16·4	17·4
Hillingdon	22·0	15·8	17·5
Hounslow	20·5	16·4	17·2
Kingston upon Thames	22·5	15·8	16·5
Merton	19·6	15·5	16·5
Newham	24·1	16·6	19·1
Redbridge	23·0	17·2	18·0
Richmond upon Thames	20·3	16·5	16·8
Sutton	23·4	16·8	18·3
Waltham Forest	22·2	15·2	16·5
Birmingham	23·6	16·3	18·0
Coventry	22·3	15·1	17·2
Dudley	20·9	15·3	16·8
Sandwell	22·0	15·5	16·4
Solihull	23·1	16·1	18·0
Walsall	22·6	16·0	17·7
Wolverhampton	21·0	14·9	16·1
Knowsley	23·0	16·5	19·5
Liverpool	23·5	15·7	18·6
St. Helens	22·2	15·2	17·4
Sefton	23·2	16·3	18·0
Wirral	22·3	15·9	17·5
Bolton	22·0	15·1	17·1
Bury	22·9	16·5	18·5
Manchester	21·9	14·6	17·2
Oldham	22·9	15·0	17·8
Rochdale	24·1	16·3	18·1
Salford	23·4	15·5	17·9
Stockport	23·5	15·8	18·3
Tameside	24·0	16·3	17·8
Trafford	23·9	15·9	18·9
Wigan	22·3	15·2	16·0
Barnsley	23·9	17·0	19·1
Doncaster	22·8	16·0	17·8
Rotherham	21·3	15·2	17·9
Sheffield	22·5	16·1	17·6
Bradford	20·7	17·1	16·7
Calderdale	23·3	16·0	17·5
Kirklees	21·3	15·6	16·7
Leeds	22·0	16·0	17·5
Wakefield	22·6	15·9	17·7
Gateshead	21·2	15·6	17·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	22·4	15·7	17·3
North Tyneside	22·3	16·0	17·2
South Tyneside	22·6	17·1	18·3
Sunderland	22·1	15·9	18·0
Isles of Scilly	14·9	7·4	10·1
Avon	22·7	16·2	17·4
Bedfordshire	21·7	17·1	17·1
Berkshire	22·8	16·0	17·3
Buckinghamshire	22·8	16·6	18·3
Cambridgeshire	23·0	16·5	17·6
Cheshire	23·9	16·6	18·8
Cleveland	23·5	15·7	18·1
Cornwall	23·4	16·8	18·7
Cumbria	22·3	15·3	17·3
Derbyshire	22·9	15·4	16·9
Devon	22·8	16·1	18·8
Dorset	23·2	17·0	18·9
Durham	22·7	16·3	17·5
East Sussex	22·3	15·9	17·2
Essex	23·1	16·9	18·3
Gloucestershire	21·9	17·1	18·5
Hampshire	21·9	16·1	17·9
Hereford and Worcester	21·8	16·8	17·6
Hertfordshire	22·1	15·7	17·7
Humberside	23·1	16·3	18·0
Isle of Wight	22·1	17·1	17·5
Kent	23·9	17·0	18·7
Lancashire	22·8	15·9	17·7
Leicestershire	22·5	15·8	18·4
Lincolnshire	23·1	15·8	17·7
Norfolk	21·8	15·6	17·6
North Yorkshire	22·6	15·7	17·0
Northamptonshire	22·6	16·6	17·1
Northumberland	23·8	17·8	18·4
Nottinghamshire	22·6	15·7	17·5
Oxfordshire	21·6	16·7	17·4
Shropshire	22·0	15·3	17·2
Somerset	22·5	16·3	17·6
Staffordshire	24·7	16·9	19·2
Suffolk	21·4	16·1	16·9
Surrey	21·7	15·8	17·9
Warwickshire	22·3	16·2	17·7
West Sussex	22·1	16·4	17·5
Wiltshire	22·6	16·3	17·5
England	22·4	16·1	17·7

Note:

1. Excluding all unqualified teachers and teachers providing short-term cover as well as teachers absent for a term or more but including the latter's qualified replacements, if any.

2. Including qualified teachers (including those not in schools and teachers providing short-term cover), student teachers, instructors and licensed teachers employed by local education authorities and self-governing (GM) schools.

Primary School Classes

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average size of maintained primary school classes taught by one teacher in January.

Mr. Robin Squire: In January 1993—the latest date for which information is available—the average size of single teacher classes in maintained primary schools in England was 26·6.

Quangos

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the grants given to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations by his Department in each year from 1985.

Mr. Boswell: The grants given to the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department are listed in the table. Those made to the research councils and to the Sports Council, formerly sponsored by the then Department of Education and

Science and now by the Office of Public Service and Science and the Department of National Heritage respectively, are published in the appropriation accounts, copies of which are in the Library.

	1985-86 £ million	*1986-87 Cash*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93 Outturn*	*1993-94 Estimate*
Business and Technology Education Council[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges[2]	1·831	1·731	1·760	1·813	2·184	3·021	3·498	3·848	4·084
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research	0·359	0·369	0·395	0·383	0·472	0·535	0·652	0·949	0·807
Council for Educational Technology (United Kingdom)	0·758	0·998	0·870	Merged April 1988 to form National Council for Educational Technology					
Micro-Electronics in Education Support Unit	—	2·791	3·075						
National Council for Educational Technology[3]	—	—	—	4·729	4·227	4·660	4·961	5·658	4·946
Council for National Academic Awards[4]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Further Education Unit	3·495	3·359	3·038	3·525	2·486	3·871	3·129	3·545	[5]—
National Youth Bureau	0·483	0·478	0·490	[6]—	0·557	0·571	[7]—	[7]—	[7]—
National Youth Agency	[8]—	[8]—	[8]—	[8]—	[8]—	[8]—	1·840	1·495	1·706
Education Assets Board[3]	—	—	—	0·770	0·642	0·552	0·500	0·858	2·694
School Curriculum and Development Council	1·053	1·140	1·340	Wound up August 1988. Replaced by School Examinations and Assessment Council and National Curriculum Council					
School Examinations Council	2·341	2·484	2·339						
School Examinations and Assessment Council	Established 1988 Wound up 1993			3·681	5·250	7·730	10·532	12·383	10·427
National Curriculum Council				5·338	7·345	7·340	7·698	8·135	6·400
School Curriculum and Assessment Authority[9]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·600
Teaching as a Career Unit[3]	—	—	0·513	0·934	0·954	1·487	1·402	1·407	1·182
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council[10]	—	—	—	—	1,113·603	1,104·255	993·158	1,034·601	—
Universities Funding Council[11]	—	—	—	—	1,851·661	1,836·708	1,782·142	1,806·426	—
Higher Education Funding Council for England[12]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[13]0·500	2,806·458
Further Education Funding Council[12]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[13]24·417	2,552·911
Funding Agency for Schools[14]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[13]2·000

[1] Nil (self-funded body). Became wholly independent and ceased to be NDPB sponsored by Department of Further Education October 1993.
[2] Merged with British Council December 1993. Henceforth sponsored by Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
[3] Established 1988.
[4] Nil (self-funded body). Wound up March 1993.
[5] Subsumed in Further Education Funding Council grant.
[6] Not separately available.
[7] Wound up 1991 and replaced by National Youth Agency.
[8] Established April 1991 incorporating National Youth Bureau and Council for Education and Training in Community Work.
[9] Established October 1993.
[10] Up to April 1989 polytechnics funded by local authorities. Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council established April 1989, wound up March 1993.
[11] Up to April 1989 grants to universities distributed on advice of University Grants Committee. Universities Funding Council established April 1989, wound up March 1993.
[12] Established April 1993.
[13] Preparatory costs.
[14] To be established April 1994.

Home Students

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time home students in the United Kingdom are over the age of 50 years.

Mr. Boswell: In the academic year 1992-93, there were 5,400 full-time, home-domiciled higher education students aged 51 and over in the United Kingdom.

EMPLOYMENT

Fast Food Industry (Wages)

4. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring is undertaken by his Department of wage levels in the fast food industry.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on earnings of workers in catering, including the fast food industry, is collected as part of the new earnings survey.

Railway Engineering Industry

13. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the jobs lost in the railway engineering industry since April 1992; and how many of those losses have occurred in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available in the form requested.

Departmental Efficiency

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have embarked on a programme of market tests. Early results are good news for the taxpayer, with savings of 52 per cent. on typing services, 33 per cent. on reprographic services and 42 per cent. on security services.

Industrial Relations

15. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on industrial relations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: Thanks to this Government's reforms of industrial relations and trade union law, the number of strikes is the lowest for over a century.

Health and Safety Executive (Grant Aid)

16. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made as to the effect of the proposed cut in grant aid to the Health and Safety Executive on charges to industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my earlier reply to the hon. Members for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie).

Statutory Minimum Wage

17. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effects on employment levels of a statutory minimum wage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The introduction of a statutory national minimum wage of the kind proposed by the Labour party makes economic nonsense. It could cost up to 2 million jobs and would irreversibly damage the labour market.

The Government's policies are designed to create the conditions for an effective and flexible labour market.

Employment, Warwickshire

18. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current levels of employment in Warwickshire; and what they were in 1983 and 1987.

Miss Widdecombe: Information by county as opposed to regions is only available from the periodic censuses of employment. Employment in Warwickshire rose from 176,900 in September 1984 to 180,700 in September 1987, and to 186,600 in September 1991.

Industrial Relations

19. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the recent record on strikes.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1979 the United Kingdom lost 1,270 working days per thousand employees; in 1992 we lost 24.

Employment (Construction)

20. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many construction jobs have been lost since the beginning of 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the exact form requested but between March 1990 and September 1993 employment in the construction industry in Great Britain fell by 424,000.

Statutory Working Week

21. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates he has made about the cost to United Kingdom industry of a statutory 35-hour limit on the working week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A compulsory 35-hour weekly limit would cost United Kingdom industry up to £20,000 million. It would be disastrous for competitiveness, jobs and the economic recovery.

Youth Training

22. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what special measures he plans to offer training and employment opportunities to young people in local communities with particularly high rates of unemployment.

Miss Widdecombe: Unemployment need not be an option for young people because this Government guarantee a training place for 16 and 17-year-olds who have left full-time education and do not yet have a job.

Our plans also include the introduction of modern apprenticeships offering young people high quality work-based training leading to higher level qualifications.

If employers respond, as we hope they will, modern apprenticeships will treble to over 40,000 a year the

number of young people who qualify at national vocational qualification level 3 or above through our programmes in England.

23. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of youth training.

Miss Widdecombe: Since 1983, over 3½ million young people have benefited from high quality vocational training by participating in youth training and its predecessors. The increasing availability of youth credits and the introduction of modern apprenticeships will encourage even more young people to train, and to higher levels.

Building Sites (Accidents)

24. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents occured on building sites in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures for the most recent year available, 1992-93, show that 15,885 injuries, including those to members of the public, arose from accidents in the construction industry reported to the relevant enforcing authorities. This is lower than for the previous four years 1988-89 to 1991-92 at 21,509, 22,872, 22,337, and 19,772 respectively.

Employment Service

25. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the north of England have been placed in work by the Employment Service in the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 79,600 job placings were made by the Employment Service in the north of England in the 12 month period ending 3 December 1993. More than 70,000 of these placings were of unemployed people. Over 19,000 were people unemployed more than six months, and 2,200 were unemployed people with disabilities.

Apprenticeships

26. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the current number of apprenticeships in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates from the labour force survey suggest that in summer 1993, nearly 190,000 people were undertaking some form of trade apprenticeship in England and Wales.

Health and Safety

27. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the change in the number of health and safety inspectors over the last year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Over the 12 months to 1 December 1993, the number of health and safety inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive has increased by 70 from 1,533 to 1,603.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under the Data Protection Act 1984, the Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act.

The Department is committed to observing the data protection principles when it obtains and processes personal data. Where the Department contracts with a third party for the processing of personal data, the contracts stipulate that the Act must be complied with.

The registrar's powers to promote compliance with the principles apply to both the owner of the personal data and the service provider. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act. Further arrangements for him to discharge his duties effectively are not considered to be necessary.

Access to Work

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what support will be available to a disabled person whose employer refused to contribute as proposed under the access to work scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In reaching final decisions about the details of the access to work scheme, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend Lord Henley are considering carefully a range of representations made by disability and employer groups, including representations about the proposed employer contribution. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State hopes to announce decisions soon.

Girocheques

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for 3Employment (1) what irregularities there have been in the delivery of unemployment benefit girocheques in the Doncaster area during the past four months; and if he will make a statement;

(2) by what method unemployment benefit girocheques are currently delivered to the Doncaster area.

Mr. Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 18 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the method by which unemployment benefit girocheques are delivered to the Doncaster area and what irregularities have occurred in their delivery over the last four months.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Employment Service (ES) is in the process of updating it's benefit payments computer system. The National Unemployment Benefit Computer (NUBS 1) has been in operation since the mid eighties. We are currently replacing it with NUBS 2; this process will be complete by the end of September 1994.

For people on Training for Work, Learning for Work and Community Action, payments are made by a different system, the Employment Service Payments system (ESP).

NUBS 1 girocheques are processed at Reading, and NUBS 2/ESP at Washington, Tyne and Wear. The Royal Mail service for each of these is different.

It is the objective of the ES to achieve delivery of a girocheque to clients within three working days of attending the local office to make the declaration which generates a payment. Clients are given this information in writing when they first attend to claim benefit.

Under NUBS 1 girocheques are produced in postcode order and are sorted on the Reading site by Royal Mail staff. They are then transported by rail, road or air depending on the destination. Many of the destinations are served by "direct bags" which go directly to the local Royal Mail delivery office.

The NUBS 2 girocheques are postcode sorted at the point of despatch (Washington) and delivered direct to the Royal Mail delivery offices via Royal Mail Streamline courier service. This ensures that bags containing the girocheques do not enter the Royal Mail system until the bags reach the destination town and it is only then that they are opened.

ESP girocheques are sent direct to clients from Washington via the normal First Class post. To support the use of First Class post, offices are loaded onto the Area Computer Centre closest to their own locality.

Close liaison is maintained between NUBS/ESP management teams and their Royal Mail counterparts to ensure that delivery systems support the ES business objectives and, where problems occur, remedial action is urgently introduced.

During the last four months there have been 15 delays in the receipt of girocheques reported in Doncaster. Eleven of these were ESP payments and four were NUBS 2. In each case the girocheque was delivered within three days. It appears that clients have reported non receipt after two days as a delay.

At Mexborough, there have been nine reported delays in receipt of NUBS 1 giros since September 1993. All of these were caused by split responsibility for Mexborough postcodes between Rotherham and Sheffield sorting offices. It has now been arranged for Royal Mail staff at Reading to perform a more precise identification of mail to ensure that it goes to the correct sorting office in future. Again it is confirmed that none of the delays exceeded three days between signing and receipt.

I hope this is helpful.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to arrange paternity leave for fathers upon the birth of a baby to their wife; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Matters such as this are best dealt with by agreement between the parties concerned, taking account of their particular circumstances.

Labour Statistics

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for employment how many people in the United Kingdom are in work, as a percentage of the total population of working age; and what information he has as to the figure in each other EC country.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is as follows:

Total employment as a percentage of the population aged 15 to 64; 1991[1]

	Per cent.
Denmark	76
Portugal	71
United Kingdom	69
Germany	65
Netherlands	63
Luxembourg	61
France	60
Belgium	57
Italy	56
Greece	55
Ireland	52
Spain	49

Source: OECD, except United Kingdom (Employment Department).
[1] 1991 is the latest year for which comparable data are available.

Poly Aluminium Chloride

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what regulations exist laying down safety standards for the production and handling of poly aluminium chloride and aluminium chlorohydrate.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require employers to make appropriate arrangements to control risks to the health and safety of their employees whilst they are at work. In addition, where there are specific risks from the production, handling or other use of chemical substances, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988—COSHH—will apply. These include requirements for exposure to these compounds to be prevented or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately controlled.

Industrial Relations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines he has issued to large companies concerning their responsibilities under the provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The statutory procedure for handling redundancies, originally enacted in the Employment Protection Act 1975, was incorporated into the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidated) Act in October 1992. The provisions are explained in the Employment Department's leaflet "Redundancy Consultation and Notification". Information and advice is also available from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).

Memory Lane Cakes, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what representations he has received concerning the announced redundancies at Memory Lane Cakes, Maesycoed road, Cardiff;

(2) what notification he received from Memory Lane Cakes, Maesycoed road, Cardiff, under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, concerning redundancies over the Christmas and new year period.

Miss Widdecombe: Information given to the Department under the redundancy handling provisions is provided in confidence.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of information technology services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Scott: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of benefit savings achieved in 1992-93 when the child support unit was acting as a shadow agency taking responsibility for the collection of existing child maintenance.

Mr. Burt: The child support unit achieved benefit savings of £313 million.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the Child Support Agency takes into consideration for housing expenditure loans which have been taken out in order to provide handicapped accommodation.

Mr. Burt: Where a loan is taken out to purchase a property, the interest and capital repayments are taken into account in calculating the parent's essential expenditure. If the parent or his partner is disabled, there is no upper limit to the amount allowed. The costs of a loan are also allowed where it is taken out for improvements to a property which a child support officer considers reasonable in the circumstances.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration has been given to introducing a level of disregard of income from invalidity benefit and disabled living allowance for Child Support Agency assessments.

Mr. Burt: Disability living allowance, which recognises the special care and mobility needs of disabled people, is disregarded in full in the assessment of child maintenance. Invalidity benefit, which is payable to people who have been incapable of work for more than 28 weeks through illness, is taken into account in the same way as net earnings would be if the parent were working.

Our proposed increase in the "protected income" provided for in the assessment of child support maintenance liability means that an absent parent whose only source of income is invalidity benefit will not be required to pay maintenance.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many copies of "The Proposed Changes to Child Support Maintenance" were published; when they were printed; and at what cost.

Mr. Burt: Five hundred thousand copies of "The Proposed Changes to Child Support Maintenance" were published. These were printed at the beginning of January at a total cost of £21,691—zero VAT.

Students (Council Tax)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the annual cost of making students eligible for council tax benefit.

Mr. Burt: The vast majority of students are not liable for council tax because they live in student-only accommodation, such as halls of residence, which is exempt for council tax purposes. Only a minority of students will be liable for council tax where they share accommodation with people who are not also students. Many of them are currently able to claim help through council tax benefit if they are vulnerable students, for example, lone parents and disabled students, or part-time students. Council tax benefit can also be claimed by the partners of students and any liable student may claim second adult rebates if he or she satisfies the normal conditions of entitlement.

No information is held about the number of students who are liable for council tax but are not eligible to claim council tax benefit and it is not possible, therefore, to estimate the additional cost of allowing all students access to council tax benefit.

Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what contribution his Department made to the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in terms of financial support, practical suport for particular events and the provision of information.

Mr. Hague: We have worked closely with the Department of Health, which had overall co-ordinating responsibility for the year. We provided a total of £79,000 to support the funding for the year, together with an officer on secondment to the secretariat at an approximate cost of £11,000. Officials have sat as members of both the European Community and the United Kingdon advisory committees to oversee the varied programme of events. The Benefits Agency produced a new client group leaflet to inform older pensioners and their carers of their benefits rights as part of its continuing improved customer care provisions for older people and, working with the voluntary sector, organised a co-ordinated programme of information activities nationwide.

Disability

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to ensure that moneys, not taken up by applications to the independent living fund 1993 in the current financial year, will still be earmarked for the living expenses of severely disabled people.

Mr. Scott: The independent living—1993—fund receives a grant in aid from the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland.

Payments to the fund are made on a monthly basis according to the most recent estimates of its present and future commitments.

Normal Government accounting rules apply to any unallocated provision.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of each component of *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Administration

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the administration from Northern Ireland of Department of Social Security benefits to Doncaster; if this procedure is currently under review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: No social security benefits for people in Doncaster are administered from Northern Ireland.

Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the number of people who draw their state retirement pension while continuing to work.

Mr. Hague: it is estimated that approximately 663,000 people in the United Kingdom receiving state retirement pension also have income from earnings.

Source: 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of pensioners who will not receive the full 50p and 70p increases in the pension in compensation for VAT on fuel because they neither qualify for a full state pension nor claim income-related benefits.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested.

At 31 March 1993, 937,610 retirement pensioners resident in Great Britain received a pension at less than the standard rate, 135,940 of whom were in receipt of income support, and both benefits were paid by a combined order book.

Information regarding the number receiving income support and retirement pension at less than standard rate where payment is made separately is not available.

Information regarding the number receiving retirement pension at less than standard rate and an income-related benefit other than income support is not available.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the number of people who retire from paid employment each year.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the proportion of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who deferred drawing their state pension in each year since 1988 for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested.

The table shows the estimated percentage of men aged 65 to 69 and women aged 60 to 64 in Great Britain who were not in receipt of retirement pension, invalidity benefit or widow's benefit in the years 1988 to 1993. Included in the percentage figures are those who did not have underlying entitlement to retirement pension and therefore were not deferring drawing state pension.

Year	*Percentage of men aged 65-69 in Great Britain not in receipt of Retirement Pension or Invalidity Benefit*	*Percentage of women aged 60-64 not in receipt of Retirement Pension, Invalidity Benefit or Widow's Benefit*
1988	6	26
1989	6	28
1990	2	26
1991	3	25
1992	3	24
1993	2	23

Housing Benefit

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much is paid in housing benefit, to how many households, each year in *(a)* Ealing, *(b)* London and *(c)* England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables.

Housing Benefit expenditure and recipients

	Ealing		*London*		*England*	
	Expenditure £ millions	*Cases 000s*	*Expenditure £ millions*	*Cases 000s*	*Expenditure £ millions*	*Cases 000s*
1988-89	24	16	683	553	3,099	3,228
1989-90	36	18	821	524	3,518	3,122
1990-91	42	19	1,062	553	4,269	3,214
1991-92	69	17	1,468	595	5,418	3,368

Notes:

Expenditure figures have been rounded to the nearest million.

Caseload figures are averages and rounded to the nearest thousand. They also include estimates for non-responding authorities.

Information is supplied for rent rebate and rent allowance cases only—rate rebate cases are excluded from the figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds currently receive housing benefit in the Doncaster area; and what percentage this represents of those in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available.

Housing Allowance

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the maximum amount of weekly housing allowance paid to a single unemployed person in London.

Mr. Burt: From a 1 per cent. sample of cases, the maximum weekly amount of housing benefit found in 1992 in London, where the claimant was single and unemployed, was £134·21.

Notes:

(i) The data has been obtained from a 1 per cent. sample of cases, therefore, the figure is the maximum in the sample and the highest amount payable may not have been included.

(ii) "Housing Allowance" has been assumed to mean housing benefit.

(iii) "Unemployed" has been defined as those in receipt of unemployment benefit.

(iv) "London" has been defined as the inner and outer London boroughs.

Data Sources:

The housing benefit and community charge benefit management information system and the income support annual statistical inquiry. The enquiries are a 1 per cent. sample of cases in Great Britain in May 1992.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by location, for each of his Department's properties in the Doncaster area, the annual fuel heating bills by year for the last four years.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

Annual fuel bills for DSS offices in Doncaster

	Year	Amount £
Doncaster District Office (Castle House)	1990-91	19,515·17
	1991-92	20,464·16
	1992-93	18,812·07
Doncaster Branch Office (St. Peters House)	1990-91	15,940·80
	1991-92	15,274·41
	1992-93	16,811·42
Doncaster Medical Examination Centre	1990-91	178·66
	1991-92	202·87
	1992-93	200·12
Doncaster Medical Adjudication Centre	1990-91	1,506·37
	1991-92	1,694·74
	1992-93	2,084·30
Thorne Caller Office	This is a building jointly occupied and as the Department is the minor occupier no figures are available.	

Notes:

1. Prior to April 1991, fuel and utility charges for the Government estate were met by the Property Services Agency and details are, therefore, not held by this Department.
2. Fuel bills include a range of energy use, such as hot water, lighting and air conditioning and it is therefore not possible to identify the heating element of each bill.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Scott: This Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-1993 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Family Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his current estimate of eligible households in the Doncaster area which do not claim family benefit; what means are used to improve the take-up rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Take-up figures for family credit are not available on a regional basis. The latest estimates for take-up of family credit for Great Britain for 1991 are that 64 per cent of families eligible to receive the benefit were claiming it, and that 71 per cent of available benefit was being claimed. [1]As at 24 December 1993, 2,876 families in Doncaster were receiving family credit.

There have been family credit advertising campaigns every year since 1989 which have stimulated claims and increased awareness. Over this period, the case load has increased from 280,000 in 1989 to around half a million now. The 1993 campaign was aimed at helping the unemployed understand how in-work benefits could help them to return to work. We have introduced special fast track procedures for people just starting work which enable the vast majority of urgent claims to family credit to be cleared, and payment issued, within one week. These special arrangements, in both employment and DSS local offices, help with completing the claim form and ensure that people starting work are aware of family credit. The family credit helpline, launched in April 1993, receives over 30,000 calls a week.

A continuing aspect of family credit awareness is the personalised message in the child benefit order book—or notification of automatic credit transfer payment—which tells the family concerned how much income they can have and still be eligible for family credit. A further stimulus to take-up of small amounts is the introduction from October 1993 of lump sum awards of family credit for awards of £4 a week or less. This provides one-off payments of up to £104, encouraging more people to claim and helping with back-to-work expenses.

Note:

[1] "Families, Work and Benefits"—Policy Studies Institute, June 1993.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation, London

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claiming unemployment benefit are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in each of the London boroughs; and what are the costs to the Exchequer at the latest available date.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

Raynaud's Disease

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what specific help with increased heating and fuel bills will be available to those with Raynaud's disease after the imposition of VAT on fuel.

Mr. Burt: Those with Raynaud's disease may be entitled to receive any of the wide range of social security benefits which are available, subject to individual circumstances. Details of the extra help in respect of VAT on domestic fuel were given in reply to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 30 November 1993 at columns *437-38*.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by parliamentary constituency in London the number of people who will be affected by the decision to reduce the entitlement to unemployment benefit from 12 months to six months.

Mr. Burt: Information on the rates of benefit received by unemployed people residing in a particular parliamentary constituency is not available and no estimate can be made of the numbers in each London constituency who may be affected by the introduction of jobseeker's allowance in April 1996.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the numbers of *(a)* males and *(b)* females leaving the unemployment register in the latest statistically convenient recent time period (i) because of loss of unemployment benefit without succeeding to eligibility for income support while remaining without work and (ii) loss of eligibility for income support due to spouse finding work.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

TRANSPORT

Supplementary Grant

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for each *(a)* county council, *(b)* metropolitan district and *(c)* London borough a summary of the transport supplementary grant made available for each of the past five years, broken down into (i) committed major schemes (gross), (ii) newly supported major schemes, (iii) bridge works, (iv) principal roads carriageways, (v) local safety schemes, (vi) packages, (vii) scheme specific, including bus priority, (viii) bus priority alone, (ix) minor works, (x) European regional development fund schemes and (xi) Industrial Development Act schemes;

(2) if he will list for each *(a)* county council, *(b)* metropolitan borough and *(c)* London borough in England a summary of the transport capital expenditure settlement for local authorities for each of the past five years, broken down into (i) committed major schemes gross, (ii) newly supported major schemes, (iii) bridge works, (iv) principal roads carriageways, (v) local safety schemes, (vi) packages, (vii) scheme specific, including bus priority, (viii) bus priority alone, (ix) minor works, (x) European regional Development fund schemes and (xi) Industrial Development Act schemes.

Mr. MacGregor: I am placing the information in the Library. Tables 1 to 5 show the amounts of expenditure accepted for transport supplementary grant under the various categories. Grant is payable at 50 per cent. of accepted expenditure.

Airport Regulation

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the system of economic regulation of airports.

Mr. Norris: I have asked officials to review the system of economic regulation of airports established under the Airports Act 1986. This review will include examination of the role of the CAA and MMC, the frequency and cost of reviews of designated airports, and the benefit of any alternative systems. The aim is to produce a discussion paper in spring 1994.

Christmas Drink-drive Campaign

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the results of the Christmas drink-drive campaign *(a)* in 1993 and *(b)* in previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The results this year show continuing good progress in reducing drink-driving.

I am very grateful to the police for the excellent support they have given. In England and Wales they conducted nearly 11 per cent more breath tests than in the 1992 Christmas campaign. I am also grateful to all those who supported the campaign through sponsorship or publicity at national and local level.

Final figures for England and Wales show that the proportion of drivers tested who were over the legal limit was 6·8 per cent., compared with 7·2 per cent. in the 1992 Christmas campaign and 7·9 per cent. in the 1991 campaign. This is a significant reduction, bearing in mind that progress must become more difficult as the problem is reduced.

It is clear, therefore, that if we are to keep up this rate of progress we must maintain our efforts to get the message across that drinking and driving wrecks lives.

Light Rapid Transit Schemes

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the bids for financial assistance for light rapid transit schemes that he is currently considering.

Mr. Freeman: Bids for financial assistance for light rapid transit schemes are submitted by local authorities as part of the annual local authority transport expenditure round. The outcome of the 1993 bidding round, covering

expenditure in 1994-95, was announced on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *699-706*. Bids for expenditure in 1995-96 will be invited later this year.

Light rapid transit schemes may be eligible for grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968. Applications for section 56 funding are under consideration in respect of light rapid transit schemes in Birmingham—Midland Metro—Leeds—Leeds Supertram—and Nottingham—Greater Nottingham light rapid transit.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what budget provision he has to support light rapid transit schemes in the current and future financial years.

Mr. Freeman: There is no budget provision specifically reserved for light rapid transit schemes. Future proposals for funding of such schemes will be considered as part of the package approach to local transport expenditure.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the light rapid transit schemes to which he has made financial contributions; and if he will detail the total amount contributed and the amount paid in each financial year.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have made funding available for the Manchester Metrolink and South Yorkshire Supertram schemes, and for some preliminary expenditure in connection with Midland Metro. The figures are as follows:

(£ million)

	1988-89 and 1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*[1]1993-94*
Manchester Metrolink					
Credit approval	16·88	31·25	23·00	6·00	—
Grant	5·88	27·68	20·75	1·75	—
Midland Metro					
Credit approval	—	—	0·75	3·46	—
Grant	—	—	0·40	0·44	—
SY Supertram					
Credit approval	—	8·70	14·10	22·60	35·30
Grant	1·10	2·95	6·40	20·50	14·50

[1] Original allocation subject to adjustment in the course of the year.

As part of the local authority transport settlement announced on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *699-706*, we have made further provision of £54·71 million for the funding of South Yorkshire supertram in 1994-95.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to cut the amount of uncollected vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Key: The number of VED evaders brought to book has steadily increased in recent years following the implementation of the recommendations of an efficiency scrutiny, the introduction of new technology, and the continuing programme of joint local campaigns with the police. Last year over 435,000 evaders were penalised with £37·5 million in revenue recovered. In addition, an estimated 180,000 evaders relicensed as a direct result of enforcement action, recovering an extra £14 million. This trend is set to continue.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many convictions there were in each of the last 10 years in respect of non-payment of vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Key: The figures for successful prosecutions and out of court settlements are set out in the table.

	Out of court settlements	*Successful prosecutions*	*Total cases successfully completed*
1984-85	123,000	167,000	290,000
1985-86	136,000	179,000	315,000
1986-87	159,000	186,000	345,000
1987-88	173,000	183,000	356,000
1988-89	185,000	187,000	372,000
1989-90	190,000	180,000	370,000
1990-91	223,000	163,000	386,000
1991-92	243,000	177,000	420,000
1992-93	242,000	193,000	435,000
[1]1993-94	237,000	213,000	450,000

[1] Projected.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff, and how much staff time, was invested in tackling non-payment of vehicle excise duty in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Key: The staff figures, expressed in man years, are as follows:

	Man years
1984-85	900
1985-86	908
1986-87	943
1987-88	973
1988-89	975
1989-90	973
1990-91	983
1991-92	936
1992-93	957
1993-94	992

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the amount of vehicle excise duty uncollected in each of the last 10 years; and what estimates he has made for the current and future years.

Mr. Key: Estimates of the revenue loss through evasion of vehicle excise duty in Great Britain are as follows:

	Revenue loss £ million	*Car VED rate £*
1984-85	80	90
1985-86	85	100
1986-87	90	100
1987-88	95	100
1988-89	100	100
1989-90	105	100
1990-91	105	100
1991-92	105	100
1992-93	130	110
1993-94	145	125 130

Estimates are derived from periodic roadside surveys. Details of the most recent survey can be obtained from the transport statistics report "Vehicle Excise Duty Evasion in Great Britain in 1989-90", which is available in the House of Commons Library. The next survey is planned for later this year.

Airports (Baggage Reconciliation)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the names of all airports in the United Kingdom where trials on potential baggage reconciliation technology have taken place over the past five years, or are currently taking place, the date on which each trial commenced and was completed, the nature of the technology involved, the company undertaking the trial, the commissioning organisation for each trial, and whether the results of the trial were published or made available to his Department; and if he will place details of the trials in the Library.

Mr. Norris: Though the Department of Transport has stated its requirements for baggage reconciliation, known as accounting and authorising for carriage, it is not the commissioning agent for trials of baggage reconciliation technology as its requirements can be met in a number of ways. Technology trials are therefore conducted as a result of commercial arrangements between airports, airlines, handling agents and the suppliers of baggage reconciliation systems. To the Department's knowledge, such trials have taken place or are under way at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Manchester airports, and there may be or may have been trials at other locations.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality and security, the Department is not able to provide the details requested of the trials without the consent of those involved.

Chelmsford Bypass

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to begin on widening the A12 Chelmsford bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Subject to the present review of the trunk road programme we hope to consult the public about our proposals for widening the A12 Chelmsford bypass later this year. Further progress will depend on the successful outcome of subsequent statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

ENVIRONMENT

Franchise Rights

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the role of local authorities in the operation of markets;

(2) what plans he has to abolish market franchise rights.

Mr. Curry: The Deregulation Bill published today includes provision for the abolition of the rights of local authorities which own market franchises to object to any proposal to establish a new market within a six-mile radius of their own.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet representatives of the National Association of British Market Authorities to discuss the abolition of market franchise rights.

Mr. Curry: Ministers will be happy to meet representatives of this association to discuss our proposals for legislation on this issue.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses his Department has received in response to the consultative paper on market franchise rights; how many of the responses were in favour of the proposal and how many opposed; and if he will place them in the Library.

Mr. Curry: The Government have received a total of 2,322 individual responses to this consultation document, of which 273 supported our proposal. The categories of responses received and the numbers in each category were as follows:

	Support	*Oppose*	*Neutral*
Local authorities	8	174	2
Market traders	240	1,568	—
Others (including consumer groups and private individuals)	25	340	8

Copies of the responses from those bodies that agreed that their comments could be made public will be deposited in the Library as soon as possible.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the names of the organisations which responded to the consultation paper of 16 August on market franchise rights;

(2) if he will place in the Library copies of responses to the Government's consultation paper of 16 August on market franchise rights;

(3) how many responses he has received in response to the consultation paper of 16 August on market franchise rights; how many supported the proposal; and how many opposed it;

(4) if he will meet representatives of the National Association of British Market Authorities before he comes to a conclusion on the future of market franchise rights;

(5) if it is his intention to include the future of market franchise rights in the forthcoming Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short).

North Circular Road (Land Contamination)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he took when he issued exchange land certificates in November 1990 for land on and immediately adjoining one of the exchange land sites for the north circular road east of Falloden way, of a report commissioned in 1988 by Barnet council on the contamination of the land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The 1988 report is unknown to both my Department and the Department of Transport. A small area of contamination was discovered in June 1993 during preparation of the land to be given in exchange for land required for the trunk road improvement between east of Falloden way and east of high road, Finchley. As a result, the whole site was systematically tested. The Department of Transport has sent the report of the test, including recommendations for the treatment of the land, to the London borough of Barnet and its response is awaited. The treatment of the exchange land for the adjacent improvement of the trunk road at Regents Park road is the subject of negotiations with the borough.

Habitats and Species Directive

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates of the meetings planned by his Department with the statutory nature conservation advisers Scottish National Heritage, the Countryside Council for Walks and English Nature on the subject of the transposition of the EC habitats and species directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) by my hon. Friend the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside, on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *821*.

Biodiversity

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many countries had by 29 December 1993 ratified the biodiversity convention drawn up at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Atkins: On the basis of notifications to the United Nations legal office in New York, 38 countries and the EC had ratified the biodiversity convention by 29 December 1993.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the United Kingdom will ratify the Rio summit's biodiversity convention.

Mr. Atkins: We have made it clear that we intend to ratify the biodiversity convention subject to satisfactory progress towards securing safeguards against our concerns about its financial provisions. We have made some progress towards such safeguards and are considering what further progress can be made before we take a final decision on ratification. In the meantime, we remain fully committed to the aims of the convention as demonstrated by our "Action Plan on Biodiversity", to be published later this month, and by the Darwin initiative.

Imported Waste

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amounts of industrial and household waste were imported during the last 12 months for which information is available; and what quantities of this waste were buried or processed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The only data available are for hazardous wastes covered by the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988. In the 12 months ending April 1993, the United Kingdom imported 46,948 tonnes of hazardous waste, 98 per cent. of which was imported into England and Wales.

None of the imported waste was landfilled without treatment. Twenty-four thousand one hundred and eighteen tonnes received some form of treatment to reduce the hazard before landfilling, 19,168 tonnes were incinerated and a further 3,662 received some other form of treatment of which 3,474 tonnes were recovered or reprocessed.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has with regard to the disposal of radioactive waste at Lumms lane, Agecroft in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Atkins: The only company currently authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960—now 1993—to dispose of low-level radioactive waste at Lumms lane is Magnesium Elektron Ltd.—MEL—which is authorised to dispose of solid waste to the on-site landfill, liquid waste to the River Irwell and gaseous waste to the atmosphere. Environmental monitoring data are collected from around MEL's landfill site as part of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's national environmental monitoring programme. I will arrange for a copy of the annual report of this programme to be made available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *6*, what deadline has been set for the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to reply on nuclear waste substitution.

Mr. Atkins: No deadline has been set for the committee's advice.

Waste (Brazil)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the Sao Paulo State Environment Protection Agency in Brazil with regard to the return to the United Kingdom by the Produquimica company of Brazil of a consignment of copper, arsenic and cadmium wastes in December 1993.

Mr. Atkins: I presume that the question refers to material exported by London Metals Ltd. to the Produquimica Company in Brazil, which was recently returned to the United Kingdom.

My Department has received no information or other communication directly from the Sao Paulo State Environment Protection Agency—CETESB. However, information received indirectly may be summarised as follows.

The Produquimica Company has claimed that it returned the material to the United Kingdom on the grounds that the terms of the original contract had not been fulfilled. CETESB joined in recommending re-export on these grounds: at this stage its own analysis of the cargo was not complete. The shipment left Brazil on 21 December 1993.

Subsequently, CETESB carried out an analysis of a sample from the cargo, which showed its composition to be largely zinc—44·9 per cent.—with some copper—8·25 per cent.—a substantial amount of moisture—14·3 per cent. —and trace amounts of metals such as cadmium and arsenic—in total about 1 per cent. CETESB concluded that the material should be classified as "ash and residues, principally containing zinc". Under Brazilian regulation No. 138—of 22 December 1992—such residues can be imported into Brazil only after prior authorisation from IBAMA—Federal Environment Agency—and DECEX—Department of Foreign Trade. Produquimica is not registered with IBAMA. CETESB therefore took the view that the import was in breach of this regulation, and formally demanded the return of the cargo to its place of origin. This demand was made only after the shipment had already left Brazil.

Thorne and Hatfield Moors

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he now expects the agreement between Fisons and English Nature over Thorne and Hatfield moors to be signed;

(2) what information he has on the legal complexities preventing the signature of the proposed agreement between Fisons and English Nature over the future of Thorne and Hatfield moors.

Mr. Atkins: Conveyancing work and other legal matters have been time consuming but conditions associated with the proposed lease back are now mostly resolved. English Nature and Fisons hope to conclude matters shortly.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of the total budget for English Nature was spent on work on Fison's peatlands on Thorne and Hatfield moors in each of the years since 1991;

(2) how much money was spent by English Nature on work on Fisons' peatlands on Thorne and Hatfield moors in each year since 1991.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested, which includes money spent on the Thorne Moors national nature reserve owned by English Nature, is set out:

Year	Expenditure on work on Thorne and Hatfield moors £	Percentage of total budget Per cent.
1991-92	3,077	0·01
1992-93	70,401	0·2
[1]1993-94	40,148	0·1

[1] To 11 January 1994.

Condoms (Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the pollution effects of used condoms discarded into the sewage system.

Mr. Atkins: The discharge of used condoms and other sewage-related debris in effluent has unsightly effects. Most of this material is intercepted and dealt with effectively by the sewerage system. Improvements planned for outfalls and treatment works will further reduce this form of pollution.

Radwell Motorway Services Station

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the outcome of the planning inquiry into Radwell motorway services station to be announced.

Mr. Baldry: The inspector's report into this planning appeal has yet to be received, although I understand it is almost complete.

Depending on the complexity of an appeal, we normally expect to be able to issue a decision within eight weeks of receipt of a report. In this case, I expect the Secretary of State's decision to be issued by early April.

Co-operative Housing Associations

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the allocation of Housing Corporation approvals to co-operative housing associations in London over the financial years 1990-91 to 1994-95, indicating the financial allocation, the number of homes to be created and the proportion of the total programme allocated to co-operatives in each year.

Sir George Young: The table below sets out the requested information on allocation of Housing Corporation approvals to co-operative housing associations in London over the financial years 1990-91 to 1994-95. The Housing Corporation also makes significant and increasing allocations to other housing associations for housing which, when developed, will be either owned or managed by co-operative housing associations.

Approvals/allocations to co-operative housing associations in greater London 1990-91 to 1994-95

	Approvals/allocations (see note)		As percentage of total Housing Corporation programme	
	£ million	Units	£ million	Units
1990-91	18·33	152	6·96	4·06
1991-92	20·51	208	3·23	1·94
1992-93	9·01	145	1·02	0·79
1993-94	4·06	92	1·23	1·29
1994-95	2·86	178	0·62	1·38

Notes:
For 1990-91 to 1992-93 figures represent approvals, i.e., allocations taken up.
For 1993-94 and 1994-95 figures are for allocations.

Local Authorities (Northamptonshire)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by local authority in Northamptonshire the total value of asset sales, excluding houses and flats, for each year since 1986-87.

Mr. Baldry: The information is given in the table.

The value of asset sales, excluding housing, since 1986-87

£'000

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Northamptonshire CC	4,143	6,800	28,420	4,767	8,741	1,629	4,815
Corby	960	1,024	3,464	4,841	55	1,211	86
Daventry	382	751	1,295	3,767	3,009	2,106	2,161
East Northamptonshire	6	626	195	0	0	0	0
Kettering	321	9,689	1,905	1,479	409	981	374
Northampton	122	175	332	21,725	11,076	12,368	146
South Northamptonshire	1,357	7	9,013	157	2	12	[1]900
Wellingborough	3,450	3,668	9,082	6,459	2,275	480	2,628

Source: Local authority returns.
[1] Provisional.

Waterways

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those rivers and waterways recommended by the National Rivers Authority for priority clean-up under the Water Act 1989; and which of these waterways will receive treatment during the next six years.

Mr. Atkins: A list of the water quality schemes in England and Wales recommended by the National Rivers Authority has been placed in the Library of the House. These schemes are still under review as part of the wider review of water company investment and charges by the Director General of Water Services.

Protected Species

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of licences issued under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to destroy protected species in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Atkins: Details of licences issued under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in respect of wild birds are contained in the reports by the United Kingdom to the European Community on derogation under article 9 of the directive on the conservation of wild birds—79,409/EEC—for the years 1991 and 1992. Figures for 1993 are not yet available. Copies of the derogation report are held in the Library of this House.

Set out is a table of licences issued in England, Scotland and Wales in 1993, and those issued in Scotland and Wales in 1991 and 1992. The figures for England for those years cannot be provided without disproportionate costs being incurred, as English Nature—the licensing authority—only has manual records prior to 1993.

Licences under section 16 are also issued by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. I will write to the hon. Member when details are available.

Species	*Number of specimens licensed for taking*	*Issed under sub-section*
1991		
Rainbow leaf beetle	small sample	16(3)(a)
Killarney fern	small sample	16(3)(a) and (c)
Foxtail stonewort	small sample	ditto
Freshwater pearl mussel	100	ditto
Freshwater pearl mussel	3 kilos	16(3)(a)
Young's helleborine	1	16(3)(a) and (c)
1992		
Crayfish	100	16(3)(a)
Pipistrelle bat	30	ditto
	1,000 young	
Allis shad (see note 1)	100 adults	ditto
	1,000 young	
Allis shad (see note 1)	100 adults	ditto
Fen orchid	5	16(3)(a) and (c)
Floating water plantain	small samples	16(3)(a)
Spiked speedwell	100	ditto
Killarney fern	small samples	16(3)(a) and (c)
1993		
Medicinal leech	1	16(3)(a)
	1,000 young	
Allis shad (see note 1)	100 adults	ditto
	1,000 young	
Allis shad (see note 1)	100 adults	ditto
Swallowtail butterfly	20	ditto
Beetles	2	ditto
De Folin's lagoon snail	40	ditto
Natterjack toad eggs/tadpoles	5,000	ditto
Natterjack toad	50 tadpoles	ditto
Natterjack toad tadpoles	175	ditto
Lagoon sandworm	unknown	ditto
Lagoon sand shrimp	unknown	ditto
Starlet sea anemone	unknown	ditto
Lundy cabbages	10	ditto
Floating water plantain	unknown	ditto
Foxtail stonewort	unknown	ditto

Note 1: Licences issued for maximum take over a three-year period

Imported Building Materials

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by value the major 25 imported building materials in the latest year stating the import as a

percentage of the United Kingdom market; and what were the comparable figures by value and import penetration five years ago.

Mr. Baldry: The table gives the estimated value of building materials imported during 1992, the latest year for which comprehensive information is available, together with the equivalent figures for 1988. Reliable information on import penetration will not be available until the information on United Kingdom production has been harmonised with overseas trade using the new PRODCOM classification; the first results of which are expected to be available this autumn.

£ millions

	1992	*1988*
Sawn and Laminated Wood	1,050	1,452
Builders Ironmongery	321	264
Plastic Sheets and Profiles	209	179
Structural Steel Components	158	131
Electric Wires	144	100
Air Conditioning Units	122	102
Metal Sheets etc.	116	111
Glazed Ceramic Tiles	116	107
Lamps and Fittings	114	82
Central Heating Boilers	88	51
Wooden Doors	82	85
Paints and Varnish	72	62
Steel Tubes and Pipes	66	47
Hardboard and Fibreboard	64	57
Mastics, putty etc.	62	36
Nails, Screws etc.	56	52
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Defective Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's estimate of the repair bill to local authority properties designated as defective housing.

Sir George Young: That information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* local authority and *(b)* private properties are designated as defective housing.

Sir George Young: Local authorities report some 128,000 designated defective dwellings in their ownership, and some 31,000 with private owners eligible for assistance under part XVI of the Housing Act 1985. The number of defective dwellings in private ownership but where the owners are ineligible for assistance is not known.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members currently appointed to the Commission for the New Towns.

Mr. Baldry: The current members of the Commission for the New Towns are:

Sir Neil Shields, MC—Chairman
Lord Finsberg, MBE—Deputy Chairman
Lord Bellwin, JP
Mr. R. B. Caws, CBE
Mr. F. C. Graves, OBE, DL
Sir Brian Jenkins, GBE
Ms W. Luscombe
Mr. W. J. Mackenzie, OBE
Mr. M. H. Mallinson
Lady Marsh
Sir Gordon Roberts, CBE, JP, DL
Mr. J. R. Trustram Eve

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Countryside Commission.

Mr. Atkins The current membership of the Countryside Commission is:

Sir John Johnson—Chairman
Mr. David Fletcher
Mrs. Sarah Ward
Sir Richard Carew-Pole
Professor Allan Patmore
Mrs. Rachel Thomas
Mr. Rodney Swarbrick
Lord Denham

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances.

Mr. Atkins: The members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances are:

Professor P. Calow—Chairman
Mr. A. Brown, CB
Dr. D. Ball
Dr. I. F. Carney
Mr. P Chave
Dr. B. Crathorne
Dr. J. F. Duffus
Mr. M. Gittins
Professor T. M. Roberts
Mr. M. Wadsley
Mr. R. Young

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board.

Mr. Atkins: The current chairman and members of the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board are:

Member	*Position*
Dr. Elizabeth Nelson *Chairman*	Former Chairman of Taylor Nelson A.G.B. plc.
Mr. Kenneth Miles *Deputy Chairman*	Director General, Incorporated Society of British Advertisers Ltd.
Mr. Tim Brown	Information and public relations officer for the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection.
Professor Roland Clift	Professor of Environmental Technology and Director of the Centre for Environmental Strategy, University of Surrey.

Member	Position
Ms Anne Foster	Director of the Scottish Consumer Council.
Ms Julia Hailes	Director of Sustainability Ltd., author of "Green Consumer Guide".
Dr. Keith Humphreys	Chairman and managing director, Rhone—Poulenc Ltd.
Ms Pippa Hyam	Senior Associate, PDA International.
Mrs. Harriet Kimbell	Consumer laywer and law lecturer.
Dr. Melanie Miller	Expert on environmental and consumer issues working for the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment Alliance.
Miss Jyoti Munsiff	Company Secretary, Shell Transport and Trading.
Mr. Derek Norman	Director of Environmental Affairs, Pilkington plc.
Dr. Richard Pugh	Director, Tesco plc.
Mr. Lew Scott	Manufacturing director, Hoover Ltd.
Miss Catherine Whitehead	County trading standards officer, Staffordshire county council.
Mr. Nigel Whitaker	Executive director, Kingfisher plc.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The members currently appointed to the London Docklands development corporation are:
Michael Pickard—*Chairman*
Lord Cocks—*Deputy Chairman*
Viscountess Cobham
Sir Christopher Foster
Cllr Janet Ludlow
Cllr Conor McAuley
Cllr John McTernan
Peter Mead
William Jack
Eric Sorensen
Neil Spense

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment.

Mr. Atkins: The members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment are:
Professor J. E. Berigner—*Chairman*
Professor E. M. Cooke
Dr. P. J. Dale
Dr. A. Garland
Dr. C. J. Gliddon
Ms J. Hill
Dr. J. Kinderlerer
Mr. J. MacLeod
Professor D. Onions
Professor L. Partridge
Professor N. J. Poole
Dr. D. J. Robinson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Local Government Commission for England.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission currently has 15 members:
Sir John Banham—*Chairman*
David Ansbro
Professor Michael Chisholm
Christopher Chope, OBE
Sir Kenneth Couzens
Ken Ennals, CB
Professor Malcolm Grant
Brian Hill, CBE, DL
Margaret Hodge, MBE
Mary Leigh
Ann Levick
Robert Scruton
David Thomas
Lady Wilcox
Clive Wilkinson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to each rent assessment panel.

Sir George Young: There are approximately 440 members appointed to the 13 rent assessment panels in England. I have arranged for a copy of the most recent list, showing the position at 31 December 1993, to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members currently appointed to the British Board of Agrément.

Mr. Baldry: The current members of the Board of the British Board of Agrément are:
Mr. W. J. W. Courtney, CBE—Chairman. Chairman, Southern Water plc
Dr. P. C. Hewlett, PhD, BSc, CChem, FRSC, FInstCeram, APRI, FInst Conc Tech—Director
Mr. N. M. Chaldecott, OBE, Director General, National Council of Building Material Producers
Mr. A. M. Cooper, FCIOB, Hon. FIAS, consultant to the National House Building Council
Mr. R. F. Gainsford, MITSA, DCA, DMS, assistant chief executive of the local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards (LACOTS)
Mr. T. Henney, MBE, M Arch(MIT), DA(Edin), RIBA, FRIAS, FCIOB, FBIM, an architect, practising in Edinburgh
Mr. D. C. Leonard, FCMA, ACIS, managing director of British Gypsum Ltd. and a director of BPB Gypsum Industries Ltd and Westroc Ltd.
Mr. T. P. O'Brien, MA, BSc. Director, Ove Arup Partnership. Technical Director within the Arup Research and Development
Dr. A. C. Paterson, CBE, DSc, FEng, FICE, FIMechE, FIStructE, consultant partner, Bullen and Partners, consulting engineers
Mr. A. J. Peach, MCIM, JP, former marketing director and now a non-executive Director of Catnic Ltd.
Mr. D. W Quinion, BSc, FEng, FICE, FIStructE, consultant to Tarmac Construction

Mr. C. A. Rackliffe, FIBC, building control manager, Waverley borough council
Miss P. R. Tindale, architect, chairperson of the HNBC RIBA housing design awards and a trustee of he Building Conservation Trust
Mr. J. W Turner, CBE, FCIOB, former chairman of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. Former chairman, E Turner and Sons Ltd, building contractors, Cardiff. Past president of Building Employers Confederation and Concrete Society
Mr. C. A Wilson, MA DA(Manc), Dip Arch, RIBA, MRTPI, director of development, Lancaster city council

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Letchworth garden city corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The constitution of the Letchworth garden city corporation makes provision for a board of six members. Four—including the chairman—are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, one by North Hertfordshire district council and one by Hertfordshire county council. The current members of the board are as follows:

E. Lyall, CBE—(Chairman)
A. R. Atherton, CB
P. W. Harkness
P. E. McMenemy
Mrs. L. A. Needham
F. Peacock

EC Environment Strategy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for United Kingdom environment policy of the environment strategy released by the Greek presidency of the European Union.

Mr. Atkins: We welcome the announcement that the Greek presidency intends to encourage measures to prevent environmental damage and improve the quality of life and look forward to discussing more detailed proposals in the coming months.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by each urban development corporation since their inception on acquiring land and buildings; and what money has been received by each urban development corporation for the sale of land and buildings.

Mr. Baldry: Expenditure and receipts in respect of the acquisition and sale of land and buildings for each urban development corporation from inception until 31 March 1993 are as follows:

	Expenditure (£ million)	*Receipts (£ million)*
Bristol[1]	26·911	2·709
Black Country[2]	86·119	4·946
Birmingham Heartlands	3·311	—
Central Manchester	13·224	0·608
Leeds	23·918	5·909
London Docklands	168·000	319·000
Merseyside	37·711	8·745
Sheffield	34·348	1·167
Teesside	63·004	36·683
Trafford Park	49·898	10·462
Tyne and Wear	37·758	7·603

[1] Includes £10,332 million expenditure for the Bristol spine road.
[2] Includes £15,449 million expenditure for the black country spine road, and £6,099 million for open space.

Council Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council leaseholders there are in each local authority.

Sir George Young: Information on the number of council leaseholders in each local authority is not held centrally.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of applications for council housing now held by local authorities in England.

Sir George Young: Local authorities provide information on the numbers of households on their council housing waiting lists on their annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns.

At 1 April 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 1,208,800 households were reported as being on council housing waiting lists in England.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with the Department of Health on the progress of the homeless mentally ill initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Officials of my Department meet with those of the Department of Health from time to time to discuss issues relating to the homeless mentally ill initiative, and in particular the contribution which the Housing Corporation is able to make to the provision of move-on accommodation.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless people are estimated to have used each of the cold weather shelters so far this winter.

Sir George Young: As part of the rough sleepers initiative, the Government are funding seven cold weather shelters this winter, providing a total of 353 places until 31 March 1994 for people who would otherwise sleep rough on the streets of central London, as follows:

Location	*Bedspaces*		*Managing organisation*
	Male	*Female*	
St. John Street, EC1	76	15	English Churches Housing Group
Tudor Street, EC4	30	—	Salvation Army
Albert Street, NW1	—	25	Camden Borough Council
Soho Square, W1	20	20	Centrepoint Soho
Page Street, SW1	60	10	St. Mungo's Association
Tooley Street, SE1	50	10	Crisis
John Street, WC1	26	11	Riverpoint

The shelters have had high occupancy rates since they opened early in December. On the night of Thursday 13 January, 313 bedspaces were occupied. More detailed information about the people using the shelters will become available from reports which the managing organisations are due to send to the Department by 31 May 1994.

Lambeth Council

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now received the audited accounts of Lambeth council's direct labour trading divisions; and

what conclusions he has reached as to whether each of those divisions shall continue to provide services to the local authority.

Mr. Baldry: The London borough of Lambeth has provided my right hon. Friend with accounts relating to the council's direct labour organisations—DLOs. These cover the financial year ending 31 March 1993 and earlier years, going back in the case of some activities to 1985-86.

The accounts have been certified by the authority's internal auditors but await certification by the district auditor. The internal auditor has qualified some of the accounts in respect of matters already made public in reports issued by the authority's former chief executive and the district auditor.

The accounts were specifically required as a result of directions given, on 23 July 1993 by my right hon. Friend, under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Subject to any changes which might be required by the district auditor the accounts show that the following defined activities met any necessary financial objectives; sports and leisure management, welfare catering, other cleaning, refuse collection and street cleaning, building cleaning, and grounds maintenance.

Losses were made in relation to general highways work. Under the terms of the relevant direction, the authority must cease carrying out the work, except for work of an emergency nature, snow clearance and gritting, as from 1 April 1994. Losses were also made on new construction work. The authority has now ceased to carry out such work.

Heavy losses have also been recorded for building maintenance work. The relevant direction already required work to be retendered by 1 April 1994 and my right hon. Friend's consent will be required before any new building maintenance work can be awarded to the authority's own DLO.

Lambeth has been notified of my right hon. Friend's views on these matters.

Protected Tenancies

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households have protected tenancies in *(a)* Ealing, *(b)* London and *(c)* England.

Sir George Young: There is no information available centrally on the number of protected tenancies in Ealing. Provisional estimates from the first half year of data collection from the new survey of English housing are that in 1993 there were around 70,000 protected tenancies in Greater London and 350,000 in England.

Central Heating

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each district council in England *(a)* the number of houses without central heating and *(b)* the proportion of the area's housing stock such homes constitute.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the number of houses without central heating in each district is not available. The number of households without central heating in each district can be found in Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, General Register Office for Scotland, *"1991 Census, Housing and Availability of Cars, Great Britain"*, London: HMSO, 1993—table 3, Housing characteristics —copies of which are in the Library.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many low-income households will have received assistance under the home energy efficiency scheme programme by 2000; and how many low-income households will remain unassisted at that date at the current level of funding.

Mr. Atkins: On current plans the total number of households receiving grants under the home energy efficiency scheme—HEES—in the United Kingdom is expected to be almost half a million a year in the three years from 1 April 1994. Because Government expenditure plans for later years have yet to be agreed, it is not possible to make a firm estimate of the number of households which will receive assistance by the year 2000.

Nor can a realistic estimate be made of the number of households which will remain unassisted in the year 2000. The number will depend not only on the numbers of households eligible for and assisted under HEES. It will reflect the number of households which already have basic insulation measures and those which will be insulated by the year 2000, either by householders themselves or through the other schemes which are improving energy efficiency.

Housing Management

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum number of local authorities' properties that can be included in proposed compulsory competitive tendering of housing management packages.

Sir George Young: The local government Acts do not set limits for contract sizes for compulsory competitive tendering. We have indicated that we would not normally expect comprehensive area-based housing management contracts in large authorities to exceed 5,000 dwellings. It would, however, be acceptable good practice for small authorities with up to 7,500 dwellings to proceed on the basis of one contract, provided that reasonable competition can be secured.

Environment Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), of 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *1106*, what was the voting record of each member state on *(a)* the packaging directive and *(b)* the UN framework convention on climate change.

Mr. Atkins: The common position on the packaging directive was agreed by qualified majority vote without the agreement of Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. As my hon. Friend the Member of Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) stated in the answer he gave on 17 December last, although the United Kingdom strongly supports Community ratification of the climate change convention, we abstained on the formal resolution because of doubts about the choice of legal base.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his intention that in an area reviewed by the Local Government Commission short-term start-up costs will be offset by future savings.

Mr. Baldry: We have said on our guidance to the commission that change to the structure of local government should be worthwhile and cost-effective over time. Cost-effectiveness cannot be measured purely in financial terms, but for most review areas we would expect structural change to produce financial savings.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Local Government Commission is precluded from recommending an option which results in transitional costs which are not offset by future savings.

Mr. Baldry: The policy guidance which we issued to the commission in November 1993 provides that the commission

"is not precluded from recommending an option which would be marginally more expensive than the status quo if the extra cost would be outweighed by other considerations."

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how any net transitional or ongoing costs are to be met in areas reviewed by the Local Government Commission if future ongoing savings are not identified;

(2) how the additoinal ongoing costs in respect of options, put forward by the Local Government Commission in areas reviewed, which are more expensive than the status quo, are to be met by the new local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: We expect recommendations which would be more expensive than the status quo, or which would not lead to ongoing savings, to be the exception. We shall look at the issue of any additional ongoing costs in the light of particular recommendations. We are currently considering the treatment in years after 1994-95 of all aspects of transitional costs.

Waterlogged Soil

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Housebuilders Federation, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the National Federation of Housing Associations and local authority associations concerning the implications for housing and planning policies of the confirmation of the positive correlation between winter waterlogging of soils and the level of infant mortality; and what further action he proposes to take.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the chairman of the National Rivers Authority on the relationship between the level of infant mortality and winter waterlogging of soils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for commissioning research into the positive relationship between winter waterlogging of soils and higher levels of infant mortality.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has no plans to commission such research.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on land drainage policy in relation to the effect of winter waterlogging on the level of infant mortality.

Mr. Atkins: Land drainage policy is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue the latest details about statutory action taken against local authorities in relation to compulsory competitive tendering of local council services following publication of the position as at the end of September 1993.

Mr. Baldry: The table lists the authorities against which statutory action was taken in the period 1 October to 31 December 1993. It also gives a cumulative figure for the number of notices and directions given under the Local Government Act 1988 and the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 for 1993 as a whole, and since 1989 when the anti-competitive provisions were brought into effect.

Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980
Local Government Act 1988
Compulsory Competitive Tendering Statutory Action Bulletin
England

4th Quarter 1993 (October—December)	*4th quarter 1993*	*Total for 1993*	*Total from January 1989*
Notices served relating to anti-competitive behaviour Calderdale MBC—Ground Maintenance Harrow LB—Other Catering Langbaurgh on Tees BC—Ground Maintenance	3	20	57
Notices served relating to financial failure Nil	0	80	88
Directions given relating to anti-competitive behaviour Birmingham CC—Building Maintenance Bradford MDC—Highways and Sewers Warrington BC—Ground Maintenance	3	12	30

4th Quarter 1993 (October—December)	4th quarter 1993	Total for 1993	Total from January 1989
Directions given relating to financial failure	7	16	48
Bedfordshire CC—Ground Maintenance			
Camden LB—Building Maintenance			
Canterbury CC—New Construction £50k			
Castle Point BC—Ground Maintenance			
Hillingdon LB—Other Catering			
Manchester CC—New Construction £50k			
South Bedfordshire DC—Refuse Collection			

Local Government Finance

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on his proposed notional amounts for capping in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We have received a small number of representations from authorities, including new information and revised data, which we are considering carefully. However, we have now reached preliminary views on all these representations, and we are today informing authorities of our current proposals reflecting these preliminary conclusions. I am arranging for a table showing our current proposals for notional amounts to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 29 November to the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight), *Official Report*, column *380*, if he has reached any decisions on the Local Government Commission's final recommendations for Cleveland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have today written to Sir John Banham, chairman of the Local Government Commission, giving my decisions on the commission's recommendations for Cleveland as set out in its report "Final Recommendations on the Future Local Government of Cleveland and Durham".

After considering the commission's recommendations and the representations made, I have concluded that effective and convenient local government in Cleveland would be achieved by abolishing Cleveland county council and establishing four unitary authorities for the area—commission recommendation 1—and that this would reflect the identities and interests of local people. I have accepted in principle that the county of Cleveland should be abolished, but I shall defer a final decision until I have reached decisions on the commission's forthcoming recommendations for Durham and North Yorkshire.

The remaining recommendations for Cleveland have been accepted as submitted, except that I am still considering the proposal that I direct the commission to undertake a further parish review.

In agreeing with the establishment of unitary authorities based on existing districts, I have given careful consideration to representations which I received about the implications for those services and functions currently performed on a wider basis. My decision is based on a presumption that the authorities which are to become unitary will work together to plan for these services and functions, and will forge working links with other bodies such as health authorities.

The boundaries of the four proposed unitary authorities, which I intend to establish in April 1995, correspond to those of the existing district councils. Where the boundaries of unitary authorities and existing authorities coincide in this way I propose as a general rule to consult the local authorities concerned about the desirability of holding elections for the whole council in the May preceding the 1 April reorganisation date. Accordingly, I am now consulting the majority and minority groups on each district council, and Cleveland county council, to seek their views about whether or not elections should be held in May 1994. I will make a further announcement about the outcome of that consultation.

An order giving effect to the commission's recommendations for Cleveland, with the aforementioned modifications, will be laid before the House in due course. A copy of my letter to Sir John Banham has been placed in the Library.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members currently appointed to each urban development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The members currently appointed to the urban development corporations are as follows:

1. *Birmingham Heartlands Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Sir Reginald Eyre
Deputy Chairman:
Sir Richard Knowles

Members:
Albert Bore
Randal Brew, JP OBE
David Brooks
Fred Chapman, JP
Ms Hazel Duffy
Mrs. Cath Finegan
Reg Hales, JP
Paul Sabapathy
Jim Shedden
Michael Wilcox, JP

2. *Black Country Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Sir William Francis

Deputy Chairman:
Christopher Hawkins

Members:
James Antill
Mike Bird
Roger Burman
Bill Clarke
John Edwards
Ian Flanagan

Dr. Diana Green
Hugh Ellis Rees
Rupert Nabarro
Michael Worley, JP

3. *Bristol Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Christopher Thomas

Deputy Chairman:
Andrew Reid

Members:
Mrs. Stella Clarke
Phillip Gregory
Geoffrey Matthews
Lady Merrison
John Portch
Graham Robertson
Sir Robert Wall
David Yorke, FRICS

4. *Central Manchester Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Dr. James Grigor, OBE

Deputy Chairman:
Derek Boothman

Members:
Ken Alford
Ms Deborah Buchanan
Peter Carmichael
Jack Flanagan
Raymond Gerrard
Mrs. Joyce Hill, OBE
Sir Robert Scott
Graham Stringer

5. *Leeds Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Peter Hartley

Deputy Chairman:
John Hardman

Members:
Andrew Carter
Edward Holroyd, FCA
John Jackson
Baroness Lockwood
David Richardson
Jon Trickett
Brian Walker

6. *Merseyside Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Sir Desmond Pitcher

Deputy Chairman:
Clive Lewis, FRICS

Members:
Leslie T Byrom, FRICS IRRV
Eric Clarke
Mrs. Muriel Downs
John Hale, IPFA
Dr. John Handley
Professor Michael Parkinson
Geoff Prince
Mrs. Paula Ridley, JP
Harry Rimmer
Dr. Protasia Torkington

7. *Plymouth Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Sir Robert Gerken

Deputy Chairman:
John Ingham

Members:
Mrs. Nicola Cutts
Simon Day
Tudor Evans
Philip Hamilton
Johnathan Harris, FRICS
Mrs. Jacqueline Gourlay
Mrs. Jean Nelder
Tom Savery

8. *Sheffield Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Hugh R. Sykes

Deputy Chairman:
Norman Adsetts, OBE

Members:
Ms Jenny Bacon
Mike Bower
Mike Buckley
Mrs. Janet Cohen
Frank Eul
David Heslop, OBE
Peter Newman
Derek Nice
Professor Gareth Roberts
Alfred A. Wood, CBE

9. *Teeside Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Ron Norman, OBE

Deputy Chairman:
Lord Dormand of Easington

Members:
Sandy Anderson
Mrs. Susan Bush
Michael Carr
Alan H. Cherry, MBE
Lady Diana Eccles
Bryan Hanson, OBE
Roger Kingdon, CBE
Ian Mathieson
John Sutcliffe
Lawrie Wild, JP

10. *Trafford Park Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Bill Morgan

Deputy Chairman:
Anthony Russell, JP

Members:
James Barker
Peter Collins, JP
Ms Beverley Hughes
Geoffrey Lord
William Moores
Hugh Richards, FRICS
Derek H. Roberts
Colin Warbick, MIMI

11. *Tyne and Wear Development Corporation*

Chairman:
Sir Paul Nicholson

Deputy Chairman:
John Ward

Members:
John Barnsley
Eric Bramfitt
Jane Darbyshire
Tony Flynn
Ian Gibson, CBE
Ian Gordon, OBE
Professor Patsy Healey
Dr. Ralph Iley, CBE
Joe L. Mills
Chris Sharp, CBE
Frank Sharratt

Dearne Valley City Grant Project

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects that all toxic materials lying within the Dearne valley city grant area will have been removed or property contained;

(2) what is the total area of land reclaimed as part of the city grant project in the Dearne valley; and what area of derelict land remains to be reclaimed;

(3) what has been the total payment from central funds in support of the city grant project for the Dearne valley to date; and what is his estimate for the total spending in the current year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The three current city grant projects in the Dearne valley involve the reclamation of about 220 acres of derelict land. One site has now been fully reclaimed, and the reclamation of a second site is expected to be completed in about three months time. The remaining site accounts for around 80 per cent. of the total area covered by these projects and its reclamation is expected to be completed by the end of 1994. On completion of the projects, the toxic materials will either have been removed from the sites or contained in an appropriate manner.

Grant payments by my Department in support of the projects have to date totalled £6·9 million. In 1993-94 payments are expected to total about £2·4 million, with around a further £1·1 million to be paid in 1994-95.

Housing (Flood Risks)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of the construction of housing on river flood plains exacerbation of recent floods in the south and east of England.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

In December 1992, the Ministry together with the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office, issued updated guidance to local planning authorities on the need to take account of flood risk due to increased run-off from new developments and the need for measures to be taken to alleviate this as a condition of granting planning permission. The National Rivers Authority provides advice to local planning authorities on application for developments in flood risk areas.

The Ministry has an ongoing programme of research into the flood response of rivers to rainfall and the development of design procedures which can take into account changes within river catchments such as urbanisation. Changes in flood run-off can be assessed in a number of ways, including by reference to 1975 flood studies report by the Institute of Hydrology, which has been substantially updated through Ministry-funded research. It is for the National Rivers Authority and the other responsible flood defence bodies to assess the causes of flooding on individual rivers using these techniques.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 19 January 1994

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for each scheme operated by his Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Goodlad: The diplomatic service operates five loan schemes for staff. In all cases, beneficiaries sign an undertaking to repay, and unless otherwise stated officers repay by deduction from salary.

The schemes and their objectives are as follows:

(i) *Housing Assistance Scheme*

DS officers returning from service overseas to an appointment in the United Kingdom are faced with the problem of needing to find rented accommodation, or buy a property at a time not of their own choosing: officers are eligible for a salary-related advance, subject to a maximum of £10,500. Repayments are deferred for the first three years, and then repaid over a maximum of nine years.

(ii) *Overseas Allowances*

In order to assist staff in purchasing equipment and establishing their household overseas, advances of allowances are available to officers which are repayable over two years. Advances of up to one month's cost of livi.g allowance—COLA—may be taken by staff who have completed a posting in the United Kingdom: for some difficult postings a three-month advance of COLA is available. Advances of six months representational allowances are available to heads of mission and other senior grade staff.

(iii) *Car Loans*

Officers need private cars overseas for domestic and operational reasons. A salary-related advance is available to officers appointed overseas after a tour of duty in the United Kingdom, repayable over two years.

(iv) *Recreational Advances*

This is a small advance made available to junior staff by our missions overseas to help them with the initial cost of joining a local sports club. The loan is repaid to the accountant at the overseas mission within one year.

(v) *Season Ticket Advances*

This advance is available to staff in the United Kingdom to purchase an annual season ticket for home to office journeys. This enables the Department to widen the recruitment catchment area, and alleviates recruitment and retention problems.

The following loans have not been paid by the due date and recovery action is in hand:

Scheme	*Year*	*Number of loans*	*Amount £*
Housing	1989	1	1,279
Housing	1991	1	3,000
Car	1993	1	531
TOTAL	—	—	4,810

The Overseas Development Administration operates three loan schemes, the objectives and the arrangements for which are similar to those for the diplomatic service.

(i) *House Purchase*

To assist staff who are transferred to a new location in UK at the Department's behest.

(ii) *Overseas Salary Advance*

Available to staff and technical co-operation officers on first taking up an overseas appointment to purchase a new vehicle and to stock up on essential equipment.

(iii) *Season Ticket/Bicycle Advances*

To assist staff with home to office travel.

The following staff loans were not repaid. In both cases, staff resigned without prior notice. ODA initiated recovery action, but on the basis of legal advice, this was not pursued.

Scheme	*Year*	*Number of Loans*	*Amount £*
Season Ticket	1990	1	547
Season Ticket	1991	1	213
Total	—	—	760

Two overseas salary advances paid to aid personnel—technical co-operation officers—have failed to be recovered since 1990. One officer has agreed to repay £7,848 over a three-year period. The other has an outstanding balance of £3,400 and recovery action is being pursued by the Treasury Solicitor.

The outstanding loans due to the Department are a minute proportion of the total advanced and recovered without difficulty. Outstanding loan recovery forms a very small part of the responsibilities of a number of officers: it is not possible to quantify in financial terms the amount of manpower expended on pursuing loans with a disproportionate amount of research.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department or the Overseas Development Administration; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A total of 2,410 Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by Foreign and Commonwealth Ministers. The cards cost £778·25. The other information is not centrally recorded or readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

EC Development Council

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *76*, what were the voting figures recorded in the meeting of the European Community's Development Council held on 2 December.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The resolutions of the Development Council on 2 December were adopted by consensus, as is the normal practice.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's Iraq note prepared in the summer of 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave in reply to a question from the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *154*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Global Commission on Population and Development

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who are the members of the global commission on population and development; how many meetings the commission has held; what is the proposed timetable for its work; and what is the Overseas Development Administration's contribution to its work.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Two meetings of the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life have been held. The commission will conduct regional consultations and other activities during 1994 and aims to launch its final report in June 1995. The ODA is providing a grant of £150,000. This includes covering the costs of seconding an ODA population adviser to the commission secretariat for two years. The commission members are:

President Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo—Former Prime Minister, Portugal.

Montique-Begin—Dean of Health Sciences University of Ottawa, Canada. Former Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Ruth Cardoso—Professor and researcher in anthropology at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Karina Constantion-David—President of the coalition of 3,000 development NGOs in the Philippines (CODE-NGO) Manila. Former Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and Development.

Eleanor Holmes Norton—Congresswoman USA.

Bernard Kouchner—Founder and chairman of the Foundation for Humanitarian Action. Former Minister of Health and Humanitarian Affairs, France.

Ewa Letowska—Law professor, Polish Academy of Sciences. Former ombudsman Warsaw, Poland.

Hannan Mikhail—Ashrawi official spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation in the peace negotiations, Jerusalem.

Vina Mazumdar—National fellow of the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, New Delhi.

Taro Nakayama—Member of the House of Representatives, Tokyo, Japan. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Olusegun Obasanjo—Founder and chairman of the African Leadership Forum. Former Head of State of Nigeria.

Jan Pronk—Minister of Development Co-operation, Netherlands. Former Member of the Brandt Commission.

Augusto Ramirez Ocampo—Special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in El Salvador. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Colombia.

Pu Shan—President of the Chinese Society of World Economy, Beijing.

Juan Somavia—Ambassador of Chile to the United Nations, President of the United Nations, President of the United Nations ECOSOC.

Aminata Traore—Social science researcher. Formerly regional co-ordinator UNDP water resources initiative, Cote d'Ivoire. Former President of the Population Council, Mali.

Beate Weber—Mayor of Heidelberg, Germany. Former Member of the European Parliament.

Anders Wijkman—Director General of the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries (SAREC).

Alexander N. Yakovlev—Vice-president of the international fund for socio-economic and political research, Moscow.

Ex-Officio, *Pierre de Senarclens*, Executive Secretary of the Commission, professor of international relations, Lausanne university, Switzerland.

Family Planning

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions for 1994 are being made to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organisation Human Reproduction Programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Decisions on the 1994 contributions to these agencies will be made shortly. I will write to my hon. Friend once the agencies have been informed.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations have taken place with United Kingdom and other non-governmental organisations on constructing an EC policy on family planning projects in developing countries; and how many and which non-governmental organisations in the United Kingdom and in other member states have been consulted.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: ODA officials have participated in initial discussions with officials of the European Commission and other member states on the need for an effective consistent EC policy on reproductive health and family planning. The Government would welcome the views of United Kingdom non-governmental organisations once discussions start on substantive issues of policy and strategy.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the total bilateral disbursements on population activities, and to which countries, for 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: New bilateral commitments totalling £11·2 million were made to Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Malawi in 1993. The figures for bilateral disbursement in 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations have taken place with United Kingdom non-governmental organisations on the issues to be considered by the April 1994 third preparatory committee meeting for the international conference on population and development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the second preparatory committee meeting for this conference, there have been five meetings of the NGO forum convened to engage

United Kingdom NGOs in United Kingdom preparations for the conference and three workshops. The Government are, as a result, well informed of the views of United Kingdom non-governmental organisations on issues to be considered by the third preparatory committee meeting.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and which budget lines in the EC development budget are allocated for expenditure on population and family planning projects in developing countries; what was the budget allocation in 1991, 1992 and 1993 for population and family planning projects; and what is the projected budget for 1994.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: One EC budget line, B7-5050 "Financial assistance to family planning programmes in developing countries" is expecially devoted to financing of population projects. In addition, another budget line B7-5047 "Mother and Child Health" includes family planning. A number of other EC budget lines for co-operation with developing countries also finance family planning projects, but it is not possible to disaggregate spending from those lines.

The allocation—in million ecu—for budget line B7-5050 was 1.5 in 1991; 2 in 1992; and 4 in 1993. Five million ecu has been allocated in 1994.

TRANSPORT

MV Braer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the report of the marine accident investigation branch on the loss of the Braer will be published.

Mr. MacGregor: The report of the marine accident investigation branch's investigation into the loss of the Braer will be published tomorrow, 20 January. Copies of the report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The report of my Department's marine pollution control unit on the loss of the Braer and the lessons to be drawn from it, which has already been made available to Lord Donaldson's inquiry, will also be published tomorrow and copies of it, too, will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Bob Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what agreement has been reached with Eurotunnel concerning the extension by 10 years of the channel tunnel concession period.

Mr. Freeman: I have today placed copies of the agreement in the Library of the House.

Rail Freight

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether surplus BR freight assets will be made available to companies wishing to operate their own rail freight services.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's freight businesses will need to retain sufficient assets to enable them to operate safely, effectively and economically and to discharge their obligations to customers.

However, where assets are identified as surplus to operational requirements, these will be offered for sale by British Rail on a competitive basis. Companies or individuals interested in purchasing such assets should register their interest with British Rail's vendor unit.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much money his Department has set aside in its 1994-95 budget for making freight facilities grants under the Railways Act 1993; how much of this sum has been allocated to date; and who has been told to date that they will receive such grants;

(2) how much section 8 grant was paid to encourage the transport of freight by rail in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; how much it is estimated will be paid in 1993-94; and how much is budgeted for such grants in 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure on freight facilities grants under both section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 and section 36 of the Transport Act 1981 has been as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1990-91	3·500
1991-92	1·239
1992-93	1·718

As grant can be claimed only on receipted invoices submitted during the construction of the rail or inland waterway facilities, it is too early to estimate how much will be expended in 1993-94.

Under the Railways Act 1993 both the existing rail and inland waterway freight facilities grants will be considerably enhanced and a new track access grant for freight service operators introduced. All three measures will be effective from the commencement of the new fiscal year on 1 April 1994 and administered from a single budget which, in 1994-95, has been set at £13·3 million with a present estimate of £43 million over three years. As formal applications cannot be considered until after this date it is too early for my Department to award any grants under the new provisions and I am not in a position to say how the funds will be taken up. Any commitments falling in 1994-95 as a result of previous awards under section 8 of the 1974 act would be met from the new single budget but the amount due will be determined largely by the timing of claims.

Stratford International Station

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had on the case for Stratford international passenger station being developed; what work his Department has done on the transport implications of such a station for Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have received representations from the promoters of the station at Stratford, from Ipswich borough council and Norwich city council, and from a number of other organisations, individuals and hon. Members. The comparative analysis in Union Railways' October report includes forecasts of patronage at each prospective intermediate station on the rail link, taking into account likely origins and destinations and the results of detailed transport modelling. We are considering Union Railways' report, together with the representations received, and will announce our decisions shortly.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the route of the high-speed channel tunnel rail link and the stations to be built along the new line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend expects to make a statement in the next few weeks.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a condition will be imposed on companies obtaining franchises to run rail services to provide facilities for through ticketing with providers of other rail services.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a condition will be imposed on companies obtaining franchises to run rail services to collaborate with other providers of rail services to offer cheap fares at off-peak times.

Mr. Freeman: No. We expect franchise operators to offer discounted off-peak travel as British Rail does now, because it will be in their commercial interest to do so.

Newcastle Bypass

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the diagramatic representations of starting and end points for journeys based on road traffic surveys in respect of the Newcastle upon Tyne Cradlewell bypass scheme, set out in the same format as the published documentation contained in annex B of the Newcastle city council's case for the Newcastle western bypass scheme.

Mr. Key: The Cradlewell bypass is a local road scheme promoted by Newcastle city council from which the required information should be sought. The Newcastle western bypass was promoted by my Department as a trunk road proposal.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of the key assumptions underpinning the cost-benefit analysis for the Newcastle upon Tyne Cradlewell bypass scheme;

(2) what assessment he has made of the conformity with his Department's guidelines of the cost-benefit analysis for the Newcastle upon Tyne Cradlewell bypass scheme prepared by Newcastle upon Tyne city council.

Mr. Key: It is not practicable to organise a comprehensive check on the background information supporting every application for transport supplementary grant—TSG. The standard of the Cradlewell bypass submission was within the normal parameters for schemes of this type. The system relies on good practice by local highway authorities. The Department operates a series of scheme audits by independent consultants. It will eventually look into all aspects of TSG submissions, including the reliability of cost and other information and whether the forecast scheme benefits have been realised. This is done on the basis of a sample cross section of schemes. Any significant shortcomings that this initiative throws up will be addressed by refining the control the Department applies, and the advice it offers.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the key assumptions underpinning the cost-benefit analysis for the Newcastle upon Tyne Cradlewell bypass scheme;

(2) if he will place a copy of the cost-benefit analysis for the Newcastle upon Tyne Cradlewell bypass scheme in the Library; and if he will provide the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East with a copy.

Mr. Key: This information is held by Newcastle city council as the scheme promoter.

Bypass Guidelines

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines are given by his Department to local authorities in respect of the publication of the cost-benefit analysis for bypass schemes.

Mr. Key: The Department gives no guidance to local authorities about the publication of cost-benefit analysis on any of their road improvement schemes. This is a matter to be decided by the authorities themselves. There is no requirement for authorities to publish any background information to their schemes outside the statutory framework of current legislation.

The annual transport policies and programme submissions which the Department invites authorities to make are available to the public. They contain considerable detail about each major scheme for which the authority seeks transport supplementary grant—TSG. The Department specifies the information it needs to assess applications for TSG in an annual circular issued both to local highway authorities and to district councils that do not have that status. The circular is on sale to the public. The latest edition is local authority circular 2/93, issued on 29 April 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines are given by his Department to local authorities when preparing cost-benefit analysis for bypass schemes.

Mr. Key: All local highway authorities are expected to familiarise themselves with the Department's cost-benefit analysis—COBA—system. They are advised in annex B to the annual transport policy and programme—TPP—circular to consult the COBA user manual. There is no specific advice on the application of COBA to bypasses.

Medway Bridge

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what statutory power a rail and road bridge over the Medway could be planned and constructed currently.

Mr. Freeman: Parallel bridges over the Medway are being planned for the M2 widening scheme and the channel tunnel rail link; the bridges can be built sequentially or at the same time. It is possible to provide for both approaches either through joint approval in a hybrid Bill, or with separate approval of the road scheme under Highways Act order procedures.

A1(M)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to delay any current or further plans for the expansion of the A1(M) in Hertfordshire and conduct an assessment of road schemes on an equal basis with other modes of transport.

Mr. Key: Our aim is to achieve a balance between the various modes of transport so that each can make its proper contribution to a safer, more environmentally friendly and more efficient transport system. We therefore seek to ensure, for example, that road and rail projects are assessed on a consistent basis using, where relevant, a common set of assumptions about the value people attach to improvements in their journey times.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's strategy, planned timetable and traffic forecasts for widening the A1(M) from junctions 6 to 8 to four lanes in each direction and the future of the section from junctions 4 to 6; and what assessment has been made of whether the proposed expansion of junctions is necessary to facilitate connections with the planned east-west route.

Mr. Key: The priority of the schemes to widen the A1(M) in Hertfordshire is being considered in the current review of the road programme and the timetables for widening will reflect the outcome of the review. Our proposals for the section between junctions 6 and 8 were the subject of public consultation in October last year. They are designed to cater for traffic flows in 2012 ranging from 85,000 to 115,000 vehicles per day. The junction arrangements which were shown are not dependent on the proposed east-west route but account has been taken of possible options for it. Responses to the consultation are being considered.

Aircraft Movements

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of annual aircraft movements that take place over the east London area including the boroughs of Redbridge, Newham, Barking and Dagenham and Havering.

Mr. Norris: No such estimates are made by my Department, nor by any other body as far as I am aware.

Metropolitan Trunk Roads

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much transport support grant was allocated for expenditure on metropolitan trunk roads for each year since 1979 for use by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* the former Greater London council until its abolition.

Mr. Key: Local authorities are not allocated TSG for national trunk roads, whether or not in metropolitan areas.

Coaches

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will allow the running of coaches to a weight limit of 18 tonnes while retaining the existing rear axle load; what maximum tyre load is permitted where the front axle tyres fitted are standard 156 rate; and what assessment he has made of the extent to which that effective load distribution is ensured in those circumstances.

Mr. Key: No. The maximum load for a tyre with load index 156 is four tonnes. Correct load distribution, which is critical to ensure axles are not overloaded, is largely determined at the initial design of the vehicle when axle weight limits are set by the manufacturer in compliance with legislation. These weights are enforced by the vehicle inspectorate at weighbridge and other checks.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the possibility of allowing coaches with a weight limit of 18 tonnes to use a limited network of trunk roads and motorways where the strengthening of bridges is not required.

Mr. Key: I have considered the possibility of permitting certain operations, including motorway coaches, to be allowed higher weights. Until the bridge assessment programmes currently being carried out by my Department and local authorities are completed there remains the problem of feeder roads to motorways. Few journeys can be completed entirely on motorways and it is difficult to envisage how a scheme for higher weights on motorways alone could be effectively enforced to protect potentially vulnerable roads.

Thames Transport

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times the working party exploring the Thames transport potential has met; what reports it has published; and if he will name its current members.

Mr. Norris: The River Thames working group which I chair has met twice. It is currently analysing the substantial number of responses received from a wide-ranging consultation exercise and expects to produce a report of its findings and recommendations in the summer.

The current members of the group are David Bayliss, director of planning, London Transport; David Jeffery, chief executive, Port of London authority; Eric Sorensen, chief executive London Docklands development corporation; and Robin Clement, deputy chief planner, London Planning Advisory Council. Dick Barker represented London First until recently; I hope to make an announcement shortly about his successor. Officials from the Departments of Transport and of the Environment also attend.

Inner City Transport Investment

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to publish the study carried out by Dr. Margaret Grieco of Oxford university on the impact of transport investment on the inner-city economy.

Mr. Freeman: None. I understand that the author is making her own arrangements for the report to be published.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments his Department has carried out into the costs of highway maintenance attributable to use by heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Key: Heavy vehicles using the trunk road network are continually monitored in order to evaluate the wear and tear on the roads. The need for maintenance results primarily from traffic wear and tear although other aspects such as climatic effects and aging of road materials have an influence.

The vast majority of road wear and tear is caused by vehicles over 15kN unladen vehicle weight such as heavy goods vehicles—HGVs—and buses—PSVs. No precise breakdown of the cost of heavy goods vehicle related

maintenance is readily available but in 1993-94, of the £700 million that we expect to spend on maintaining the trunk road network, less than half is attributable to traffic wear.

A6(M) Stockport Bypass

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the line of route of the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass.

Mr. Key: Although the line is fixed, revised proposals were published in November 1991 to take account of the forecast of increased traffic and changes recommended by the inspector in his report of the 1987-88 inquiry. In February 1992 a draft compulsory purchase order was published. The revised proposals included a modification of the junction with the A6(M) and the A627 Offerton road which has provoked substantial opposition from the local authority and local residents.

As a result, we have reviewed our proposals in this area resulting in further changes. The draft orders will need to be withdrawn and fresh ones published. Our review is almost complete and we expect to publish the fresh orders this summer.

Excessive Loads

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to prevent commercial vehicles entering England with excessive loads.

Mr. Key: Enforcement against overloading of commercial vehicles will continue to be undertaken at ports, with the agreement of port authorities, and at other inland sites within the vicinity of ports. Where driver self-weigh equipment is available operators and drivers are encouraged to use the facility to check-weigh and to help avoid vehicles leaving ports in an overloaded condition.

International goods vehicle traffic will also continue to be routinely checked at inland enforcement sites. Arrangements are currently being negotiated with Eurotunnel for checking channel tunnel traffic prior to leaving France.

British Rail

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the targets and performance against targets in respect of *(a)* punctuality and *(b)* reliability of each of the divisions of British Rail serving the (i) South Yorkshire, (ii) Humberside, (iii) North Yorkshire and (iv) West Yorkshire areas in each month from January 1992.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows. British Rail performance data are published on a four-weekly, rather than a calendar month, basis. The following tables run from period 11 of the 1991-92 financial year—commencing 29 December 1991—to period 10 of the 1993-94 financial year ending 1 January 1994.

British Rail punctuality
(Yorkshire and Humberside area)

	Four-week periods												
	1991-92			1992-93									
Service group	*11*	*12*	*13*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
TransPennine Express	90	94	96	93	87	89	91	94	92	92	89	88	91
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Long)	n/a	n/a	n/a	95	92	84	87	91	91	90	88	84	83
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Short)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Yorkshire (Long)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Yorkshire (Short)	91	94	93	96	93	95	94	95	94	93	90	91	92
InterCity Cross Country	82	86	86	86	78	80	82	83	85	83	73	77	79
InterCity East Coast Main Line	82	86	87	84	90	84	91	89	91	88	86	87	85

Notes:

1. The passengers charter target for punctuality has been set at 90 per cent. throughout the period for all regional railways and InterCity routes.
2. Some early figures are unavailable because of changes in route definitions.
3. Punctuality results are rounded to the nearest whole number.

British Rail punctuality
(Yorkshire and Humberside area)

	Four-week periods												
	1992-93			1993-94									
Service group	*11*	*12*	*13*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
TransPennine Express	93	93	92	90	89	87	90	87	93	91	81	83	86
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Long)	91	93	89	91	95	92	89	91	94	92	89	90	91
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Short)	91	91	87	87	89	92	86	85	85	80	82	82	90
West Yorkshire (Long)	96	95	95	95	95	94	95	94	95	95	85	89	91
West Yorkshire (Short)	92	91	92	93	90	89	91	91	93	90	81	85	89
InterCity Cross Country	80	87	83	84	84	84	87	89	87	86	84	86	81
InterCity East Coast Main Line	82	89	91	89	89	92	94	92	92	92	87	70	83

British Rail reliability
(Yorkshire and Humberside area)

Service group	Four-week periods 1991-92 11	12	13	1992-93 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
TransPennine Express	98·6	98·8	99·3	97·9	98·2	98·6	99·1	99·7	98·7	99·4	99·5	99·0	98·7
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Long)	n/a	n/a	n/a	98·5	98·4	97·7	98·7	98·6	99·1	98·5	98·3	98·0	99·3
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Short)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Yorkshire (Long)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Yorkshire (Short)	99·0	99·6	99·6	98·7	99·8	99·5	99·6	99·5	99·5	99·7	99·6	99·5	99·5
InterCity Cross Country	99·6	99·6	99·2	99·6	99·5	99·4	99·5	99·5	99·6	99·8	99·3	98·7	99·5
InterCity East Coast Main Line	98·5	98·8	99·0	99·3	99·5	97·8	99·3	99·5	98·2	99·5	98·6	98·5	98·6

Note: The passengers charter target for reliability has been set at 99 per cent. throughout the period for all InterCity and regional railways routes.

British Rail reliability
(Yorkshire and Humberside area)

Service group	Four-week periods 1992-93 11	12	13	1993-94 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
TransPennine Express	99·0	99·0	99·3	98·8	98·7	97·2	98·3	97·1	98·9	98·0	98·3	95·8	96·9
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Long)	99·1	99·4	99·0	98·6	99·1	98·4	97·0	98·3	98·8	93·2	98·1	97·3	98·7
South Yorkshire/Humberside (Short)	99·5	99·6	99·7	99·2	99·9	99·2	98·3	98·6	97·8	98·8	98·9	98·2	98·9
West Yorkshire (Long)	98·6	99·6	98·9	99·9	99·6	98·8	98·5	98·7	99·7	99·1	96·7	95·7	97·4
West Yorkshire (Short)	98·8	99·1	99·0	99·1	98·2	99·5	99·4	99·2	99·4	99·1	98·0	96·1	96·7
InterCity Cross Country	99·2	99·8	99·2	99·3	98·2	99·7	99·7	99·7	99·7	99·4	99·5	99·8	99·0
InterCity East Coast Main Line	97·5	99·2	99·2	99·1	99·4	99·3	99·6	99·0	99·0	99·4	99·6	97·4	95·2

Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) in which programmes and events for the European year of older people and solidarity between Generations he has been directly involved;

(2) what contribution his Department made to the European year of older people and solidarity between generations in terms of financial support, practical support for particular events and the provision of information.

Mr. Norris: The Department has a continuing programme of initiatives to improve services, facilities and information for older people as pedestrians, public transport users and motorists. These initiatives were promoted by the Department at national and local events throughout the year.

During 1993 the Department published an information leaflet aimed at older drivers with practical advice on continuing to drive safely. Two million copies were distributed with the help of the Saga group and through doctors' surgeries. A "stuffer" leaflet on the same topic was also distributed to 30 million car owners with their vehicle excise duty reminders.

In addition, the Department continued to promote, through research, guidelines and advice to local authorities, operators and individuals, the needs of older people for improved bus design and access to bus services and the safety of older pedestrians.

Motor Cycling

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the method of enforcement will be for the proposed stage II noise limits of motor cycles.

Mr. Key: There will be two aspects to the enforcement of the stage II noise limits. In the case of new motor cycles, the manufacturer will have to seek and obtain a valid type approval certificate to the noise directive prior to sale and registration. The date of mandatory application of these limits has yet to be agreed by the EC Council of Ministers.

As far as in-use enforcement is concerned, on 10 January I made regulations which require that both original and replacement silencers for motor cycles be marked as complying with a relevant EC directive or—for replacement silencers—an equivalent British standard. I am also now drawing up regulations to control the supply of replacement silencers at point of sale.

Heavy Vehicles

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many bridges on the trunk road system are not capable of supporting a gross vehicle weight of 18 tonnes;

(2) how many bridges on the motorway system are not capable of supporting a gross vehicle weight of 18 tonnes.

Mr. Key: Our records show that there are three underbridges on motorways and 65 underbridges on all purpose trunk roads in England in which parts of the structure have been assessed as having inadequate capacities for carrying vehicles of 18 tonnes gross weight with the required margins of safety.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Norris: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the

information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report".

Airport Security

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has received from the communications and transport deregulation task force to justify its statement on the cost and cost-effectiveness of airport security.

Mr. Norris: The statement to which the hon. Member refers is in his recent report "Deregulating Disaster". He quotes an early draft by the task force which suggested that the Department approaches airport security with an "overly belt and braces approach at huge cost to industry".

In its final report, to be published shortly, the task force recommend that security measures must be commensurable with the level of threat and that the aviation industry should be fully consulted in the measures adopted. We accept this view.

A590

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has, and over what time scale, for improvements to the A590 road between the M6 and Barrow.

Mr. Key: The Secretary of State announced last August a review of the road programme to establish more clearly defined priorities within it. The review is now in progress and the aim is to announce the conclusions in time for the launch of the Highways Agency in April.

The timing of any schemes in the programme for improvements to the A590 between the M6 and Barrow is dependent on the outcome of this review.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Norris: This information is not held centrally and could be given only at disproportionate cost.

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each scheme operated by his Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Norris: There are three loans outstanding on the votes of my Department. They are:

Humber bridge—built under provision of the Humber Bridge Act 1959, as amended. As at the 30 September 1993, the total debt outstanding is £359,307,192.

Second Mersey tunnel—built under provision of the Mersey Tunnel Act 1965, as amended. As at 30 September 1993, the total debt outstanding is £24,388,785.

Tyne tunnel—built under provision of the Tyne Tunnel Act 1964, as amended. As at 30 September 1993, the total debt outstanding is £13,162,996.

Payments against these loans are made regularly in two instalments each year. The administrative costs of such payments are less than £300 per year.

My Department also makes loans to staff under their terms and conditions of service. These include loans covering the cost of season tickets, and assistance with house purchase where staff are moved under compulsory terms.

M62 Relief Road

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations have been received from the Bury, South constituency against the proposed M62 relief road.

Mr. Key: So far, some 2,500 representations have been received from Bury, South, from a total in excess of 5,000. These figures include an element of duplication.

Vehicle Reverse Alarms

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he has plans to review the present 2,000 kg weight limit below which reversing alarms may not be fitted unless that vehicle is a bus, a works truck or engineering plant;

(2) how many representations he has received concerning regulation 99 of the Vehicle Construction and Use Regulations 1985 in respect of vehicle reverse alarms; and if he will provide a statement on the future of this provision.

Mr. Key: During 1992 and 1993, 15 letters were received on this subject. Eight of these were requests for information or from those with a commercial interest, two were complaints about noise nuisance and the rest questioned whether the provision should not be made compulsory and/or extended to other categories of vehicles.

I shall be reviewing this matter when I come to consider certain other amendments to the Construction and Use Regulations on vehicle noise.

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria were used in arriving at the 2,000 kg weight limit below which a vehicle reversing alarm may not be fitted unless it is a bus, a works truck or engineering plant.

Mr. Key: Reversing alarms are permitted to be used as an aid to safety on those vehicles where we consider the driver's vision might be obscured by the shape or size of the vehicle. The prime responsibility for ensuring that reversing is carried out safely rests, however, with the driver; and he or she should follow the advice of the highway code.

Minibuses and Coaches (Safety)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the British Government's current position on the statutory introduction of passenger seat belts on coaches manufactured within the European Union;

(2) what progress he has made in asking the other members of the European Union to introduce the statutory

installation of passenger seat belts on coaches manufactured within the European Union; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received on improving the safety of passengers travelling on minibuses or coaches; what the Government's current position is on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have been discussing with the European Commission for some years the desirability of amending the directives which deal with the fitting of seat belts in coaches. To date, however, there has not been the support necessary from EC member states for the Commission to make seat belt fitment on all seats a mandatory requirement.

We have received a great number of representations from a wide range of organisations and individuals, making various suggestions which they feel would improve the safety of minibus and coach travel.

We are currently reviewing the full technical and cost implications of seat belts in coaches. Until this review is complete and we have full reports on the tragic accidents which happened last year, it would not be wise to consider making further regulations in this area.

St. Avon

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take to seek to ensure that the circumstances leading to the incident in which St. Avon ran aground at Browndown, Gosport on 21 July 1993 do not recur.

Mr. Norris: Following consideration of the grounding of the steam tanker Avon and other accidents, advice on preventive measures has been drafted and will be issued shortly in the form of a merchant shipping notice.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all statements made by Ministers in his Department, and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible start and/or completion date for refurbishment of the west coast main line, the date on which each such statement was made, and the possible start and/or completion date which was mentioned.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* On 1 December 1993, my right hon. Friend announced the Government's decision that the modernisation of the west coast main line would be taken forward as a privately financed project. Railtrack would invite expressions of interest from the private sector to work with it in devising new performance standards for the route. At the same time, he announced plans for a competition in late 1994 to select a private sector consortium to modernise the line and maintain it for a defined period.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each report of the marine accident investigation branch concluded in 1993; and which of those were published.

Mr. Norris: Investigations carried out by the marine accident investigation branch, and reports published on its behalf by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, are listed in the summary of investigations which is produced three times a year. A copy of each summary is placed in the Library.

Crossrail

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all statements made by Ministers in his Department, and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible completion date for the crossrail project, the dates on which each such statement was made and the possible completion date which was mentioned.

Mr. Norris: The then Secretary of State wrote to the chairmen of British Rail and London Transport on 9 October 1990 about crossrail and the Chelsea-Hackney line. The associated press notice said that crossrail was expected to open in 1999.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all statements made by Ministers in his Department, and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible completion date for the channel tunnel rail link, the dates on which each such statement was made, and the possible completion date which was mentioned.

Mr. Freeman: The list is as follows:

18 May 1990

The Minister for Public Transport, in debate on private Members' motion, at column 1179

"I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who sought to put this debate in the context of the channel tunnel opening in three years' time and a rail link being a decade away, even with the fastest possible agreement on the route, and its design and structure."

9 October 1991

Press Notice—from text of a letter by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinbugh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) to Sir Bob Reid

"Inevitably, the start of a construction of the rail link is some way ahead. On present forecasts, existing capacity is not expected to be exhausted until around 2005. It means account can be taken of demand for rail services through the Channel Tunnel once it opens. This will help to give a more precise view of when the extra capacity of the new line might be needed."

14 October 1991

Statement by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands, at columns 25-26

"Inevitably, the start of construction is still some way ahead; but so is the need for the line. BR's own forecasts are that the capacity of the existing network is expected to be sufficient to meet the demand until around 2005. It will be possible to take account of the actual demand for rail services through the Channel Tunnel, once it opens. Overall, the choice of the eastern route rather than the southern route will not have any material effect on when the new line might come into operation. Suggestions that a decision has been taken not to begin construction before 2000 are incorrect. No such decision has been taken."

22 March 1993

Statement by Secretary of State for Transport, at column 611

"Provided that we press ahead quickly, it should be possible for the railway to be completed by around the turn of the decade."

23 November 1993

PQ by hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims)

Q: "To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he now expects construction of the Channel Tunnel Fast Link to commence."

A: "Construction is expected to begin shortly after the enactment of a hybrid Bill, which the Government aim to have ready by autumn 1994; the Bill's introduction will depend upon the parliamentary timetable and the private sector's views."

Deregulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of all organisations with which his Department has held meetings regarding the deregulation initiative as it affects his Department, together with the dates on which such meetings were held and the persons present.

Mr. Norris: It would not be possible to publish such a list. The Department holds a large number of meetings about legislation with a wide range of people. Deregulation is a central plank of the Government's legislation policy. It is a consideration in all meetings about legislation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish a list of all material sent to his Department by the communications and transport deregulation task force, together with the dates on which such material was received by his Department;

(2) if he will publish a list of all meetings held between Ministers or officials in his Department and the communications and transport deregulation task force, the dates on which each meeting took place and those who attended each meeting.

Mr. Norris: The Department has had a large number of dealings, both oral and written, with the task force. The task force's recommendations, along with those of all the other task forces, will be published shortly.

Roads

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of all potential DBFO-design build finance and operate—road projects which have been identified by his Department; and when construction of each project is planned to begin.

Mr. Key: We shall announce the first DBFO schemes as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all organisations with which Ministers or officials have held meetings to identify potential DBFO road projects, the dates on which each meeting took place; and what future meetings are planned.

Mr. Key: We have held a number of meetings with construction companies and others to help to identify potential DBFO schemes. The meetings have been conducted on a confidential basis.

Airport Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to act on the conclusions of the air accident investigation branch that airport safety is threatened by confusion between his Department, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Health and Safety Executive over responsibility for vehicle safety and staff safety training;

(2) what action he is taking to ensure that a mechanism is in place at every airport to take immediate action on staff complaints about serviceable vehicles; and that vehicles used at airports are checked regularly for roadworthiness and have appropriate vehicle test certificates;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that all staff at airports have proper safety training;

(4) what response he has made to the report of the air accident investigations branch published on 7 January on the fatal accident affecting a member of the ground staff at Edinburgh airport, and what action he is taking to ensure that its recommendations are implemented at every airport without delay.

Mr. Norris: These questions relate to a tragic accident at Edinburgh airport on 11 March 1993 in which a tractor driver was killed by the propeller of a stationary aircraft. The air accidents investigation branch has made safety recommendations to the CAA, BAA plc and the Airport Operators Association—AOA. Appropriate action has been taken, or is in hand, by those organisations.

The CAA initiated an aerodrome apron safety management working group with members drawn from BAA, AOA, the British Air Transport Association and the British Airline Pilots Association, with the following terms of reference:

i. To determine the best practice in safety management and procedures and their application in apron safety management.

ii. To establish model safety management standards and procedures from which airport operators can prepare the systems and procedures for their airports.

iii. To determine the most appropriate measures to effect audit control over the safety management systems and procedures at airport.

The working group is meeting on a monthly basis to expedite its progress. The CAA is also in active discussion with the Health and Safety Executive.

BAA plc advises me that it has remedies in place or in progress relating to the detailed points emerging from this accident and these will apply equally to all its airports. It took action where possible at the earliest moment. The AOA has already brought these matters to the attention of its members.

M2 Widening

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the increase in the cost of widening the M2 between junctions 1 and 4; and if he will reconsider the proposal and the necessity for the project.

Mr. Key: Since the scheme for widening the M2 between junctions 1 and 4 entered the roads programme, the cost has increased from £43 million to £156 million. This increase has been mainly due to an increase in standard from dual three lanes to dual four lanes over most of the length, the addition of a second Medway bridge, strengthening of the existing bridge, major remodelling at

junctions 2 and 3, and further structures. The scheme has also been extended 1·5 km to the west of junction 1 to include a short length of the A2.

The M2 widening scheme is part of the current road programme review.

EDUCATION

Pupil Costs

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost per pupil at *(a)* Nun Monkton school near York and *(b)* Green Hammerton school.

Mr. Forth: For the financial year 1993-94, the budget shares allocated to Nun Monkton Church of England primary school and Green Hammerton Church of England primary school under North Yorkshire local education authority's scheme for the local management of schools amounted to £3,446 per pupil and £1,779 per pupil respectively.

Primary Education

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list local education authorities in order of spending per primary pupil with the actual amount spent per pupil for the last available year; and what spending per primary pupil represented as a percentage of spending per secondary pupil in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table for 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available.

Cost per pupil 1991-92

	Nursery and Primary £	*Percentage of spending on secondary pupils*
City of Westminster	2,902	89·5
Corporation of London	2,609	n/a
Islington	2,328	79·2
Kensington and Chelsea	2,287	71·5
Tower Hamlets	2,253	76·5
Wandsworth	2,212	67·5
Hackney	2,176	77·7
Lambeth	2,083	70·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	2,047	74·7
Camden	1,943	79·9
Haringey	1,927	72·7
Isles of Scilly	1,849	44·4
Greenwich	1,830	79·7
Southwark	1,828	74·3
Ealing	1,754	61·9
Richmond upon Thames	1,738	82·2
Merton	1,723	65·7
Lewisham	1,717	72·3
Barnet	1,674	72·0
Newham	1,671	67·7
Brent	1,670	67·0
Harrow	1,661	70·0
Hillingdon	1,661	63·3
Bradford	1,652	92·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,646	79·7
Leeds	1,642	83·0
Enfield	1,636	70·5
Oxfordshire	1,635	77·6
Waltham Forest	1,625	62·0
Nottinghamshire	1,625	65·2
Croydon	1,593	67·1
Oldham	1,582	70·0
Calderdale	1,570	78·1
Hounslow	1,567	72·5
Gateshead	1,562	73·8
Wolverhampton	1,554	66·0
Barking	1,550	68·8
Kingston upon Thames	1,543	62·4
Sandwell	1,540	67·6
Lancashire	1,535	69·0
Bedfordshire	1,511	74·2
Berkshire	1,506	69·8
Leicestershire	1,498	66·5
Shropshire	1,497	63·7
Wakefield	1,494	70·7
Redbridge	1,489	64·5
Isle of Wight	1,488	76·9
Hertfordshire	1,482	66·3
Northumberland	1,477	75·2
Sheffield	1,476	67·7
Hereford and Worcester	1,473	75·1
Norfolk	1,465	69·2
Rotherham	1,465	68·1
Cumbria	1,460	67·1
Surrey	1,460	66·3
Hampshire	1,457	68·4
Derbyshire	1,452	66·0
Bromley	1,443	59·1
North Yorkshire	1,442	67·0
Sutton	1,437	66·5
South Tyneside	1,435	70·3
Avon	1,435	70·1
Knowsley	1,432	62·3
Sunderland	1,427	69·7
Gloucestershire	1,425	81·1
Kirklees	1,423	69·2
Humberside	1,422	68·9
East Sussex	1,421	70·4
Manchester	1,421	62·2
Tameside	1,419	67·6
Cambridgeshire	1,417	70·0
Dudley	1,411	66·3
Dorset	1,410	73·4
Wiltshire	1,408	72·3
Cornwall	1,403	71·7
North Tyneside	1,402	67·6
Walsall	1,400	66·4
Staffordshire	1,397	68·3
Havering	1,396	61·9
Devon	1,394	69·6
Durham	1,386	68·6
Liverpool	1,386	58·8
Bolton	1,380	64·8
Barnsley	1,374	67·3
Bexley	1,371	66·6
Birmingham	1,370	63·7
Cheshire	1,364	64·7
Buckinghamshire	1,358	64·8
Northamptonshire	1,355	68·8
Solihull	1,352	63·6
Somerset	1,349	69·1
Lincolnshire	1,348	64·8
St. Helens	1,341	63·7
Warwickshire	1,338	64·0
West Sussex	1,338	64·2
Wirral	1,325	62·7
Doncaster	1,323	66·2
Stockport	1,319	61·8
Sefton	1,313	65·1
Rochdale	1,310	61·4
Bury	1,302	68·6
Coventry	1,300	61·4
Salford	1,299	59·3
Trafford	1,281	60·8
Cleveland	1,271	60·2
Kent	1,263	60·9
Essex	1,261	55·5
Wigan	1,257	54·9
Suffolk	1,250	73·6

Notes to the table:

1. Figures are in outturn prices and are derived from local education authorities' returns of their net institutional expenditure to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department of Education.

2. Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure. Figures include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.

3. "N/A" indicates not applicable; Corporation of London LEA has no secondary schools.

Mr. Tim Brighouse

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assistance is being given from public funds or by involvement of Government personnel to him in his defence against the legal action launched by Mr. Tim Brighouse in relation to remarks made by him about Mr. Brighouse in October 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: This is being treated as a personal, not a Government, matter.

Higher Education (Drop-out Rate)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research has been commissioned by his Department on the drop-out rate from higher education both before and after the introduction of student loans; and what account this research takes of drop-out rates in different socio-economic groups, and parental income brackets.

Mr. Boswell: Higher education drop-out rates are published in the Department's annual report. Table 26 in the last report—Cm 2210—showed that drop-out rates have remained broadly steady over the period from 1982-83 to 1990-91. The figure for 1991-92 is 17 per cent.

Information about the socio-economic group or parental income bracket of students who drop out is not collected centrally. No specific research has been commissioned on drop-out rates before and after the introduction of student loans.

Grant-maintained Schools

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in which local education authority areas grant-maintained schools now educate *(a)* more than 10 per cent. but less than 75 per cent. of primary or secondary pupils, *(b)* more than 75 per cent. of primary or secondary pupils and *(c)* less than 10 per cent. of primary or secondary pupils; and if he will give the current percentage figures for each area.

Mr. Robin Squire: The estimated proportions of maintained school pupils attending self-governing—grant-maintained—schools in each local education authority area in January 1994 are as follows.

Table A

Percentage of primary pupils in self-governing schools by local education authority area

	Per cent.
i. 10 per cent. to 74 per cent.	
Essex	11·6
Hillingdon	13·3
Lincolnshire	11·4
ii. Less than 10 per cent.	
Avon	0·0
Barking	0·0
Barnet	3·3
Barnsley	0·0
Bedfordshire	1·5
Berkshire	3·7
Bexley	2·4
Birmingham	0·4
Bolton	1·3
Bradford	0·5
Brent	2·2
Bromley	4·6
Buckinghamshire	3·5
Bury	1·3
Calderdale	0·4
Cambrideshire	3·3
Camden	0·0
Cheshire	0·5
Cleveland	0·0
Cornwall	0·0
Corporation of London	0·0
Coventry	0·0
Croydon	3·2
Cumbria	3·8
Derbyshire	2·0
Devon	0·4
Doncaster	0·0
Dorset	0·9
Dudley	1·4
Durham	0·0
Ealing	4·4
East Sussex	0·0
Enfield	0·6
Gateshead	0·0
Gloucestershire	3·2
Greenwich	0·0
Hackney	0·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·0
Hampshire	3·0
Haringey	0·0
Harrow	0·0
Havering	0·0
Hereford and Worcester	0·0
Hertfordshire	1·0
Hounslow	0·0
Humberside	0·3
Isle of Wight	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0·0
Islington	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	5·2
Kent	3·3
Kingston-upon-Thames	1·8
Kirklees	0·0
Knowsley	0·0
Lambeth	6·6
Lancashire	0·2
Leeds	0·1
Leicestershire	0·0
Lewisham	1·8
Liverpool	0·0
Manchester	0·0
Merton	0·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·0
Newham	0·0
Norfolk	4·0
North Tyneside	0·0
North Yorkshire	0·0
Northamptonshire	6·1
Northumberland	0·0
Nottinghamshire	0·0
Oldham	0·0
Oxfordshire	0·2
Redbridge	0·0
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·0
Rochdale	4·0

	Per cent.
Rotherham	0·0
Salford	0·0
Sandwell	0·0
Sefton	0·0
Sheffield	1·2
Shropshire	0·9
Solihull	2·3
Somerset	0·7
South Tyneside	0·0
Southwark	5·2
St. Helens	0·0
Staffordshire	0·0
Stockport	0·0
Suffolk	0·0
Sunderland	0·0
Surrey	2·4
Sutton	6·2
Tameside	0·0
Tower Hamlets	0·0
Trafford	0·0
Wakefield	0·0
Walsall	2·0
Waltham Forest	0·0
Wandsworth	3·0
Warwickshire	0·0
West Sussex	0·0
Westminster	0·0
Wigan	0·0
Wiltshire	3·3
Wirral	0·0
Wolverhampton	0·0

Table B
Percentage of secondary pupils in self-governing schools by local education authority area

	Percentage
i.	*75 per cent. and above*
Hillingdon	83·6
ii.	*10 per cent. to 74 per cent.*
Barnet	48·6
Bedfordshire	19·6
Berkshire	16·0
Bexley	19·6
Birmingham	21·8
Bolton	16·6
Bradford	11·1
Brent	65·8
Bromley	63·4
Buckinghamshire	25·3
Calderdale	34·1
Cambridgeshire	37·5
Camden	22·3
Croydon	25·5
Cumbria	26·0
Derbyshire	26·8
Dorset	21·8
Dudley	25·4
Ealing	44·6
Enfield	32·1
Essex	63·6
Gloucestershire	60·8
Hammersmith and Fulham	20·6
Hampshire	19·2
Havering	25·7
Hertfordshire	26·6
Hounslow	15·0
Kensington and Chelsea	19·6
Kent	45·6
Kingston-upon-Thames	37·6
Lambeth	53·0
Lincolnshire	44·2
Norfolk	21·4
Northamptonshire	20·7
Shropshire	14·3
Southwark	30·3
Surrey	25·5
Sutton	59·6
Tameside	18·1
Trafford	25·4
Walsall	29·0
Waltham Forest	17·3
Wandsworth	72·8
Warwickshire	16·6
Wiltshire	32·4
Wolverhampton	14·9
iii.	*Less than 10 per cent.*
Avon	2·9
Barking	0·0
Barnsley	0·0
Bury	0·0
Cheshire	3·8
Cleveland	0·0
Cornwall	0·0
Corporation of London	0·0
Coventry	0·0
Devon	8·0
Doncaster	0·0
Durham	0·0
East Sussex	0·0
Gateshead	0·0
Greenwich	0·0
Hackney	0·0
Haringey	0·0
Harrow	6·1
Hereford and Worcester	7·6
Humberside	0·0
Isle of Wight	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0·0
Islington	0·0
Kirklees	5·1
Knowsley	8·0
Lancashire	8·0
Leeds	2·6
Leicestershire	5·5
Lewisham	0·0
Liverpool	7·6
Manchester	0·0
Merton	0·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·0
Newham	4·1
North Tyneside	0·0
North Yorkshire	0·0
Northumberland	2·2
Nottinghamshire	2·9
Oldham	0·0
Oxfordshire	0·0
Redbridge	7·4
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·0
Rochdale	8·3
Rotherham	0·0
Salford	3·6
Sandwell	3·7
Sefton	0·0
Sheffield	7·1
Solihull	0·0
Somerset	1·4
South Tyneside	0·0
St. Helens	0·0
Staffordshire	6·3
Stockport	0·0
Suffolk	0·0
Sunderland	0·0
Tower Hamlets	7·8
Wakefield	0·0
West Sussex	0·0
Westminster	0·0
Wigan	0·0
Wirral	9·8

Footnotes to tables:

1. The percentages in the tables are based on provisional data derived

from the DFE's January 1993 schools census.
2. The self-governing schools included in these calculations are those operating by 5 January 1994.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what materials have been distributed to schools during the last year to promote grant-maintained status; and what is the cost of the preparation, production and distribution of this material.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has not distributed any materials promoting grant-maintained status. It does, however, provide booklets containing factual information to help parents and governors make informed decisions about whether grant-maintained status is right for their schools and to tell them how to acquire it. A total of 2·9 million such booklets have been distributed over the last five years, mainly to schools. Expenditure on these in the first nine months of this financial year included £164,000 for production and £8,000 for their distribution. The identification of all preparation costs would entail disproportionate expense.

FE College Corporations

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will introduce a compulsory register of members' interests for members of the governing bodies of further education college corporations.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend sees no need for such a register. The instruments of government for further education corporations provide that, except with the approval in writing of the Secretary of State, no member shall take or hold any interest in any property held or used for the purposes of the institution. Further, a member who has any financial interest in the supply of work or goods for the institution, any contract or proposed contract concerning the institution, or any other matter relating to the institution, and is present at the meeting of the governing body at which such a matter is to be considered, is required to disclose his or her interest and is precluded from taking part in the discussion or vote on the matter.

Examination Papers (Access)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to allow parents and schools access to marked external examination papers on written request.

Mr. Robin Squire: The GCE and GCSE examination bodies are independent of Government. It is for them to decide whether to alow external access to marked examination papers. Where candidates are dissatisfied with their results they may appeal through their school or college to the relevant examination body and, if necessary, to the Independent Appeals Authority for School Examinations.

Outdoor Activity Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his Department's estimate of the number of commercial outdoor activity centres currently operating in England and Wales.

Mr. Forth: Precise figures are not available, and the exact number of centres is likely to vary from time to time. It is estimated that about 3,000 are currently in operation.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many outdoor activity centres will be inspected by the Health and Safety Executive over the next two years.

Mr. Forth: As part of the special programme of inspections announced by my right hon. Friend on 11 November 1993, the Health and Safety Executive are planning to inspect about 100 centres over the next two years.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many orders have been made using the powers of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, section 5(10); which trusts have been given such additional powers; and what was the nature of those additional powers.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of information technology services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Sackville: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When information technology services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Mental Health

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where information assembled by the Centre for Mental Health Services Development about the costs of current mental health services in the nine authorities considered to be providing a comprehensive community-based service is available in published form.

Mr. Bowis: I am arranging for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library.

Surgical Dressings

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list NHS expenditure in the latest available year on surgical dressings and bandages, broken down into country of manufacture.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Savage

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order an independent inquiry into the death of Mr. Peter Savage in Doncaster royal infirmary.

Mr. Sackville: As a result of Mr. Savage's death, the trust asked Mr. Philip Gill, a former district coroner in west Yorkshire, to undertake an independent inquiry into the procedures followed by Doncaster royal infirmary for admission, investigation and treatment of confused patients. His report was published in December 1993, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Alder Hey Hospital

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current waiting time for children needing orthopaedic treatment at the Alder Hey hospital in Liverpool.

Dr. Mawhinney: Alder Hey hospital is part of the Royal Liverpool childrens hospital national health service trust. Information on this trust's waiting times for in-patient and day case treatment is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", which is published twice yearly. The latest published figures are for September 1993 and copies are available in the Library.

Population Statistics

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the population for each county in the United Kingdom, according to the census taken in each year in *(a)* 1971, *(b)* 1981 and *(c)* 1991; and what are the absolute and percentage differences between the 1971 and 1991 figures.

Mr. Sackville: Census figures for each county of England and Wales are published in the report "1991 Census, Historical Tables, Great Britain", copies of which are available in the Library. However, these census figures are affected by people missed from the census and by other factors. The most satisfactory comparisons are those based on the Registrar General's mid-year population estimates of resident population. These figures will be placed in the Library.

Figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement concerning the funding arrangements of the Medicines Control Agency listing all external agencies or companies that supply funds.

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control agency—MCA—has, since it was established in 1989, been funded by fees from applicants for and holders of product licences, wholesale dealers licences and manufacturers licences. The MCA also receives fees for inspections of manufacturers and wholesale dealers premises. Ministers review MCA fee levels annually and widespread consultation takes place on the Government's proposals for the following year. The proposed fee levels, amended as necessary in the light of consultation, are then laid before Parliament for approval. Over 2,700 companies and external agencies paid fees to the MCA in 1992-93, a list of them will be placed in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the orders made under sections 5 to 11 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 for the NHS trusts in the Northern region.

Mr. Sackville: Copies of orders made under section 8 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 will be placed in the Library. All other orders made under sections 5 to 11 for NHS trusts in the northern region have been made under statutory instrument and are therefore already in the Library.

Press Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of staff and the cost of the Department's press office for each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The number of staff employed in the main press office for each year since 1989 is as follows:

	Number
1989-90	14
1990-91	15
1991-92	14
1992-93	15
1993-94	14

The cost of the press office and staffing figures for 1988-89 are not available in the form requested.

Workload Supervision

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what routine supervision is exercised by her Department over hospital and health authority workload and caseload performances in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Management Executive—NHSME—holds regional health authorities—RHAs—to account for their performance on the basis of agreed corporate contracts. Corporate contracts reflect both national and regional priorities and purchasing plans agreed by district health authorities, family health services authorities and, where appropriate, general practitioner fundholders. Performance is monitored through formal submissions—corporate contracts and quarterly returns—and continuous reviews between the NHSME's performance management teams and regional managers. This review process culminates in annual meetings held between the chief executive of the NHSME and each regional general manager and chairman. Issues outside corporate contracts are also raised with RHAs as appropriate to ensure performance is satisfactory.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish for each service that has been market tested in her Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the £300,000 public funds loaned by Mr. M. Davies while director of finance to West Midlands regional health authority to the company FIP has been recovered; and what interest on that sum was paid by FIP

Dr. Mawhinney: The loan to the financial information project is being repaid to West Midlands regional health authority by instalments on a quarterly basis. The first payment of £50,000 is due on 28 February. Interest on the loan is being charged in line with the health service prices index.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to instigate prosecutions for corruption in respect of the affairs of the West Midlands regional health authority as discussed in the 57th report from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1992-93, HC 485.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for West Midlands regional health authority and the police to determine what action needs to be taken over alleged corruption in the affairs of the authority.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was paid to Mr. M. Davies when he resigned from his post as director of finance of West Midlands regional health authority; how much of this was performance related; and what were the reasons for these payments.

Dr. Mawhinney: When Mr. Davies resigned from West Midlands regional health authority, he had a contractual entitlement to six months notice, and was paid two months extension of contract for untaken leave, a total of £36,702. He also received £6,222 for cumulative performance-related pay.

Influenza Vaccine

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the adequacy of supply of inflenza vaccine in the London area; what steps she is taking to ensure adequate supplies; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information about the supply of influenza vaccine to particular areas is not available centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 17 January at columns *391-92*, for details on the general supply of vaccine.

Child Resistant Closures

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she proposes to take to speed the pharmaceutical industry's development of a child resistant closure for liquid medicines.

Mr. Sackville: Some liquid medicines are already in child resistant containers. There are, however, technical difficulties in developing a closure which is effective for all types of liquid medicine containers and which could be adopted across the pharamaceutical industry and by pharmacists. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry are in discussions to help speed up the development process.

Mental Illness Grant

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what funding will be available for the mental illness specific grant for the year 1994-95; and what are the planning figures for the following years;

(2) what plans she has to extend the mental illness specific grant beyond 1995.

Mr. Bowis: On 28 December 1993, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced that the mental illness specific grant will be increased to £36 million in 1994-95, supporting expenditure of over £51 million, and that it is planned that the grant will continue for at least another three years.

The 1993 public expenditure settlement provided for planning figures of £37·262 million and £38·262 million for 1995-96 and 1996-97 respectively. The planning figures are subject to discussion in future public expenditure rounds.

AIDS

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support the Government will be giving to London boroughs for their work in HIV and AIDS in 1994-95 and beyond; and what conclusions she has arrived at in reviewing this assistance.

Mr. Sackville: Funds will again be available in 1994-95 through the AIDS support grant scheme as a contribution towards local authorities' expenditure on HIV and AIDS. There are planning figures for the two subsequent years, which are subject to discussion in future public expenditure rounds.

The grant has made a valuable contribution to fostering joint co-operation in supporting people with HIV or AIDS and to limiting the spread of the virus.

Young People, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds there were in the Doncaster area in each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The population estimates requested, relating to Doncaster metropolitan district, are shown in the table.

Estimated mid-year resident population of Doncaster: Persons aged 16 to 17

Thousands

Year	*Age 16*	*Age 17*
1988	4·1	4·3
1989	3·9	4·1
1990	3·7	3·9
1991	3·6	3·8
1992	3·6	3·6

Source:
Population Estimates Unit, Office of Populaton Censuses and Surveys.

Abortion

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of terminations of pregnancy in *(a)* the North Devon health authority and *(b)* the East Berkshire health authority were carried out under the NHS in the last year for which figures are available; what would be the additional cost if the North Devon percentage applied nationwide; and what steps she is taking to establish reasons for geographical differences on the proportion of terminations of pregnancy carried out under the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The proportion of terminations of pregnancies for the two health authorities concerned for 1992 is as follows:

	[1]Total	*[1]NHS funded*	*Per cent.*
East Berkshire HA	1,157	120	10·4
North Devon HA	307	292	95·1

[1] These statistics are based on the (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Abortion Monitor (AB 94/2) due to be published on 20 February 1994.

The cost of a termination of pregnancy in the national health service varies according to factors such as gestation and length of stay. It is not therefore possible to provide any meaningful estimate of the additional cost if the North Devon percentage applied nationwide. Arrangements for purchasing abortion services under the NHS are the responsibility of individual district health authorities in the light of their assessment of local needs and priorities.

Pain Clinics

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pain clinics are at present being operated by the NHS; and what is the average waiting time before patients are treated.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Social Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to encourage social care professionals to raise concerns about bad practice; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: It is the responsibility of both employers and professionals to ensure that any evidence of bad practice or misconduct is investigated appropriately and without delay.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to commission work on the definition of national standards in social care; who is undertaking the work; when it will be completed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We intend to issue a tender specification for a study of possible standards in the delivery of social care. We expect to do so before Easter.

Smoking

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount was spent by Government on discouraging smoking in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the amount spent by the Health Education Authority on discouraging smoking over the last five years on behalf of the Government.

Financial Year	*Amount spent on discouraging smoking £*
1988-89	1,318,000
1989-90	4,151,000
1990-91	3,435,000
1991-92	4,175,000
1992-93	5,438,000

Overall figures for spending within central Government on discouraging smoking could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she intends to allow special hospitals to apply for trust status.

Mr. Bowis: We will decide on this in the light of our conclusions on the proposals in the Reed working group report.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the Reed report on special hospitals.

Mr. Bowis: It will be published when we have completed our consideration of its proposals on the future of high security psychiatric services.

Ashworth Hospital

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what instruction was given to doctors following the Swann report into over-use of drugs at Ashworth hospital and on the reduction of drug levels; how this instruction was implemented; and what were the results.

Mr. Bowis: This is a matter for the Special Hospitals Service Authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the authority, Mrs. Anne-Marie Nelson.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to the national health service Supplies Authority.

Mr. Sackville: The chairman is Sir Robin Buchanan, and the other non-executive members are Mrs. Alison

Cook, Mr. Eric Greenhalgh, Mr. James Hammond, Mr. Fred Hoult and Miss Catherine McLoughlin. The executive members are Mr. Terry Hunt, Mr. Evan Sutherland, Mr. Richard Chantler, Mrs. Roxanne Sutton and Mr. Chris Uden.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to the registered homes tribunal.

Mr. Bowis: The members currently appointed to registered homes tribunals are:

CHAIRMEN
Mr. P. Hughes QC
Mrs. O. B. Jones
Mrs. M. Rutherford
Mr. P. Singh
Mr. J. W. Tinnion

EXPERT MEMBERS
Residential care/children's homes:
Mr. R. Bessell
Mr. D. Browne
Mr. M. Burrell
Mr. J. Churchill
Mr. K. Coleman
Mr. G. Dunn
Mr. F. Edwards
Mr. J. Fisher
Mr. B. Garner
Mrs. L. Gladwin
Dr. B. Gray
Mr. J. Hanson
Mr. R. Humphries
Mr. G. Harper
Mr. D. James
Mr. M. Jobbins
Miss M. Joynson
Miss S. Mathieson
Miss S. Poupard
Mr. J. Regan
Miss J. Reynolds
Mr. J. Stephens
Mr. G. L. Thomas
Ms J. Tunstill
Mr. P. Tyndall
Mr. D. Wakefield
Mrs. J. Waldron
Mr. F. Watts
Mr. K. White
Miss M. Woodier

Nursing homes:
Dr. A. Admani
Dr. A. Banerjee
Dr. J. Cox
Dr. G. Hall
Dr. M. Hildick-Smith
Dr. G. Jones-Davis
Dr. D. Kerr
Dr. S. Moreton
Mr. R. Marcus
Mr. B. Maurice
Dr. N. Merali
Dr. P. Tiplady
Mrs. S. Adams
Mrs. C. Alford
Mr. K. Dainty
Mrs. R. Doidge
Mrs. T. Gallety
Miss P. Jenkins
Mrs. N. Kelly
Mrs. M. McGregor
Mr. J. Sharp
Mrs. M. Wilson

Written Questions

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of answering a written parliamentary question in her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The current average cost of providing an answer to a written parliamentary question is estimated at £97. This information was provided in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November 1993 at column *391*.

Administrators

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many administrators worked in the NHS and trust hospitals five years ago and the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 2 December 1993:]* The information available is shown in the table. Many of the administrative and clerical staff directly support medical and other professional staff. The figures for managers need to be treated with caution because much of the increase arises from the reclassification of existing staff. The number of managers has been deliberately increased since the mid-1980s—not just since the reforms—because the service was previously undermanaged.

Administrative and clerical (A&C) staff and general and senior managers (GM/SM) at 30 September each year, England (hospital and community health services, excluding family health services authorities and other statutory authorities): Whole-time equivalents

	1988 total	*1992 total*	*No. included in 1992 total in NHS Trusts*
A&C	106,990	122,990	(37,760)
GM/SM	1,230	14,980	(3,820)

Source:
1988 Non-Medical Manpower Census.
1992 DH form KM49.

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. There were no trusts in 1988.
3. Figures for 1992 are the latest available.

WALES

Enterprise Zone

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made towards establishing an enteprise zone in Meirionnydd Nant Conwy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities in the area are preparing an outline case for an enterprise zone.

Institute of Welsh Affairs

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of the Institute of Welsh Affairs to discuss their recent proposals for the future of Wales; what new measures he is considering in the light of these proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I met representatives of the Institute of Welsh Affairs in July to hear of developments since the

publication of its report, "Wales 2010: Creating Our Future". My officials continue to keep in close touch with the institute on further developments.

Schools Inspection

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of tenders placed in the financial year 1993-94 for the inspection of secondary schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for school inspection rests with the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales. I am informed that the total price of contracts let by OHMCI for the inspection of secondary schools in Wales so far this financial year is £1,510,617, including VAT.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Redwood: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers to ensure that all holders of personal data on computer are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out, the data protection principles and the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, apply to both the owner of the personal data and the service provider. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1990-91 the running costs of Ministers' official cars have increased by 12 per cent.—including the VAT increase in April 1991—resulting in additional costs in 1993-94 of £13,000. Further minor increases are attributable to changes in patterns of usage.

Strategic Planning Guidance

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding strategic planning guidance in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received representations from various organisations about strategic planning guidance in Wales both in correspondence and at meetings.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report". On an individual basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Badgers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county the number of badgers shot and gassed in each year since 1988; and what percentage of those badgers were subsequently shown to have tuberculosis.

Mr. Redwood: The number of badgers killed, following trapping during state veterinary service badger removal operations, in Wales since 1988 is as follows:

Year	*Number of Badgers killed*	*Number positive*
1988	32	0
1989	5	0
1990	9	1
1991	22	0
1992	—	—
1993	10	0

The figures relate to the county of Dyfed. No badgers have been killed by the state veterinary service in any other county in Wales since 1988. The legal gassing of badgers ceased on 26 June 1982.

DEFENCE

Artillery Shells

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department holds on the trading relationship between Allivane International Ltd., Allivane International Group or Aerotechnologies Ltd. of London and Glasgow, with the Chartered Chemical Industries Pte. Ltd. of Singapore in regard to the sale and manufacture of artillery shells.

Mr. Aitken: My Department holds no information on any trading relationship between these companies and the Chartered Chemical Industries Pte. Ltd. of Singapore.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department holds on the trading relationship between Royal Ordnance and the Chartered Chemical Industries Pte. Ltd. of Singapore in regard to artillery shells.

Mr. Aitken: My Department holds no information on any trading relationship between Royal Ordnance and the Chartered Chemical Industries Pte Ltd. of Singapore.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on matters in regard to the proliferation of plutonium and other nuclear materials discussed at the NATO summit in Brussels on 10 and 11 January.

Mr. Hanley: The NATO summit declaration, to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred in his statement of 12 January, *Official Report*, columns *177-79*, sets out in paragraph 17 the alliance policy on proliferation. A copy of the declaration has been placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department prepared proposals for the second preparatory committee meeting for the fifth review and renewal conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty held in New York from 17 January.

Mr. Hanley: My Department continues to be closely involved with the United Kingdom's participation in the work of the second preparatory committee.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research is currently being conducted by his Blacknest verification laboratory into establishing a robust verification procedure to monitor a comprehensive nuclear test ban; and what resources are committed annually to such verification research.

Mr. Aitken: The Atomic Weapons Establishment, of which the Blacknest laboratory is a part, has been contracted by the Ministry of Defence to carry out work on the verification procedures necessary to monitor a comprehensive nuclear test ban. Expenditure on unclassified work in this area is likely to be about £1·5 million per annum.

Landing Platform Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the best and final offer accepted from VSEL in respect of the landing platform helicopter carrier since 11 May 1993; and what is the reason for any subsequent adjustments.

Mr. Aitken: VSEL has contracted to provide a vessel which meets the Department's requirements as set out in the procurement specification. As the design progresses, it is normal for alterations to the details of the specification to be discussed. These discussions are still ongoing and any changes to the specification will be rigorously controlled to ensure that cost estimates are not exceeded and value for money is achieved. My Department is not renegotiating the contract with VSEL.

Royal Naval Engineering College

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of recarpeting work carried out at the Royal Naval engineering college in Plymouth during the last 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of recarpeting work carried out during the last 12 months is £10,000.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of replacing and installing perimeter fencing and lighting at the Royal Naval engineering college in Plymouth since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of replacing and installing perimeter fencing and lighting since 1990 is £330,000.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of building, maintenance and refurbishment work carried out at the Royal Naval engineering college in Plymouth during the last two financial years.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost of building, maintenance and refurbishment work carried out during the last two financial years is £1,557,000 in financial year 1991-92 and £2,798,000 in financial year 1992-93.

Royal Navy (Visits to South Africa)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made recently for Royal Navy ships to visit South Africa; what was the purpose of each of those visits; and which of those visits has been in connection with the sale of arms.

Mr. Aitken: The only visit of Royal Navy ships to South Africa to have been arranged in recent years is that of HMS Norfolk and the tanker RFA Grey Rover. This visit will take place later this month. The purpose of the visit is to re-establish relations between the Royal Navy and the South African navy.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Hague: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the total cost to the Benefits Agency in 1993 of those Christmas cards sent out by senior executives in their official capacity.

Mr. Burt: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Derek Fatchett, dated 18 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking for the total cost to the Benefits Agency of Christmas cards issued by its senior executives in an official capacity.

The senior executives of the Benefits Agency (BA) are myself, as the Chief Executive, and my Directors, who form the Benefits Agency Management Team.

A number of greetings cards were issued by myself and my Directors to managers, staff and outside organisations, but the cost of these cards and any postage costs incurred were funded, in the main, by the individual concerned.

The Agency also produced "official" Christmas cards which appeared in two designs and were of a functional nature, carrying a number of Freeline and Helpline telephone numbers, which are on the reverse of the card. These cards were available to all staff within BA and their intended purpose was one of liaison and information. It was felt that there was a good opportunity at Christmas, by way of a simple greetings card, to issue a reminder to the organisations with which the Agency has contact.

A number of these "official cards" were issued by myself and my Directors, to government officials and outside bodies and organisations. Where possible such cards were distributed, along with other items of official mail, within the internal courier system at no extra cost to the Agency. Where postage costs were incurred these were restricted to second class postage.

The cost to the Agency of Christmas cards issued by myself and my Directors in an official capacity, including postage, was £48·96.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what extent the job seeker's allowance will be financed by the national insurance fund.

Mr. Burt: Payments of the job seekers allowance which are made on the basis of national insurance contribution records will be met from the national insurance fund.

Young People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area applied for severe hardship payments in each year from 1988; and what percentage of applicants were successful.

Mr. Burt: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 18 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about Severe Hardship Payments to 16 and 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area.

The information requested in this question is not available in the format required and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. This is because the statistics kept cover the number of applications, rather than the number of individuals who have claimed. Some customers may have made more than one application. Also, the statistics collected do not distinguish between 16 and 17-year-olds.

However, I have provided figures from the earliest date available, 1989, in the attached appendix, relating to successful applications for Severe Hardship Payments.

I should point out that the statistics relate to Benefits Agency Districts and are not routinely collected to show the number of claims specific to a town. The statistics given for Doncaster relate to the Benefits Agency's Doncaster East and Doncaster West offices.

16/17-year-olds severe hardship applications—Doncaster district office

Year	*Total applications*	*Number successful*	*Percentage successful*
1989	97	64	66
1990	103	68	66
1991	349	263	75
1992	541	382	71
1993	650	543	84

Disability

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* disability living allowance, *(c)* family credit, *(d)* income support, *(e)* invalidity benefit and *(f)* sickness benefit in (i) Barking and Dagenham and (ii) Redbridge.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. M Bichard to Mr. Mike Gapes, dated 18 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about benefit recipients in Barking, Dagenham and Redbridge.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because Benefits Agency District boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries. However, I have provided figures relating to Barking Benefits Office, which covers the Barking and Dagenham area, and Ilford District Office, which covers the Redbridge area. I should point out that both those offices deal with areas other than Barking, Dagenham and Redbridge. The statistics provided, therefore, include a small number of people who do not live in those areas.

I should also explain that Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance are centrally administered benefits. To obtain figures for specific areas would result in disproportionate cost.

Statistical data for each of the benefits is collected and collated over different periods and timescales. The figures provided are the latest available for each benefit.

The numbers of people receiving Income Support, at November 1993, are as follows:

	Number
Barking Benefits Office	38,230
Ilford District Office	60,239

The numbers of people receiving Family Credit, at 24 December 1993, are as follows:

	Number
Barking Benefits Office	934
Ilford District Office	992

The numbers of people claiming Sickness Benefit and Invalidity Benefit, at the last working day of December 1993, are as follows:

	Number
Barking Benefits Office	
Sickness Benefit	2,025
Invalidity Benefit	4,083
Ilford District Office	
Sickness Benefit	2,766
Invalidity Benefit	4,529

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled persons are employed on *(a)* a full-time basis and *(b)* a part-time basis in Benefits Agency local offices in the Doncaster area; and what

Mr. Burt: The responsibility for Benefits Agency staff is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 18 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number of disabled people employed in the Benefits Agency's offices in the Doncaster area.

There are 320 staff employed in the two offices in the Doncaster area: Doncaster East and Doncaster West. Of the 245 who work full time, nine are registered disabled, and this represents 2·81 per cent. of all staff. Of the 75 staff who work part time, none are registered disabled.

Information is not available for disabled staff who are not registered.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security where is the weather station which provides the recordings to enable cold weather payments to be made to citizens resident in Doncaster; what reviews he is currently carrying out to change the location of the weather station in relation to Doncaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the Library. There are currently no plans to change the weather stations covering the Doncaster area.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Investors Compensation Scheme

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from hon. Members since January 1990 on the operaton of the investors compensation scheme; what discussions he has had with the officers of the scheme arising from such discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I have received a number of such representations. The Securities and Investments Board has recently consulted about the funding of the scheme and is currently consulting about a number of minor changes to the rules. While the rules are a matter for SIB and decisions in individual cases are matters for the board, I am very conscious of the valuable work carried out by the scheme.

Illegal Drugs

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise officers have been in post each year since 1979, solely involved in the detection of the illegal import of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The only customs staff whose duties are solely involved in the detection of illegal imports of drugs are those who work in the customs investigation division and local collection investigation units. The relevant numbers are:

Year	*Number*
1979-80	121
1980-81	133
1981-82	152
1982-83	183
1983-84	201
1984-85	212
1985-86	262
1986-87	297
1987-88	376
1988-89	395
1989-90	420
1990-91	568
1991-92	576
1992-93	582
[1]1993-94	591

[1] estimate

In addition, all staff employed on anti-smuggling duties at ports and airports have a prime responsibility in the detection of the illegal importation of drugs as well as of other prohibitied and restricted goods.

Non-elected Authorities

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product was spent by central and local government and within central Government by non-elected authorities, for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Nelson: Information on gross domestic product and central and local government expenditure is readily available on the CSO database in the following series—identified by their database code:

EBAO: GDP at market prices adjusted for the distortion caused in the abolition of domestic rates

ABAC: Central government contribution to general government expenditure

ABAD: Local authority contribution to general government expenditure.

The database can be accessed on-line by the House of Commons Library.

Information on non-departmental public bodies is available in the annual Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies".

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what amount corporation tax receipts have been reduced in each of the last five years by the offsetting of costs associated with tobacco advertising, including sponsorship, against taxable profits.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information is not available.

Income Tax

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would have been the average percentage loss of income due to an increase of 7p in the pound in income tax, instead of the measures imposed in the March and November 1993 budgets, for the 10 per cent. lowest income group and the 10 per cent. highest income group.

Mr. Dorrell: The distribution of income tax can be analysed using the annual survey of personal incomes which records information about individuals who have some tax liability. On the basis of a projection to 1994-95 of the 1991-92 survey the income net of income tax of the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers would fall by about 4·1 per

cent. as a result of a 7p increase in the basic rate of income tax. The bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers pay tax only at the lower rate and would be unaffected by a change in the basic rate.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractors *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor of the Exchequer's departments are currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Tax Relief

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to extend extra-statutory concession A25, claims for tax relief, to include taxpayers restrained by the time limit relating to the setting back of retirement annuity relief and similar statutorily imposed time limits.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to extend extra-statutory concession A25. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, he may wish to write to me.

English Courses (VAT)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the revenue raised from levying value-added tax on fees paid by students undertaking English as a foreign language course in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: No estimates are available.

Unofficial Economy

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to estimate the size of the unofficial economy; and what this represents as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Nelson: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Caernafon (Mr. Wigley) on 26 January 1993 at column *618*.

Public Sector Debt

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give in cash terms the level of the net public sector debt for each year since 1979 together with his forecasts using the prediction contained in the Red Book for each year until 1999 using either end of financial year dates or other convenient dates.

Mr. Nelson: The table shows data for net public sector at end-March for each year from 1979 to 1993, plus projections for 1994 and 1995 consistent with the Budget forecast.

Net public sector debt (end-March figures)

	£ billion	*Per cent. GDP*
1979	92·0	49·50
1980	100·6	45·50
1981	115·2	47·00
1982	126·1	47·00
1983	134·0	45·75
1984	146·5	46·50
1985	160·3	46·75
1986	166·4	44·75
1987	172·3	42·50
1988	171·1	38·00
1989	157·2	31·50
1990	151·0	28·00
1991	155·3	27·50
1992	164·9	28·00
1993	201·7	32·75
[1]1994	253·0	38·50
[1]1995	292·0	41·75

[1]Forecast.

Projections for 1995-96 to 1998-99 for net public sector debt as a percent of GDP are shown in chart 2.3 of the 1994-95 "Financial Statement and Budget Report". These projections show net public sector debt peaking at around 44 per cent. of GDP at end-March 1997, and falling thereafter. They are illustrative and depend on the assumptions made about growth of the economy.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Nelson: A total of 1,175 official Christmas cards were sent by Ministers and 2,497 by civil servants in the Treasury in 1993. These cards cost £1,028·16 to buy. No record is available of the methods used to deliver the cards which would enable an accurate assessment to be made of postage costs. Equally no record is available of staff time involved in signing, addressing and placing the Christmas cards in envelopes.

Sporting Services (VAT)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for finalising legislation which would exempt from value-added tax sporting services supplied to people taking part in sport or physical education by non-profit-making bodies and local authorities.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 12 January, at column *189*.

Taxation

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 15 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *120-26*, and provide latest

estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95, including figures for the community charge and council tax as appropriate.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* Updated figures for 1992-93, including estimates of community charge payments, and the latest estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95 for direct and indirect taxes excluding local taxes are given in the tables on a similar basis to that provided to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 15 December 1992. No estimates of council tax payments for specimen households in 1993-94 can be provided until the 1993 family expenditure survey is published.

Income tax, National Insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings 1992-93

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	24·98	46·71	68·44	111·90	181·37	320·45	459·53	598·61	876·77	1,294·01	2,684·81
NICs	11·87	19·69	27·51	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67
Income tax and NICs	36·84	66·40	95·95	144·57	214·04	353·12	492·20	631·28	909·44	1,326·68	2,717·48
VAT	—	14·43	19·24	29·75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·89	23·33	33·02	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	7·19	7·53	8·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		106·91	146·05	215·54							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	14·4	17·9	19·7	21·5	26·1	30·7	33·0	34·4	36·0	37·2	38·6
NICs	6·8	7·6	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·3	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Income tax and NICs	21·2	25·5	27·6	27·7	30·8	33·9	35·4	36·3	37·4	38·2	39·1
VAT	—	5·5	5·5	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·2	6·7	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	2·8	2·2	1·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		41·0	42·0	41·3							
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	16·71	38·44	60·17	103·63	168·14	307·22	446·30	585·38	863·54	1,280·78	2,671·58
NICs	11·87	19·69	27·51	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67
Income tax and NICs	28·57	58·13	87·68	136·30	200·81	339·89	478·97	618·05	896·21	1,313·45	2,704·25
VAT	—	13·35	18·59	30·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	21·11	25·61	35·43	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	11·13	11·47	12·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		103·72	143·35	213·92							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	9·6	14·7	17·3	19·9	24·2	29·5	32·1	33·7	35·5	36·8	38·4
NICs	6·8	7·6	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·3	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Income tax and NICs	16·4	22·3	25·2	26·1	28·9	32·6	34·4	35·6	36·8	37·8	38·9
VAT	—	5·1	5·3	5·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·1	7·4	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	4·3	3·3	2·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		39·8	41·2	41·0							
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	–0·74	20·99	42·72	86·18	150·69	289·77	428·85	567·93	846·09	1,263·33	2,654·13
NICs	11·87	19·69	27·51	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67	32·67
Income tax and NICs	11·12	40·68	70·23	118·85	188·36	322·44	461·52	600·60	878·76	1,296·00	2,686·80
VAT	—	13·33	19·27	32·23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·74	24·28	32·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	11·47	12·15	13·51	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		86·22	125·93	196·59							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	–0·4	8·0	12·3	16·5	21·7	27·8	30·8	32·7	34·8	36·3	38·2
NICs	6·8	7·6	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·3	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Income tax and NICs	6·4	15·6	20·2	22·8	26·4	30·9	33·2	34·5	36·1	37·3	38·6
VAT	—	5·1	5·5	6·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·0	7·0	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	4·4	3·5	2·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		33·1	36·2	37·7							
Married, both working, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·65	19·97	41·68	85·15	128·61	226·15	349·51	488·59	766·75	1,183·99	2,574·79

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
NICs	8·09	15·91	23·73	39·38	53·92	65·34	65·34	65·34	65·34	65·34	65·34
Income tax and NICs	9·74	35·88	65·42	124·53	182·53	291·49	414·85	553·93	832·09	1,249·33	2,640·13
VAT	—	17·17	22·86	34·23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	25·58	29·47	37·26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	11·85	12·23	13·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		90·48	129·98	209·02							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	1·0	7·7	12·0	16·3	18·5	21·7	25·1	28·1	31·5	34·1	37·0
NICs	4·7	6·1	6·8	7·6	7·8	6·3	4·7	3·8	2·7	1·9	0·9
Income tax and NICs	5·6	13·8	18·8	23·9	26·2	27·9	29·8	31·9	34·2	35·9	38·0
VAT	—	6·6	6·6	6·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·8	8·5	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Community charge	—	4·5	3·5	2·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		34·7	37·4	40·1							

Income tax, National Insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings
1993-94

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	26·02	48·51	71·01	118·67	190·65	334·61	478·57	622·53	910·45	1,342·33	2,781·93
NICs	12·28	20·37	28·47	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88
Income tax and NICs	38·30	68·89	99·48	152·55	224·53	368·49	512·45	656·41	944·33	1,376·21	2,815·81
VAT	—	14·71	19·64	30·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·87	24·45	34·23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		103·47	143·57	216·94							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	14·5	18·0	19·7	22·0	26·5	31·0	33·2	34·6	36·1	37·3	38·6
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Income tax and NICs	21·3	25·5	27·6	28·3	31·2	34·1	35·6	36·5	37·5	38·2	39·1
VAT	—	5·5	5·5	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·4	6·8	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		38·3	39·9	40·2							
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	17·75	40·25	62·74	107·73	177·42	321·38	465·34	609·30	897·22	1,329·10	2,768·70
NICs	12·28	20·37	28·47	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88
Income tax and NICs	30·03	60·62	91·21	141·61	211·30	355·26	499·22	643·18	931·10	1,362·98	2,802·58
VAT	—	13·51	18·87	30·57	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	22·31	27·00	37·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		96·44	137·08	209·40							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	9·9	14·9	17·4	20·0	24·6	29·8	32·3	33·9	35·6	36·9	38·5
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Income tax and NICs	16·7	22·5	25·3	26·2	29·4	32·9	34·7	35·7	37·0	37·9	38·9
VAT	—	5·0	5·2	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·5	6·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		35·7	38·1	38·8							
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	–0·35	22·15	44·64	89·63	159·32	303·28	447·24	591·20	879·12	1,311·00	2,750·00
NICs	12·28	20·37	28·47	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88	33·88
Income tax and NICs	11·93	42·52	73·11	123·51	193·20	337·16	481·12	625·08	913·00	1,344·88	2,784·48
VAT	—	13·41	19·48	32·73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	22·09	25·77	33·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		78·01	118·36	190·04							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	–0·2	8·2	12·4	16·6	22·1	28·1	31·1	32·9	34·9	36·4	38·2
NICs	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
Income tax and NICs	6·6	15·8	20·3	22·9	26·8	31·2	33·4	34·7	36·2	37·4	38·7

					Multiples of average earnings						
	50	75	100	150	200	300	400	500	700	1,000	2,000
VAT	—	5·0	5·4	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·2	7·2	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		28·9	32·9	35·2							
Married, both working, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	2·87	21·60	43·77	88·76	133·75	237·63	368·07	512·03	799·95	1,231·83	2,671·43
NICs	8·36	16·45	24·55	40·75	55·87	67·76	67·76	67·76	67·76	67·76	67·76
Income tax and NICs	11·23	38·05	68·32	129·51	189·62	305·39	435·83	579·79	867·71	1,299·59	2,739·19
VAT	—	15·57	21·42	33·06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	25·88	29·92	37·96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		79·51	119·67	200·52							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	1·6	8·0	12·2	16·4	18·6	22·0	25·6	28·5	31·8	34·2	37·1
NICs	4·6	6·1	6·8	7·5	7·8	6·3	4·7	3·8	2·7	1·9	0·9
Income tax and NICs	6·2	14·1	19·0	24·0	26·3	28·3	30·3	32·2	34·4	36·1	38·1
VAT	—	5·8	6·0	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·6	8·3	7·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		29·5	33·3	37·1							

Income tax, National Insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings
1994-95

					Multiples of average earnings						
	50	75	100	150	200	300	400	500	700	1,000	2,000
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	27·34	50·73	74·13	126·83	201·69	351·41	501·13	650·85	950·29	1,399·45	2,896·65
NICs	14·16	23·51	32·87	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44
Income tax and NICs	41·50	74·25	107·00	165·27	240·13	389·85	539·57	689·29	988·73	1,437·89	2,935·09
VAT	—	16·78	22·21	33·74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·86	25·68	35·87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		111·89	154·89	234·88							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	14·6	18·1	19·8	22·6	26·9	31·3	33·5	34·8	36·3	37·4	38·7
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·1	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	22·2	26·4	28·6	29·4	32·1	34·7	36·0	36·8	37·7	38·4	39·2
VAT	—	6·0	5·9	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·4	6·9	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		39·9	41·4	41·8							
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	20·73	44·12	67·51	120·21	195·07	344·79	494·51	644·23	943·67	1,392·83	2,890·03
NICs	14·16	23·51	32·87	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44
Income tax and NICs	34·88	67·63	100·38	158·65	233·51	383·23	532·95	682·67	982·11	1,431·27	2,928·47
VAT	—	15·38	21·27	33·76	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	23·24	28·16	38·57	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		106·25	149·81	230·99							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	11·1	15·7	18·0	21·4	26·1	30·7	33·0	34·4	36·0	37·2	38·6
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·1	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	18·6	24·1	26·8	28·3	31·2	34·1	35·6	36·5	37·5	38·2	39·1
VAT	—	5·4	5·7	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·5	6·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		37·8	40·0	41·1							
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	2·27	25·67	49·06	101·76	176·62	326·34	476·06	625·78	925·22	1,374·38	2,871·58
NICs	14·16	23·51	32·87	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44
Income tax and NICs	16·43	49·18	81·93	140·20	215·06	364·78	514·50	664·22	963·66	1,412·82	2,910·02
VAT	—	15·21	21·92	36·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Other indirect	—	23·13	27·03	35·29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		87·53	130·88	211·62							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	1·2	9·1	13·1	18·1	23·6	29·1	31·8	33·4	35·3	36·7	38·4
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·1	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	8·8	17·5	21·9	25·0	28·7	32·5	34·4	35·5	36·8	37·7	38·9
VAT	—	5·4	5·8	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·2	7·2	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		31·2	35·0	37·7							
Married, both working, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	4·31	25·25	48·07	94·85	141·64	257·97	396·76	546·48	845·92	1,295·08	2,792·28
NICs	9·60	18·95	28·31	47·03	63·82	76·88	76·88	76·88	76·88	76·88	76·88
Income tax and NICs	13·91	44·21	76·38	141·88	205·46	334·85	473·64	623·36	922·80	1,371·96	2,869·16
VAT	—	17·58	24·03	36·82	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	27·19	31·44	39·86	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		88·97	131·85	218·56							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	2·3	9·0	12·8	16·9	18·9	23·0	26·5	29·2	32·3	34·6	37·3
NICs	5·1	6·8	7·6	8·4	8·5	6·8	5·1	4·1	2·9	2·1	1·0
Income tax and NICs	7·4	15·7	20·4	25·3	27·4	29·8	31·6	33·3	35·2	36·7	38·3
VAT	—	6·2	6·5	6·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·7	8·4	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL		31·7	35·2	38·9							

Notes to tables:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 national insurance contributions at the contracted-in rate.
2. Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.
3. In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.
4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are assumed to be £347·70 a week in 1992-93, £359·90 a week in 1993-94 and £374·30 a week in 1994-95, based on illustrative earnings growth assumptions of 3½ per cent. in 1993-94 and 4 per cent. in 1994-95.
5. The estimates of most indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. Estimates of VAT on domestic fuel and power are based on equations using results from the 1991 family expenditure survey, uprated using a similar methodology. These estimates are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.
6. Estimates of the burden of the community charge has been derived from the 1991 and 1992 Family Expenditure Surveys. All respondents were assumed to pay the community charge to which they were liable. The calculations include water charges in order to put the estimates on a comparable basis to the estimates for earlier years. Community charge payments are net of transitional relief and community charge benefit. Since community charge payments vary widely between households with similar incomes, estimated charge payments are only approximate.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a full list of all statements made by Ministers in his Department, and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible completion date for the channel tunnel rail link, the dates on which each such statement was made, and the possible completion date which was mentioned.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), in his Budget statement of 16 March 1993, *Official Report*, column 194, said that he hoped to see the new line completed around the end of the decade.

Crossrail

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a full list of all statements made by Ministers in his Department, and/or press notices issued by his Department, which referred to a possible completion date for the crossrail project, the dates on which each such statement was made and the possible completion date which was mentioned.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* I am not aware of any such statements or press notices.

Private Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the 10 companies included in the survey commissioned from KPMG Peat Marwick by the

Securities and Investments Board recently, on the transferring of assets from occupational to private pension schemes.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* The survey was commissioned by SIB. I understand that the firms included in the survey—10 LAUTRO regulated firms, eight IMRO regulated firms and 43 members of FIMBRA—were chosen as firms representative of those involved in the selling of personal pensions. Because the study was intended to establish the extent of compliance in the industry as a whole it would be unfair and misleading to single out those firms included in the survey by publishing their names.

Air Passenger Duty

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what investigation his Department intends to undertake into the effect of air passenger duty on air fares within the United Kingdom; what estimate he has made as to the impact on business and leisure use of air transport, particularly to the airports operated by Highlands and Islands Airports; and what evidence he has received from other European countries as to the impact of such taxation on transport.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* Air passenger duty is expected to increase return air fares within the United Kingdom and to other EC countries by £5; and to other destinations by £10. For the purpose of analysing the effects of the duty we have assumed airlines will fully pass on the duty to passengers in the form of higher fares. The price elasticity for business journeys is estimated to be –0·3; for non-business journeys to be –1·25. Overall, the tax is expected to reduce demand for air travel by around 2½ per cent. There is insufficient information available to estimate the impact of the tax on airports operated by Highland and Islands airports. No information has been received from other European countries on the impact of the introduction of such taxation on transport.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

DAF Leyland

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the 1990, 1991 and 1992 accounts of DAF Leyland were filed at Companies House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: This matter is for Companies House. I have therefore asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. D. Durham to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 17 January 1994:

You tabled the following Parliamentary Question:

"To ask the President of the Board of Trade, when the 1990, 1991 and 1992 accounts of DAF Leyland were filed at Companies House."

As this is a matter which is my responsibility as Chief Executive and Registrar of Companies House, I am writing to you direct.

There is no company currently registered under the name of DAF Leyland. I presume that the company in which you are interested is Leyland DAF Limited. I should point out that there are in fact 13 companies on the register with the name Leyland DAF in their title, but for the purposes of this reply I have concentrated on the two major companies within the group, Leyland DAF Limited and Leyland DAF Holdings Limited.

Leyland DAF Limited and Leyland DAF Holdings Limited both delivered accounts for the period ending 31 December 1990 on 10 October 1991. Failure of the directors of these companies to deliver accounts for the period ended 31 December 1991 were followed up with the companies in accordance with normal procedures.

I was subsequently notified that an administrative receiver had been appointed for both companies on 3 February 1993. The receiver submitted the relevant receivership documents. The companies will not now be pursued for statutory documents but the receiver has an obligation to send me accounts of the receipts and payments to cover the first 12 months of the receivership and six monthly periods thereafter. A report from the receiver was delivered to Companies House for both companies on 2 September 1993.

Should the companies survive the receivership and emerge as active and wishing to remain on the register, the directors will be obliged to deliver outstanding statutory documents including those which became outstanding prior to the appointment of the receiver.

I hope this reply has covered the points tabled in your question. If you are interested in any other company within the Leyland DAF group please do not hesitate to let me know.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will update to the present the answer given to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 17 October 1990, *Official Report*, column *837*, on export credits to Iraq.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is contained in the answer that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 12 January at column *236*.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what benefits have accrued to United Kingdom business from exhibitions at the Baghdad international arms fairs.

Mr. Needham: I assume the question refers to the international exhibition for military production held in Baghdad in 1989 in which a number of British companies participated. It is for the companies themselves to say what commercial benefits accrued as a result.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date the most recent United Kingdom-Iraq joint committee on trade was held; what matters were discussed; and what was decided.

Mr. Needham: The most recent UK-Iraq joint commission was held from 27 to 30 November 1989. It reviewed the implementation of the agreement on economic and technical co-operation signed on 24 June 1981. A financial protocol was signed for ECGD supported medium-term credits, up to a value of £250 million, in respect of the export of capital goods and services to Iraq by United Kingdom companies. In the event, however, loan agreements in respect of this sum were not signed and none of the £250 million, therefore, was utilised by Iraq.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has sent a copy of the Kemp report on the ECGD to the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Needham: A copy of the Kemp report which reviewed the status options for ECGD has not been sent to the Scott inquiry since it does not fall within the categories of documents requested by the inquiry.

Export Credits Guarantees Department

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the nature of his Department's responsibility for and oversight of the ECGD since it was sold.

Mr. Needham: The short-term business of ECGD, formerly operated by its insurance services arm, was privatised on 1 December 1991. The privatised company has to meet the regulatory requirements of the DTI pertaining to private sector insurance companies. ECGD continues to be a separate Department of the Secretary of State, principally concerned with credit insurance support for capital goods and project exports, typically sold on medium and long terms of credit. The Government have agreed to provide various supplemental reinsurance facilities to the private sector through ECGD to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to meet the needs of United Kingdom companies exporting on short terms of credit.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department retains records of ECGD activities prior to its privatisation.

Mr. Needham: The Secretary of State retains the right of access to records held by NCM Credit Insurance Ltd. to satisfy ECGD's requirements in terms of its trading and appropriation accounts, its public accountability obligations and to ensure the company complies with the terms of agreements entered into with ECGD in the context of the privatisation.

British Coal

Mr. Lester: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what total amount of subsidy towards the cost of production has been paid by the Department to British Coal since the 1993 coal White Paper;

(2) what conditions need to be met in order to claim a subsidy from the Government to British Coal towards the cost of production from a particular mine;

(3) how many requests his Department has received from British Coal since last March for a subsidy to a mine or group of mines; and how many have been accepted.

Mr. Eggar: The coal subsidy is available to both British Coal, and private sector producers, in support of genuinely additional sales of deep mined coal for electricity generation, at world market related prices. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account a range of factors including, the price paid for the coal, which should be related to world market prices, current and projected production costs at the pit, the financial performance of the pit and the position of competing producers, as it is important to ensure that United Kingdom opencast producers are not unfairly disadvantaged.

The Department of Trade and Industry has received a number of bids for subsidy since March 1993. Details of individual applications are commercially confidential, but so far, two offers of subsidy have been made to British Coal, in support of sales from Ellington colliery. Both offers are subject to EC clearance.

The subsidy is payable in arrears in line with actual deliveries made. To date, no subsidy has been paid to British Coal. Details of the total amount of subsidy awarded will however be made available to Parliament in the normal way.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the consultants commissioned by him to report on the restructuring and privatisation of British Coal; what are their terms of reference; when each piece of work was commissioned; and when it was completed.

Mr. Eggar: Details of consultants appointed by the Department on privatisation and associated restructuring are as follows:

Consultant	*Date*	*Scope of work*
NM Rothschild	30 May 1991	Provision of financial advice in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry.
Clifford Chance	19 June 1991	Provision of legal advice in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry.
John T. Boyd	5 August 1991	Provision of advice on technical matters related to evaluating the potential for improvements in mining productivity and costs in the United Kingdom coal industry and other similar matters that may be specified in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry.
Touche Ross	12 June 1991	Provision of accounting and regulatory advice in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry.
RPS Consultants	12 July 1993	Identification of and advice on environmental liabilities.
Dewe Rogerson	28 July 1992	Provision of marketing advice for privatisation.
Wardell Armstrong	5 August 1991	Provision of advice on technical matters related to minerals leasing and licensing.
Peter Williams	7 January 1992	Provision of advice on coal mining safety matters in connection with the privatisation of British Coal.

The consultants' work is continuing as work on privatisation progresses.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost including expenses of all consultancies he has commissioned on the restructuring and privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure on consultancies in connection with the privatisation of British Coal for 1991-92 and 1992-93 was £3·3 million, including VAT, and £3·5 million, including VAT, respectively. Provision for 1993-94 is £13·5 million, including VAT. The consultancies budget for 1994-95 has still to be decided.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of

Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Eggar: The Department did not have an official Christmas card last year. The use of Christmas cards by the Department's executive agencies is a day-to-day operational matter for their chief executives, but I understand that in 1993 the following DTI agencies sent out official cards: Accounts Services Agency, Companies House, Laboratory of the Government Chemist, National Engineering Laboratory, National Physical Laboratory, National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Patent Office, Radiocommunications Agency and Warren Spring Laboratory. Details of these and any other mailings of Christmas cards are not held centrally.

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which his Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Eggar: My Department does not classify consultancy contracts in terms of the type of organisations awarded them and the information requested cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

AKZO-Nobel Industrier

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer the proposed merger between AKZO and Nobel Industrier to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. This merger falls to be considered under the EC merger regulation. I understand the concerns that my hon. Friend has expressed about this transaction and I can assure him that these were taken into account in the full comments which the United Kingdom has passed to the EC Commission. A decision as to whether a detailed investigation should be undertaken is a matter for the Commission.

Ofwat Customer Services Committees

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria are used in determining nominations for the chairmanship of regional Ofwat customer services committees.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

Jetstream Aircraft

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of the agreement of GATT on the future prospects for the sale of Jetstream aircraft overseas.

Mr. Sainsbury: No new agreement on civil aircraft —a category which includes aircraft of all sizes, aero-engines and equipment—was concluded at the end of the Uruguay round. The parties involved agreed to retain the status quo, and to continue negotiations for a further year on the basis of a text drafted by the chairman of the relevant GATT sub-committee. It is therefore unlikely that Jetstream's sales prospects will be affected in the short term.

In the long term, our aim is to put into place an agreement which controls all forms of government support to the aerospace industry in a balanced way. Such an agreement would be of benefit to Jetstream as well as to the rest of the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action he will take to recover the levy paid to Nuclear Electric in the current financial year following the publication of the most recent figures regarding the cost of decommissioning nuclear power stations;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on costs of decommissioning power stations recently published by the nuclear industry on the validity of the estimates on which the fossil fuel levy was based; and what plans he has to reduce or end the levy.

Mr. Eggar: The fossil fuel levy enables the full costs of nuclear generation in England and Wales, including making provision for the costs of decommissioning Nuclear Electric's stations, to be met. The sums to be raised by the levy over the period 1990-1998 were determined in 1990 in the light of Nuclear Electric's best estimates at that time of the full costs of its stations and in the light of reductions in these costs which Nuclear Electric aimed to achieve. This is reflected in the fact that the amount raised for Nuclear Electric from the levy is schedule to decline in real terms up to 1998, providing the company with an incentive to reduce its costs. The levy arrangements in respect of nuclear power are due to end in 1998.

The House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee made certain recommendations in respect of the levy in its report "British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal" (HC 237). The Government will take account of these recommendations in their review of the future prospects for nuclear power.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how GATT will affect the ability of Rolls-Royce in Coventry to compete with other aero engine manufacturers.

Mr. Sainsbury: no new agreement on civil aircraft—a category which includes aero-engines—was concluded at the end of the Uruguay round. The parties involved agreed to retain the status quo, and to continue negotiations for a further year on the basis of a text drafted by the chairman of the relevant GATT sub-committee. Thus, the competitive position of Rolls-Royce will not be affected immediately.

In the long term, our aim is to put into place an agreement which controls all forms of government support to the aerospace industry, in particular the high levels of indirect support which the United States aero-engine industry receives. Such an agreement would help Rolls-Royce to compete on an equal basis in world markets.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what request he has received from Rolls-Royce for launch aid.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our policy to confirm or deny whether applications for support have been received from particular companies, as any such applications are treated as commercially confidential.

Digital Audio Broadcasting

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether any decision has been reached on the allocation of radio frequency spectrum to allow the introduction of digital audio broadcasting into the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have decided to make available the frequency band 217·5 MHz to 230 MHz to enable terrestrial digital audio broadcasting—T-DAB—services to begin in the United Kingdom. Broadcasters and equipment manufacturers will now be able to make plans for sound broadcasting services and for the production of receivers with more certainty.

The various interests which were brought together by the President of the Board of Trade in February in a DAB forum, which has the aim of promoting plans for the introduction of this important new development into the United Kingdom, will also now be better placed to take investment and other decision, taking into account factors such as the benefits to listeners and the potential for business opportunities which will be created within and outside the United Kingdom.

The DAB forum has enabled the various interests to make significant progress in planning for the introduction of DAB including the technical details, the business issues and the regulatory environment. This has built on the success of the Eureka project in which the United Kingdom—(notably the BBC—played a leading role, and has helped the United Kingdom remain in the vanguard of this exciting new challenge and opportunity for broadcasters and manufacturers.

The Government's decision to make available scarce frequencies in a prime location in the radio spectrum to allow services to start up is a further demonstration of our commitment to play a full part in enabling the devolopment of DAB in this country for the benefit of United Kingdom industry as well as United Kingdom listeners.

Regulations (Impact Costs)

Mr. Gill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the cost impact of complying with proposed regulations is to be assessed with regard to small businesses.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are introducing today a small business litmus test as part of the compliance cost assessment procedure to ensure that the cost impact of proposed regulation on small businesses is fully taken into account. The test will normally take the form of a requirement for departments to consult two or three small firms typical of the sector affected by the regulation and discuss with them what the impact would be. Departments may apply an alternative test if this would give a better and clearer picture of the impact. The results of the test are to be included in the compliance cost assessment on the proposed regulation.

I am arranging for a note of the full terms of the small business litmus test to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

EC Aid Programmes

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place a copy of his response to the European Commissioner's consultative document on the future of Rechar and other EC-wide aid programmes in the Library.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 12 January at column *240.*

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts made provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Sproat: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Unicorn Heritage plc

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the reasons for his decision to declare as unrecoverable the grant made to Unicorn Heritage plc to promote the royal heritage exhibition.

Mr. Sproat: The writing-off of debts relating to grants paid under the section 4 grant scheme is an administrative procedure that does not require the intervention of the Secretary of State. In the case of Unicorn Heritage plc, the English tourist board was informed by the company's liquidators that there was no prospect of the debt being paid. The board accordingly recommended to my Department that the debt should be written off. My Department accepted the board's recommendation and once Treasury approval had been granted, the debt was

duly written off. Unicorn Heritage plc was treated in exactly the same way as any other company would have been in the circumstances.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the practices and criteria used to write off grants made by the English tourist board; and if he will make a statement with regard to the write-off of the £200,000 grant for Unicorn Heritage plc awarded in December 1988.

Mr. Sproat: The English tourist board has discretion to seek repayment of any grant made under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 if there is a breach of the grant conditions. Having raised a debt, the board will investigate the likelihood of repayment. If, following these investigations, the board judges that the debt is irrecoverable, it will formally recommend to my Department that the debt should be written off. My Department has authority to write off debts up to a value of £100,000. Debts over £100,000 can be written off only with Treasury approval.

In the case of Unicorn Heritage plc, I am satisfied that the English tourist board investigated thoroughly the possibility of repayment, and that the write-off procedures were correctly applied. Unicorn Heritage plc was treated in exactly the same way as any other company would have been in the circumstances.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what the accommodation at the occupied royal palaces consists of for *(a)* Princess Margaret, *(b)* the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, *(c)* Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, *(d)* the Duke and Duchess of Kent and *(e)* Princess Alexandra.

Mr. Sproat: The information is as follows:

HRH the Princess Margaret
Kensington Palace

2 principal bedrooms
4 principal reception rooms

TRH the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester
Kensington Palace

4 principal bedrooms
7 principal reception rooms

TRH the Prince and Princess Michael of Kent
Kensington Palace

5 principal bedrooms
5 principal reception rooms

TRH the Duke and Duchess of Kent
St. James's Palace

4 principal bedrooms
6 principal reception rooms

HRH the Princess Alexandra
St. James's Palace

5 principal bedrooms
4 principal reception rooms

In each case, apart from HRH the Princess Alexandra, there is associated staff and ancillary accommodation.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the occupants of the grace and favour accommodation at the occupied royal palaces and of the offices most recently held by each of them.

Mr. Sproat: Occupants of accommodation at the occupied royal palaces are as follows:

	Occupants	*Number*
(i)	Members of the Royal Family—Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, The Prince of Wales, The Princess of Wales, The Princess Margaret, The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, The Duke and Duchess of Kent, Princess Alexandra and Prince and Princess Michael of Kent.	8
(ii)	Private Secretaries and officials in The Queen's Households.	46
(iii)	Private Secretaries and officials in other Households.	9
(iv)	Domestic staff in the Queen's Household.	34
(v)	Domestic staff in other Households	13
(vi)	Stables staff looking after the Civil List carriages and carriage horses.	34
(vii)	The Queen's private staff and staff who work on the Royal Farms at Windsor.	7
(viii)	Chauffeurs in the Queen's Household.	9
(ix)	Chauffeurs in other Households.	4
(x)	Staff in The Queen's Household responsible for the maintenance of the Occupied Palaces Estate.	16
(xi)	Gardeners in the Queen's Household.	6
(xii)	Gatekeepers and security staff in The Queen's Household.	7
(xiii)	Firepatrolmen in The Queen's Household.	5
(xiv)	Craftsmen and Porters in The Queen's Household.	23
(xv)	Royal Collection Enterprises Limited staff.	4
(xvi)	Crown Estate staff.	3
(xvii)	Military Knights at Windsor Castle—pensioners.	13
(xviii)	Pensioners.	27
Total		268

Twenty-three of the pensioners are retired employees of the royal household or their widows. The remaining four pensioners were granted accommodation in the past on a grace and favour basis.

Stately Homes

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from English Heritage about the effect on the future upkeep of stately homes of the financial situation of their owners.

Mr. Brooke: I have received no recent representations from English Heritage on the general issue of the effect on the future upkeep of stately homes of the financial situation

of their owners, but various aspects of English Heritage's on-going work bear on this issue. For instance, English Heritage's tax review panel is considering the impact of current taxation on owners of historic property, including stately homes. My Department is kept in close touch with that work.

National Lottery

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy that all capital building projects financed by revenue from the national lottery will include access and facilities for people with disabilities.

Mr. Brooke: It will be for the bodies identified in section 23 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 to consider applications for national lottery funds. I shall be encouraging them to ensure that capital projects financed from the national lottery take account of the needs of people with disabilities, as required by the building regulations.

Windsor Castle

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the National Heritage what damage has been caused to medieval wall paintings at Windsor castle by contractors; and if he will review the application of listed building controls to inhabited royal palaces.

Mr. Sproat: One chase approximately 8 ft high was made alongside a door architrave for the insertion of wiring, before the evidence of some paintwork concealed behind panelling and limewash was identified. The damage was localised and represented a fraction of an extensive area. Remedial conservation work has been undertaken.

The occupied royal palaces are not statutorily subject to scheduled monument consent or listed building consent because they are Crown property. However, in the case of Windsor castle and Kensington palace, which are scheduled ancient monuments, any proposed development is subject to a similar non-statutory procedure known as scheduled monument clearance. It is also the practice of the royal household to comply with listed building consent requirements at the other occupied royal palaces which are listed but not scheduled. There are no plans to alter these arrrangements.

British Library

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what additional costs have been incurred following the problems with wiring at the new British library building in St. Pancras.

Mr. Sproat: I expect the additional costs incurred in the employment of expert consultants, the direct costs of remedial works and the indirect cost of delay and disruption to be borne by the parties who have contributed to these costs, and not by the Exchequer. It is too early to estimate what the sum involved is likely to be.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Sproat: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report". On an individual contact basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Geese

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many geese, of what species and in which locations, have been culled on the authority of his Department; and if he will give similar details for any proposed future culls.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its chief executive, Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Welch to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 17 January 1994:

Mr. Ian Sproat, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number and types of geese that have been culled in the Royal Parks.

We sought licences from the Department of the Environment last year, under the Countryside and Wildlife Act, to cull 100 Greylag and 200 Canada geese. In the event, we culled 61 Greylag and 107 Canada geese.

We will continue to monitor the situation, in the light of which we may apply for further licences in the future.

Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contribution his Department made to the European year of older people and solidarity between generations in terms of financial support, practical support for particular events, and the provision of information.

Mr. Sproat: Almost all of my Department's executive functions are carried out by its two executive agencies and by its 43 non-departmental public bodies which operate at arm's length from Government. My officials wrote to the chief officers of those bodies in 1992 to advise them that 1993 had been designated European year of older people and solidarity between generations so that they could consider what contribution could be made by their respective bodies within the programmes funded through the Department.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in which programmes and events for the European year of older people and solidarity between generations he has been directly involved.

Mr. Sproat: None; the chief officers of the 43 non-departmental public bodies through which my Department's programmes are delivered and which operate

at arm's length from Government, were asked to consider what contributions could be made in support of the year by their respective bodies.

Television, Wales

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will discuss with S4C the feasibility of securing satellite television air time to ensure that all residents within Wales are able to receive Welsh language television programmes.

Mr. Brooke: No. Responsibility for coverage of television services lies with the broadcasters, including S4C, which determine their priorities in the light of the resources available to them.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which communities within Wales which are at present unable to receive a reasonable reception of programmes transmitted by S4C and at least one English language television channel based in Wales could technically be served by a system of low power local relay masts; how many residents could be served by each mast; and how much each mast would cost to erect and maintain.

Mr. Brooke: Information about reception of television services by communities in Wales was given in my replies to questions from the hon. Member on 14 December 1993, *Official Report,* columns *577-78.* The additional information about coverage could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The broadcasters estimate that the average cost of building a low-power television relay station is about £40,000, with maintenance costs of about £3,000 a year.

"Big Story" Broadcast

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what discussions he has had with the Independent Television Commission regarding the espousal of burglary, surveillance and war on the water by Greenpeace in pursuit of the making of Carlton television's "Big Story" broadcast on 6 January;

(2) what action he intends to take following the illegal forced entry to premises by Twenty Twenty Television during the making of Carlton television's "Big Story" broadcast on 6 January.

Mr. Brooke: I do not intend to discuss this with the Independent Television Commission. It would be for it to decide whether any action should be taken. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission can also examine complaints about unwarranted invasion of privacy. Ultimately, it would be for the courts to determine whether criminal activity had taken place.

Film Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what recent representations he has received concerning incentives for investment in film production; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to issue a consultation document on the introduction of incentives to encourage investment in film production; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he last met representatives of the British film industry to discuss the prospects for that industry; with whom he met; and what action he proposes to take as a result of that meeting.

Mr. Brooke: I regularly receive representations concerning possible measures to increase investment in film production. In December, I discussed the prospects of the British film industry with representatives of the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television and the film producer Mr. Edward Simons. So far as possible future Government action to help the industry is concerned, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend on 11 January, *Official Report,* column *70.*

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Sproat: Some 2,500 Christmas cards were purchased by the Department of National Heritage at a cost of £628·76. Of these, some 1,100 were supplied to Ministers. The remaining cards were available for use by civil servants. Cards were dispatched at normal second class postal rate, or were sent via the Government inter-departmental service. It is not possible to quantify the cost in staff time to sign, address and envelope the cards.

I have asked the chief executive of the Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Parks agencies to write to the hon. Member about the practices in their agencies.

ENVIRONMENT

London Policy

14. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has had to the consultation document on London policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: So far over 9,000 completed questionnaries from "London: Making the Best Better" have been returned and I have also received over 200 letters in response to the publication. I will publish a digest of the response in March when replies have been analysed by my Department. All completed questionnaires received by mid-February will be taken into account in this analysis.

Local Government Reorganisation

15. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the Government's current attitude to local government reorganisation.

Mr. Curry: We are committed to the Local Government Commission's reviews of shire counties in England, which should lead to more convenient and effective local government reflecting the identities and interests of local people.

20. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in favour of local government reorganisation in England.

Mr. Curry: Since issuing our consultation paper on the structure of local government in April 1991 we have received many representations in favour of reorganisation

from local authorities, individuals and representatives of the business community, as well as Members of the House. It is not possible, however, to produce a definitive list of all the representations we have received except at disproportionate cost.

35. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress to date made by the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Curry: The Local Government Commission's reviews are proceeding on schedule. It has submitted final reports on the Isle of Wight, Derbyshire, Cleveland, Durham, Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset. Its final recommendations on Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire are due on 23 January. It began on 13 December 1993 reviews of all the remaining shire counties in England and has been directed to submit final recommendations on these counties by the end of 1994.

Local Authority Debt

16. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current extent of local authority debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: At 31 March 1993, the total outstanding debt of local authorities in England was £37·6 billion. We shall continue to encourage authorities to reduce their debts.

Affordable Housing

17. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received over the shortage of affordable rented accommodation.

Sir George Young: I and my Department continue to receive a regular flow of representations about the quality and quantity of rented housing. I am glad to tell the hon. Member that we are on course to exceed our commitment to providing 153,000 homes through housing associations over the first three years of this Parliament; the Housing Corporation now estimates that on the latest plans some 178,000 will have been completed by the end of 1994-95.

32. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase the amount of affordable housing in inner London.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation recently announced the allocation of £285 million of resources to Housing Association projects in inner London. This will provide over 5,000 additional homes to rent and over 2,000 additional lettings through the tenant incentive and sale programmes.

Local authorities can increase the supply of available housing for rent by reducing the number of vacant and squatted properties. Inner London has made good progress in the last five years, reducing by 7,500 the number of vacant and squatted council dwellings, but there is more to be done.

We expect to provide about £358 million in 1994-95 to assist the repair and regeneration of inner London estates through HIP, estate action and housing action trusts. We will also be funding cash incentive schemes which increase the number of council homes available for letting and we will provide £86 million over the next three years through the rough sleepers initiative, largely to provide homes for single homeless people.

We also have initiatives such as flats over shops, housing associations as managing agents and tax incentives to take in lodgers which increase the supply of affordable housing through private renting.

Bathing Water Quality

18. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what standards he wishes to see implemented for the regulation of the quality of bathing water at Britain's beaches.

Mr. Atkins: The Government wish to see bathing water quality standards which are based on good scientific and medical advice. The forthcoming review of the EC bathing water directive will be an opportunity to ensure that the Community focuses on essential quality and health parameters.

Housing, Birmingham

19. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the impact of the Budget on housing in Birmingham.

Sir George Young: Birmingham housing has done extremely well from the Budget. Resources totalling over £78 million have been allocated in 1994-95 to renovate existing housing and build new. In addition, very large investments have been targeted to renovate some of the worst council estates through the estate action, city challenge and housing action trust initiatives, amounting to a further £60 million.

Respiratory Disease

21. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he is carrying out into the links between air pollution and respiratory disease.

Mr. Atkins: The Government sponsor a substantial body of research on links between air pollution and respiratory disease. Last July the Institute for Environment and Health was established to act as a focal point for research into the links between health and environmental quality generally, including air pollution.

Birds Directive

22. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites the United Kingdom have been designated under the EC wild birds directive.

Mr. Atkins: Seventy-seven special protection areas have been designated in the United Kingdom. Further designations are expected shortly.

36. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with his opposite number in the Commission of the European Communities in relation to the designation of the lower Severn estuary special protection area under the 1979 wild birds directive.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Local Government Finance

23. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about local government finance since July.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle).

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will calculate the total potential spending by all local authorities in England in 1993-94 if they all spent to the maximum of the capped levels, and the similar total potential spending for 1994-95 according to the provisional figures so far announced.

Mr. Baldry: The aggregates of the maximum budget requirements which could be calculated by English local authorities within the capping principles adopted for 1993-94 and the provisional capping criteria for 1994-95 which my right hon. Friend has announced are respectively:

	£ billion
1993-94	36·790
[1]1994-95	38·097

[1] Provisional.

These figures exclude the receiver for the Metropolitan police district—which is not subject to designation for capping under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992—local precepts, and appropriations from reserves.

Spending Plans

24. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reduction there is in the spending plans for 1994-95 to 1995-96 compared with his Department's plans in the 1992 autumn statement.

Mr. Gummer: Changes from the spending plans for my Department in the 1992 autumn statement were set out in table 5B.3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", a copy of which is in the Library.

29. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the estimate for spending in 1994-95 and 1995-96 contained in the 1992 autumn statement; what is the current spending plan for those years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's spending plans for 1994-95 and 1995-96 were contained in table 2A.5 of the 1992 autumn statement. The latest plans are in table 5B.3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95". Copies of both documents are in the Library.

Waste Incineration

25. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the operation of current legislation on the operation of incinerators for the burning of waste material.

Mr. Atkins: Operators of waste incinerators are required by part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to apply for authorisation of the process and must demonstrate the use of best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—BATNEEC—to prevent or minimise pollution before the authorisation is issued. Guidance is given to local enforcing authorities by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and for Scotland, and to the national inspectorate—HMIP and HMIPI in Scotland—by the chief inspectors. Both guidance notes and authorisations will be reviewed by the enforcing authorities at not more than four-yearly intervals.

33. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the critical loads advisory group can assist with decisions on the provision of incineration of industrial and domestic waste.

Mr. Atkins: Critical loads maps are published by my Department, and these may be used by the relevant pollution control authorities. The critical loads advisory group is currently investigating methods of improving the resolution of the maps.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

26. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in his plans to extend compulsory competitive tendering to councils' professional services.

Mr. Baldry: My Department is currently consulting local authorities and other interested parties on detailed proposals for extending CCT to local authority legal services. We will begin consulting on other white collar services in the course of this year. I anticipate that legislation will take effect in a phased programme beginning in October 1995.

27. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in putting out local services to compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: Many blue collar services are already subject to CCT and are coming up for their second cycle of tendering, comprising approximately £2 billion-worth of contracts. CCT will be introduced for further blue collar services and a wide range of white collar services, starting with on-street parking and vehicle management from 1 April 1995 and legal and construction services from 1 October 1995. These are further large areas of council activity involving services amounting to well over £4 billion in value.

Water and Sewerage Charges

28. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy in relation to the preferred method for the charging for domestic water and sewerage services.

Mr. Atkins: The basis of charging is a matter for the water companies. We have said that in our view there is a case for selective use of meters chiefly in areas of significant potential water shortage.

National Parks

30. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made with the implementation of the Edwardes committee recommendations for national parks in England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: In 1992 we issued a major policy statement setting out our proposals for the national parks, including a commitment to legislate to establish independent authorities for all 10 parks. Unfortunately

pressure on the parliamentary timetable has not allowed us to secure a place in the current session. However, Lord Norrie has recently announced his intention to introduce legislation in the House of Lords to establish independent authorities for all the parks and I am optimistic that the Government will be able to support it.

Minerals Planning Guidance

31. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will have completed his review of minerals planning guidance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We published revised mineral planning guidance for coal mining and colliery spoil disposal for public consultation on 14 December 1993. Comments are required by 18 March 1994. When the comments have been considered we would hope to make any necessary revisions and publish final guidance in the summer.

Standard Spending Assessment, Bournemouth

34. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the standard spending assessment for Bournemouth for 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: Within the proposals for revenue support grant in 1994-95 announced on 2 December 1993, the provisional standard spending assessment for Bournemouth is £18·18 million. We have consulted local authorities on these provisional figures and will reach final decisions shortly.

Housing Quality

37. **Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the Government's policies to improve the quality of housing in outer ring areas of cities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Housing in outer ring areas of cities benefits in the same way as housing in other areas from the Government's policies to secure better value for money from the use of public funds; to encourage investment in the private rented sector, widening choice for tenants and increasing the supply of homes for rent; to promote the growth of owner occupation; and to direct public expenditure more effectively towards those people and areas that most need support.

As far as council housing is concerned, we aim to direct a larger share of spending power to those local authorities with the greatest needs, so outer ring areas with the most serious housing needs will receive greater help. Where local authority estates face particular difficulties, estate action helps local authorities to tackle their management and social and economic problems as well as their physical problems. For a few of the most severely run-down estates housing action trusts have been established to secure comprehensive regeneration—for example, in Castle Vale. The resources for both estate action and housing action trusts for 1994-95 were increased in the Budget; both will be included in the single regeneration budget, which will come into operation from April.

Litter

38. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of Chelmsford borough council's use of the power in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to enforce the law against litter.

Mr. Atkins: The Tidy Britain Group, which monitors local authorities performance under the Environmental Protection Act, tells me that Chelmsford borough council continues to make good use of the powers available to it. By employing litter wardens, adopting the fixed penalty scheme, and fining offenders, it is providing a strong deterrent to prospective litter louts.

Housing Land

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of available housing land broken down by region and estimated in terms of the number of properties.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not available.

The Department does collect information on land in England with outstanding planning permission for residential development, which represents one component of land available for housing. The latest results, for 1991-92, relate to private sector development only and were published in "Development Control Statistics: England 1991-92" which is available in the Library. The table, showing the area of land with planning permission for private housing development in each region of England, and the corresponding number of dwellings, is taken from that publication.

Since 1992, the Department has collected information on outstanding planning permissions for all residential development in England, public as well as private sector. The 1992-93 results will be published by the Department this summer in "Development Control Statistics: England 1992-93".

3.2 Land with outstanding planning permission for private housing development by region and type of authority[1]: 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92

Thousand/thousand hectares

Region	1989-90		1990-91		1991-92	
	Dwellings	*Area*	*Dwellings*	*Area*	*Dwellings*	*Area*
North	42·4	2·0	[3]47·7	[3]2·2	45·9	1·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	67·1	2·9	[2]71·1	[2]3·0	71·7	2·3
East Midlands	92·3	4·2	[3]99·7	[2]4·5	100·3	4·6
East Anglia	72·3	3·5	74·6	3·5	72·3	3·5
South East						
Greater London	62·1	1·0	[2]54·3	[2]0·8	57·7	0·9
Rest of South East	217·6	8·6	[2]207·2	[2]8·6	200·2	9·1
South West	110·7	4·1	[2]110·0	[2]4·2	110·8	4·3
West Midlands	72·9	3·1	[2]72·1	3·6	69·0	3·0
North West	70·4	3·0	[3]77·2	3·3	77·7	3·2

Region	1989-90 Dwellings	1989-90 Area	1990-91 Dwellings	1990-91 Area	1991-92 Dwellings	1991-92 Area
England	807·8	32·4	[2]813·9	[2]33·7	805·6	32·8
of which:						
Metropolitan Districts and Greater London	154·7	[2]4·7	[2]152·5	[2]4·8	151·8	4·5
Non-Metropolitan Districts	653·1	[2]27·7	[2]661·4	[2]28·9	653·8	28·3

[1] All figures are estimates based on available figures for 92·3 per cent. of English local authorities in 1989-90, 94·8 per cent. in 1990-91 and 91·3 per cent. in 1991-92.
[2] Figures refer to the stock of sites with outstanding planning permission at the end of each financial year.

Lancashire (Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received on the pollution arising from the pollution incident off the coast of Lancashire on 2 January.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit was first informed of the incident on 1 January. Samples of the substance recovered from the Fylde and Cumbrian coasts have been analysed by the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, and indicate that the source of the pollution is likely to be a commercial lubricant additive. Further tests are being carried out to establish the precise cause of the pollution.

Council Housing

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority dwellings, excluding those purpose-built for the elderly and disabled, were *(a)* started and *(b)* completed in the latest 12-month period for which figures were available and how many were (i) started and (ii) completed in the comparable 12-month period for 1979-80, for (1) England and Wales and (2) the City of Manchester.

Sir George Young: The available figures for local authorities are as shown:

Local authority housebuilding, excluding purpose-built dwellings for the elderly and disabled

(numbers of dwellings)

	Starts		Completions	
	England and Wales	City of Manchester	England and Wales	City of Manchester
1979	43,123	801	61,336	738
1980	24,692	861	65,164	913
1992	1,140	6	1,922	2
12-month period to November 1993	[1]773	—	[1]1,078	6

[1] These cover 76 starts and 96 completions of local authority house building in Wales which include dwellings purpose-built for the elderly and disabled.

Housing associations now have the main responsibility for new building in the social sector and the figures equivalent to those for local authorities are as follows:

(numbers of dwellings)

	Starts		Completions	
	England and Wales	City of Manchester	England and Wales	City of Manchester
1979	12,098	62	15,472	365
1980	12,473	227	19,360	94
1992	26,044	553	20,209	238
12-month period to November 1993	[1]34,906	606	[1]29,170	477

[1] These cover 3,070 starts and 2,410 completions of housing association house building in Wales which include dwellings purpose-built for the elderly and disabled.

House building is only part of housing associations' provision of additional social housing. Homes are also provided through a variety of other means including purchases for rehabilitation and, the tenants incentive scheme.

Local Authorities (Northamptonshire)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed by each local authority in Northamptonshire *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in each year since 1983.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is given in the table:

Numbers employed in Local Authorities in Northamptonshire at June of each year

Authority	1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Northamptonshire	11,784	9,751	11,832	9,735	11,857	10,254	11,890	10,934
Corby	527	122	550	112	582	108	572	141
Daventry	268	48	268	43	275	53	287	54
East Northamptonshire	263	70	266	73	264	73	265	72
Kettering	509	92	494	105	[illegible]	103	485	108
Northampton	1,606	172	1,608	159	1,599	183	1,606	178
South Northamptonshire	261	35	263	34	257	34	252	37
Wellingborough	386	67	389	73	384	77	376	79

Authority	1987		1988		1989		1990	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Northamptonshire	11,594	11,223	11,819	11,477	11,536	11,295	11,005	12,365
Corby	583	170	580	135	613	134	667	153
Daventry	298	59	311	73	N/A	N/A	314	106
East Northamptonshire	261	69	260	80	267	78	213	57
Kettering	478	109	478	96	468	104	464	105
Northampton	1,482	216	1,431	235	N/A	N/A	1,554	192
South Northamptonshire	255	43	255	26	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wellingborough	378	83	384	90	388	93	388	105

Authority	1991		1992		1993	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Northamptonshire	10,943*	10,966	10,752	10,409	10,015	9,362
Corby	621	135	613	133	N/A	N/A
Daventry	312	118	315	86	312	89
East Northamptonshire	200	57	203	57	N/A	N/A
Kettering	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Northampton	1,602	281	1,518	151	1,429	255
South Northamptonshire	N/A	N/A	342	43	336	74
Wellingborough	392	100	383	119	346	116

*Provisional data
N/A: Data not available
Source: Joint Staffing Watch for England.
Notes:
(i) Education, highways, fire services, law and order and social services are administered by Northamptonshire county council. The other authorities shown are district councils which, amongst other services administer housing, planning and refuse collection.
(ii) Polytechnics and higher education institutions were transferred from the local authority sector in April 1989.
(iii) Further education institutions became the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council in April 1993.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Gummer: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Rates (Transitional Relief)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment if he will list for each district council the actual and percentage reductions in transitional relief from 1993-94 to 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available at individual authority level. The total cost of transitional relief in England in 1993-94 is £399 million; the estimated cost in 1994-95 is £130 million.

Planning Applications

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outstanding planning applications by local authorities are yet to be decided upon by him.

Mr. Baldry: Seventeen.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the Housing Corporation budget is dedicated to *(a)* shared ownership schemes, *(b)* tenants incentive schemes and *(c)* do-it-yourself shared ownership schemes for each year from 1987 to the present.

Sir George Young: The percentages of the Housing Corporation's gross approved development programme —ADP—going to *(a)* conventional shared ownership schemes—LCHO—*(b)* tenants incentive schemes—TIS —and *(c)* do-it-yourself home ownership—DIYSO—from 1987-88 to 1993-94 are as follows:

LCHO, TIS and DIYSO as percentage of gross ADP

	LCHO	*TIS*	*DIYSO*
1987-88	11·3	—	—
1988-89	11·4	—	—
1989-90	8·8	—	—
1990-91	6·1	—	—
1991-92	[3]5·5	2·4	—
[1]1992-93	4·6	3·0	2·5
[2]1993-94	4·3	3·1	5·4

[1] Including housing market package.
[2] Estimated outturn.
[3] Includes DIYSO pilot scheme.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the material deprivation index devised by the School of Advanced Urban Studies at the university of Bristol in the context of his review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: The measurement of social and economic deprivation proposed for use in standard spending assessments arising from the review is based on detailed statistical analysis discussed with the local authority associations. The proposed assessments use a wider range of indicators than that devised by the school of advanced urban studies including some outside the census, such as unemployment.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to further amend the formula for the calculation of standard spending assessment.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend has consulted on the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95 including his proposals for standard spending assessments. All the representations which have been received and any other relevant information will be carefully considered before final proposals are brought before the House shortly.

County Hall

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the latest value placed on London's county hall prior to the London residuary body selling it to the Shirayama Corporation of Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Prior to its sale, any valuation of the riverside building of County hall would have been a matter for the London residuary body and potential purchasers. The terms of the contract for the sale of the riverside building were confidential between the LRB and the Shirayama Corporation. But the LRB was required by law to obtain the best price.

Social Index

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment was made of the possible impact on local authorities of the changes to the ethnic definition within the social index.

Mr. Baldry: A wider definition of ethnicity was felt to be more appropriate for the measurement of social deprivation within the revised all ages social index. No assessment has been made of the separate effect of this change within the context of a number of changes proposed as a result of the review of standard spending assessments.

Audit Commission

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members currently appointed to the Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the national health service in England and Wales.

Mr. Baldry: Audit Commission: Members serving at 17 January 1994.

Chairman
Sir David Cooksey

Deputy Chairman
Murray Stuart

Sir Peter Bowness CBE
Alan Brown CBE
Anthony Christopher CBE
Lawrence Eilbeck
Sir Terence English
Sir Donald Irvine CBE
Kate Jenkins
Sir Peter Kemp
Jeremy Orme
Clive Thompson
Tony Travers
Sir Robert Wall OBE
Chris West
Clive Wilkinson
Peter Wood

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to each housing action trust.

Sir George Young: The names of the board members of each of the housing action trusts are as follows:

North Hull—
Lord Bellwin *(Chairman)*
Cllr. John Black *(Deputy Chairman)*
Prof. Peter Arnold
Mr. Chris Fenwick
Mrs. Maureen Foers
Mr. Ray Ford
Mrs. Joan Maginn
Mrs. Jill Sowersby
Mr. David Urquhart
Cllr. Dennis Woods

Waltham Forest—
Mr. John Chumrow *(Chairman)*
Mr. Simon Bartlett *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. Roger Baker
Mrs. Wendy Chapman

Mr. Roy Evans
Ms Jacky Flanders
Mr. Clive Landa
Mr. Howard May
Ms Melinda Phillips
Mrs. Sharwar Sadeque
Mr. David Shepherd

Liverpool—
Mrs. Paula Ridley *(Chairman)*
Mr. Michael Appleton *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mrs. Irene Clark
Cllr. Margaret Clarke
Mr. Rodney Dykes
Mrs. Marjorie Gallimore
Mrs. Susan Last
Mr. Edward McGonagle
Mrs. June Roberts
Mr. Jack Sheridan

Castle Vale—
Mr. Richard Temple Cox *(Chairman)*
Cllr. Ken Barton *(Deputy Chairman)*
Cllr. Sheila Austin
Mrs. Joyce Curtis
Cllr. Pat Forester
Mr. Horace Gillis
Mrs. Valerie Lawrie
Mr. John Newton
Miss Pat Niner
Mr. Alfred Owen
Mrs. Carole Rafferty
Mr. Robert Wharton

Tower Hamlets—
Dr. Michael Barraclough *(Chairman)*
Cllr. Janet Ludlow *(Deputy Chairman)*
Ms Susan Angoy
Ms Sheila Drew Smith
Mrs. Jackie Harris
Mrs. Doris Lewis
Rev. Andrew Mawson
Mr. Rory Moore
Mr. Barry Shaw
Ms Tricia Zipfel

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Housing Corporation.

Sir George Young: The current members of the Housing Corporation board are:
Sir Christopher Benson *(Chairman)*
Stella Clarke JP DL
David Cochrane OBE FCA
Peter Cooke
Dermot Gleeson
David Kleeman
Lady Montgomery
Robin Thompson
Julia Unwin
Wilfred Wood
Anthony Mayer *(Chief Executive)*

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Property Advisory Group.

Sir George Young: The current members of the Property Advisory Group are as follows:
Mr. Hugh Jenkins *(Chairman)*
Chief Executive of Prudential Portfolio Managers and Director, Prudential Corporation plc.

Mr. Roger Aldridge
Executive Director, Marks and Spencer plc.

Mr. Robin Broadhurst
International Chairman, Jones Lang Wootton.

Mr Harold Couch
Partner, Hillier Parker May and Rowden.

Professor Lyn Davies
Professor of Planning at the Department of Land and Development, University of Reading.

Mr. David Doubble
Assistant General Manager (Estates), Friends Provident Life Office.

Mr. Stuart Lipton
Chief Executive, Stanhope Properties plc.

Mrs. Lesley MacDonagh
Managing Partner, Property Sector of Lovell White Durrant.

Mr. Anthony Pender
Chief Executive of English Estates.

Mr. Martin Shaw
Director of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council.

Mr. Anthony Solomons
Chairman, Singer and Friedlander plc.

Mr. Alan Tate
Consultant, Healey and Baker.

Mr. James Tuckey
Managing Director, MEPC plc.

Mr. William Wells
Chairman, Chesterton International Ltd.

Mr. Derek Wood QC
Principal, St Hugh's College, Oxford.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to each valuation tribunal.

Mr. Baldry: There are 56 valuation tribunals in England which in total have around 2,500 members.

The tribunals are independent bodies. Their members are appointed by local authorities. Detailed information about membership is not held centrally.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Building Regulations Advisory Committee.

Sir George Young: The current members of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee are:
Professor J. M. Anderson *(Chairman)*
Mr. K. W. G. Blount
Mr. N. J. Bright
Mr. J. W. Carter
Mr. B. A. Cox
Mr. H. J. Dawson
Mr. R. A. Dibben
Mr. M. D. Finn
Mr. D. C. Goodsir
Mr. R. A. Graham
Mr. S. J. Ham
Professor Sir Edmund Happold
Professor P. O'Sullivan
Miss P. R. Tindale
Professor T. J. Wiltshire
Ms R. Wyles

Westminster City Council

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which currently implement a designated sales policy of the type referred to in Mr. John Magill's report on the accounts of Westminster city council; and what action he plans to take.

Sir George Young: The Department does not collect information on voluntary sales undertaken by local authorities in a way which would permit the identification of policies of the type mentioned.

Right to Buy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards are in place to prevent abuse of the right-to-buy scheme by people who are not council tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The right to buy only gives public sector tenants the right to purchase, at a discount, the home in which they live. The tenant purchaser is required to repay all or part of the discount to the vendor authority if, within three years of purchase, the freehold of the property is conveyed, the lease assigned or a new lease granted, or an option to purchase is given to a third party. Any question about the repayment of discount in an individual case is a matter for the vendor authority.

Council House Sales

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority owned homes were sold in each year since 1989-90.

Sir George Young: Details of sales and transfers of local authority dwellings in England in the years 1989-90 to 1992-93 are given in the table.

	To owner occupiers	*To Housing associations*[1]	*Other sales and transfers*[1]
1989-90	141,832	15,068	—
1990-91	81,236	37,453	8,029
1991-92	51,961	10,862	2
[2]1992-93	40,404	26,488	17

[1] Includes block transfers to housing associations and the private sector. Transfers to housing action trusts are excluded.
[2] Provisional.

Homelessness, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are currently homeless in Durham.

Sir George Young: Figure for households accepted as homeless by individual local authorities are given in the supplementary table to the quarterly information bulletin "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act 1985: England"; copies of both are in the Library. The latest available statistics are for the third quarter of 1993.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what improvements he has in mind for building regulations in relation to the energy efficiency of building.

Mr. Baldry: Last January the Government issued for consultation proposals for strengthening part L of the building regulations relating to energy conservation. These included:

increasing the standards for fabric insulation;

improving building air-tightness whilst ensuring adequate ventilation;

improving the control and insulation of heating and hot water systems;

the provision of energy ratings for new dwellings using the Government's standard assessment procedure;

new requirements for non-domestic buildings aiming to ensure the provision of efficient lighting with effective means of control, and the provision of air conditioning systems only where they are reasonably necessary—and, where they are necessary, provision for their effective control.

As a result of the responses to this consultation the proposals for air conditioning have been revised and a further consultation exercise ended on 14 January. We are continuing to consider the responses to the other proposals for part L and those to the inter-related proposals for improving part F—ventilation—which were also issued for consultation last year. The intention is to lay revisions to both parts of the regulations before Parliament in the first half of this year and to bring them into force by the end of the year.

Green Belt

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of green belt have been covered with *(a)* housing and *(b)* other buildings in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. Individual local authorities may be able to provide information about green belt decisions in their areas. Government policy is set out in planning policy guidance note 2, published by HMSO in January 1988. Recently completed research has demonstrated that green belts are effective in containing urban sprawl—"The Effectiveness of Green Belts", HMSO, July 1993.

Housing

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the level of housing grants, *(b)* the number of council houses built, *(c)* the size of the council housing stock, *(d)* the number of families legally accepted as homeless, *(e)* the number of such families housed in local authority housing and *(g)* the number of such families housed by nomination to housing associations or other housing for the years 1979-80 to 1993-94 for each local authority in England.

Sir George Young: The available information on housing stock, households accepted as homeless, homeless households housed in local authority dwellings and homeless households housed by nomination to housing associations or in other ways can be found in the annual "HIP1 All Items Print", copies of which are in the Library. The column reference numbers in the prints are as follows:

Local authority dwellings at 1 April
Within local authority's own area—Column A11
Outside local authority's own area—Column A16 (only available for 1987 to 1993)

Households accepted as homeless in the year ending 31 March
1980 and 1981—Column C5
1982 to 1984—Column B5
1985—Column B6a
1986 to 1989—Column C1a
1990 to 1993—Column C11

Homeless households housed by LAs in the year ending 31 March
Secure lettings only
1980—Column D4b1
1981—Column E4b1
1982—Column E8b
1983—Column E9b
Secure lettings, non-secure lettings and mobility scheme lettings
1984—Columns D5a + D9b + D10a
1985—Columns D5b + D9b + D10b
1986 to 1988—Columns E5b + E9b + E10b
1989—Columns E5a2 + E5b2 + E5c2 + E7 + E9b + E10b
1990—Columns E5a21 + E5b21 + E5c21 + E81 + E9b1 + E10b1
1991 to 1993—Columns E5a21 + E5b21 + E81 + E9b1 + E10b1

Homeless households taking up LA nominations to housing associations in the year ending 31 March
1980—not available
1981 and 1982—Column D1b
1983—Column C1b
1984—Column C1a
1985—Column C1b
1986 to 1990—Column D1b
1991 to 1993—Column D1b1

Homeless household taking up LA nominations to bodies other than housing associations or taking up LA or housing association tenancies in other local authorities in the year ending 31 March
1980 to 1989 not available
1990—Columns D2b+D3b+D4
1991 and 1992—Columns D2b1+D3b1+D41
1993—Columns D2b1+D3b1+D51

Details of the housing investment programme—HIP—allocations, which give an indication of what the Government consider are the relative resource requirements for capital expenditure on housing, for each local authority in England for the years since 1979-80 are also available in the Library.

Figures for house building by individual local authorities are published on a calendar year basis; the publications in which they can be found, which are again available in the Library, are as follows:

1979	Local Housing Statistics Issue No. 59 Table 4(b)
1980-84	Housebuilding in England by local authority areas Tables 1.1-1.5
1985-90	Local Housing Statistics Issue No. 103 Tables 1(a)-(f)
1991	Local Housing Statistics Issue No. 105 Table 1(b)
1992	Local Housing Statistics Issue No. 106 Table 1(b)
1993 *	Local Housing Statistics Issue No. 107 Table 1

* January to June only

Figures for financial years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Traffic Levels

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for which local authorities the figures to be used for calculating the standard spending assessments assume a reduced level of traffic; and what evidence exists that the traffic levels have actually reduced there since the previous figures were calculated.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* The authorities with a reduction in annual average traffic flows on principal roads as calculated for the purposes of 1993-94 and 1994-95 provisional standard spending assessments respectively are listed in the table. The figures used in the calculation of SSAs are estimates of the annual average flow of all motor vehicles on principal roads—excluding principal motorways—for which the authority is the highway authority. They are based on data from the Department of Transport's traffic census.

Authorities with a reduction in traffic flow data between 1991 and 1992
Manchester
Oldham
Rochdale
Salford
Stockport
Tameside
Trafford
Knowsley
Liverpool
St. Helens
Sefton
Wirral
Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Sheffield
Newcastle Upon Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tyneside
Sunderland
Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
City of London
Camden
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Lambeth
Lewisham
Southwark
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Croydon
Enfield
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Merton
Redbridge
Richmond upon Thames
Sutton
Waltham Forest
Isles of Scilly
Avon
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
East Sussex
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Kent
Northumberland
Somerset
Surrey
West Sussex
Wiltshire

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be offset in the same way as for all employers, by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within the Department's existing running costs baseline.

Noreast Building Management

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out *(a)* the proceeds from the sale of Noreast Building Management, *(b)* the amount of money set aside to cover possible redundancy costs and *(c)* on the latest available figures, the total number of redundancies and the cost involved.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* The vendor will receive proceeds of £8 million from the sale of the Noreast Building Management business. The agreed limit to the Department's liability for severance payments to Noreast Building Management staff is £29·5 million, covering staff made redundant in the first five years post sale. The Department shares liability pound for pound with the purchaser for severance costs in excess of £25 million—until the cap of £29·5 million is reached. The total number of staff made redundant since sale is 222, at an estimated cost of £9·1 million; of these only one was a transferred member of staff made redundant by the purchaser.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest estimate of the effect of common agricultural policy reform upon the cost of the CAP on the average European Union citizen in *(a)* tax transfers and *(b)* consumer transfers as indicated by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) on 12 June 1992, *Official Report*, column 555.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimates provided by my predecessor at the time of the CAP reform agreement still stand. To provide revised estimates, revised assumptions would need to be made about the situation if the reform had not taken place. There is no basis for making any such assumptions.

Birds (Imports)

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when her Department will publish the mortality statistics for imports of birds for 1993; and what plans have been made for the publication of these statistics in future years.

Mr. Soames: We aim to publish the 1993 importation of birds mortality statistics by the middle of this year. Arrangements for publication of future studies will be kept under review.

Tied Cottages

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female agricultural workers live in tied cottages in England and Wales.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No official figures are available for the number of agricultural workers living in tied cottages. However, the results of the sample survey of earnings and hours of agricultural workers indicate that 38 per cent. of male regular hired workers and salaried managers and 7 per cent. of female regular hired workers and salaried managers in England and Wales in 1992 received a house or cottage as payment of wages in lieu of payment in cash.

Horses (Exports)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what measures there are to ensure that horses exported live to the Republic of Ireland are not subsequently exported to other EC member states for slaughter;

(2) how many cases are known to her of horses being exported to *(a)* the Republic of Ireland, *(b)* other EC states and *(c)* elsewhere for slaughter, in each of the last three years; how many horses were involved; and how many of these horses had false documents;

(3) what tonnage of horse meat was exported from Britain to *(a)* the Republic of Ireland, *(b)* other EC states and *(c)* elsewhere in each of the last three years;

(4) how many horses were exported live from Britain to *(a)* the Republic of Ireland, *(b)* other EC states and *(c)* elsewhere in each of the last three years.

Mr. Soames: Welfare regulations made under the Animal Health Act 1981 require all horses exported to the continent of Europe, except race horses certified by the Jockey club, to be licensed. The Ministry does not license horses exported for immediate slaughter. Any trade in animals from the Republic of Ireland is a matter for the Irish authorities. I am not aware of any horses travelling with false welfare documents.

No horse meat was exported to the Republic of Ireland in 1991-92. Exports of horse meat to other member states were 1,069 metric tonnes in 1991 and 1,010 metric tonnes in 1992. In 1992, seven metric tonnes were sent to other destinations.

The number of horses exported to the Republic of Ireland were 3,042 in 1991 and 2,538 in 1992. Exports of horses to other member states were 2,786 in 1991 and 2,844 in 1992. Exports to other destinations were 2,717 in 1991 and 3,765 in 1992. In 1992, three horses were exported to the Republic of Ireland for slaughter.

Trade data for 1993 are not yet available.

Source. H M Customs and Excise.

Integrated Administration and Control System

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the requirements for IACS applications in England and Wales in 1994.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Following the 1993 IACS exercise, I have consulted closely with the industry to ensure that the IACS requirements for 1994 are kept as simple as possible in line with the Government's policy to

keep any necessary regulation to a minimum. The arrangements to apply this year reflect the conclusion of those consultations.

A guidance note to enable applicants to prepare the necessary mapping and field information is being sent out; copies should be received next week. The main explanatory booklets should be issued in March. The documentation is designed to be as helpful and easy to follow as possible given the complex nature of the system.

The mapping booklet makes it clear that no maps will be required where applications relate only to forage area and that they will not be required for arable area as long as the land was registered as eligible for future arable payments in 1993 and has not changed significantly since then.

Applicants will need to supply the national grid reference number of each field and the Ordnance Survey map sheet reference in order to comply with the basic area requirements of the EC regulation. Estimates will continue to be accepted, but if areas are over-declared, we are required to apply strict penalties. I strongly urge all farmers to begin obtaining any necessary maps, field numbers and area measurements as soon as possible so as not to risk missing the application deadline.

MAFF argued strongly in Brussels for a United Kingdom deadline later than 31 March 1994 for submitting IACS applications; and will be applying the latest possible date of 15 May.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total payment made under suckler cow premium to United Kingdom farmers up to the last available date in the current financial year; and if she will express this as a percentage of the full payment available in the current financial year.

Mr. Jack: The total payment made to United Kingdom farmers under the 1993 suckler cow premium scheme up to Friday 14 January was £11·66 million. This is about 17 per cent. of the amount to be paid in the current financial year.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of information technology services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Jack: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are in fact necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Lambs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average percentage mortality figure for *(a)* upland lambs, *(b)* lowland lambs and *(c)* all ewes during the lambing season; and what are the main reasons for mortality.

Mr. Soames: Mortality figures for sheep are not collected. Mortality of young lambs varies considerably depending on the weather and other factors but is likely normally to be about 10 per cent. Hypothermia in the first two days of life is likely to be the main cause. For adult ewes, annual mortality is estimated at about 4 per cent. for which there is no single predominant cause.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to undertake research to identify the incidence of subclinically infected BSE cattle.

Mr. Soames: Research into the incidence of subclinically infected BSE cattle would require the development of a practical test to identify the presence of the infective agent in live cattle and this Ministry is already supporting a substantial volume of research aimed at developing such a test.

Fruit

Sir David Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the safety of fruit which has been waxed or sprayed with fungicide.

Mr. Soames: Fruit which has been waxed or sprayed with fungicide may be sold in the United Kingdom only if it complies with the relevant legislation. Such treatments are carefully evaluated by independent expert committees to ensure they are safe, and the evaluations are subject to review as approriate.

Milk Marque

Mr. Mills: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she plans to initiate the operations of Milk Marque; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Under the Agriculture Act 1993 it is for the Milk Marketing Board to decide what date to propose for the ending of the milk marketing scheme in its reorganisation scheme. The board has agreed that a 1 April date, as it originally proposed, is not now possible. It is considering what later date now to propose. My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales will decide on its eventual proposal along with the rest of its reorganisation scheme in accordance with the terms of the Act.

Badgers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list by county the number of badgers shot and gassed in each year since 1988; and what percentage of those badgers were subsequently shown to have tuberculosis.

Mr. Soames: The number of badgers shot in each year since 1988 in England, and the numbers of badgers that were subsequently shown to be positive for tuberculosis —M.bovis—are listed by county.

Gassing has not been used as an official means of controlling badgers since 1982.

County	*Number shot*	*Number positive for M.bovis*
1988		
Avon	110	38
Cornwall	100	20
Devon	193	36
Dorset	77	15
Gloucestershire	242	102
Somerset	23	1
Wiltshire	6	—
TOTAL	751	212 (28·2 per cent.)
1989		
Avon	129	35
Cornwall	176	27
Devon	180	18
Dorset	13	4
Gloucestershire	206	37
Somerset	—	—
Wiltshire	18	1
TOTAL	722	122 (16·9 per cent.)
1990		
Avon	55	13
Cornwall	385	63
Devon	188	45
Dorset	7	2
Gloucestershire	109	27
Somerset	17	—
Wiltshire	3	—
TOTAL	764	150 (19·6 per cent.)
1991		
Avon	55	17
Cornwall	422	75
Devon	159	20
Dorset	49	2
Gloucestershire	75	12
Somerset	—	—
Wiltshire	178	34
TOTAL	938	160 (17 per cent.)
1992		
Avon	159	38
Cornwall	470	68
Devon	162	35
Dorset	—	—
Gloucestershire	96	38
Somerset	—	—
Wiltshire	141	30
TOTAL	1,028	209 (20·3 per cent.)

County	*Number shot*	*Number positive for M.bovis*	*Number of results awaited*
1993			
Avon	123	24	6
Cornwall	360	67	38
Devon	127	37	13
Dorset	49	8	—
Gloucestershire	161	38	43
Somerset	130	48	5
Wiltshire	131	50	6
TOTAL	1,081	272 (28 per cent.)	111

RAF Aston Down

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *852*, if she will define the operational role of her Department at Royal Air Force station Aston Down; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 26 October at columns *563-64* and 6 December at column *101*.

Yorkshire and Humberside Base Area

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish the figures in hectares for *(a)* set-aside, *(b)* pulses, *(c)* oilseed rape and *(d)* cereals for each year since 1988 which were used to calculate the base area in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 3 December 1993 to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), regarding the calculation of the base area in England, *Official Report*, column *850*. There is no separate base area for Yorkshire and Humberside.

Cats and Dogs (Transport)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what system of permanent identification will be used for cats and dogs transported between member states under the provisions of the Balai directive from 1 July.

Mr. Soames: The Standing Veterinary Committee of the European Commission is currently discussing what system will be used to identify traded dogs and cats moving between member states under the provisions of the Balai directive after 1 July this year.

Hunting

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide details of the terms and conditions of the licences issued by the Forestry Commission to the Badsworth hunt allowing it to hunt on its lands; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission has not issued a licence to hunt over its land to the Badsworth hunt.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the names of the hunts which have been given licences to hunt on Forestry Commission land in the county of Essex; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission has issued licences to hunt over its land in Essex to the following hunts:

East Essex hunt
Essex hunt
Puckeridge hunt
Suffolk hunt
Thurlow hunt

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which hunts have been given licences to hunt in Epping forest.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The hon. Member may wish to contact the City of London corporation which acts as conservators of Epping forest.

Sewage Sludge Disposal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 1 December, *Official Report,* columns *589-90,* when the hon. Member for Don Valley can expect to receive the fourth report of the marine pollution monitoring management group's co-ordinating group on monitoring of sewage sludge disposal sites.

Mr. Jack: Our records show that a copy of the report was sent to the hon. Member in early December last. A further copy has now been sent to the hon. Member, together with a copy of the recently published fifth report of the co-ordinating group. Copies of both publications have been placed in the Library of the House.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Jack: The Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Sheep Quotas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she will set up a tribunal to consider applications for sheep quotas from the national reserve which do not easily fit into the categories defined by the Government but merit consideration; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The categories of producers eligible to claim on the national reserves reflect the requirements of Community legislation. They were drawn up extremely carefully following extensive consultation, bearing in mind that availability of reserve quota will be restricted. The fullest consideration was given to defining hardship cases. There are no plans to set up tribunals to consider claims of producers falling outside these categories.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value at 1980 and 1992-93 prices of hill livestock compensatory allowances in each year since 1980.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* The information requested is given in the table.

	Expenditure on HLCAs (£ million)		
Financial years	*Current prices*	*1980 prices (a)*	*1992-93 prices (a)*
1980-81	95·0	96·0	192·1
1981-82	84·5	76·2	153·0
1982-83	88·3	72·8	149·4
1983-84	91·5	72·5	148·0
1984-85	93·8	70·7	144·3
1985-86	104·9	73·9	152·5
1986-87	121·7	83·2	171·3
1987-88	121·0	79·4	163·9
1988-89	112·6	71·1	143·8
1989-90	122·4	71·5	145·0
1990-91	130·4	69·7	140·9
1991-92	160·9	80·8	166·0
1992-93	139·4	67·1	139·4

(a) Deflated by the retail prices index—all items.

Livestock Premium Quotas

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will set out the reasons why the judicial review on livestock premium quotas is being carried out by the European Court of Justice; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* This case turns on the interpretation of Community legal provisions relating to ewe premium and suckler cow quotas. Article 177 of the Community treaty provides that, where a national court considers that a decision on such a question is necessary to enable it to give judgment in a case before it, it may request a preliminary ruling from the European Court of Justice; and must do so if the court is one from which there is no appeal. In this case, both parties to the case agreed with the court that a reference was necessary and the terms of the reference were also agreed. The national court will determine the issue when it has the European Court's response.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Union Flag

Mr. John D.Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to provide a Union flag for the hospital at Tower Hill, Armagh; what arrangements have been made to fly the Union flag at these premises on the designated dates; why it was not flown on 1 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Union flag is normally flown at Tower Hill hospital on the designated dates. A breakdown in the local arrangements for flying the flag resulted in the flag not being flown on 1 January.

Cattle Premiums

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will make payments of the beef special premium and the suckler cow premium; why these payments have been delayed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to press release No. 5/94 dated 11 January 1994 from the Department of Agriculture—Northern Ireland—which sets out the current position on payment of claims under these and other livestock premium schemes. A copy has been sent to the press notice desk in the House of Commons Library.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Sir John Wheeler: The increase in the cost of providing cars for Ministers in 1990-91 and 1992-93 was around £177,000. Some £72,000 was in respect of cars provided by the RUC for Ministers in Northern Ireland and the remainder in respect of cars provided by the Government car service—GCS.

There are two main factors that have led to an increase in the cost per GCS car. The first is the effect of inflation on GCS costs, particularly pay, vehicles and fuel. The second is that, during this period, the GCS restructured its charges to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its full costs in 1990-91.

Radioactivity

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by date of change of status the various areas and locations of those parts of Northern Ireland which came under Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Orders as a result of the Chernobyl incident; what were the highest levels of contamination measured in each of those areas in *(a)* vegetation, *(b)* peat and *(c)* mineral oils; what are the levels in each area now; when he expects, at the present rate of decline of radioactivity in each area, to be able to lift the remaining restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The change of status of those parts of Northern Ireland subjected to restrictions as a result of the Chernobyl incident is as follows:

	Glenshane Co Londonderry	*Belraugh Co Londonderry*	*Glenwherry Co Antrim*
Acreage restricted in September 1986	10,744	2,248	8,620
Acreage derestricted 14 January 1991	247	943	—
Acreage derestricted 11 December 1991	568	—	—
Acreage derestricted 14 January 1993	—	—	1,112
Acreage to be derestricted 19 January 1994	—	—	618
Approximate acreage still under restriction	9,929	1,305	6,890

The highest levels of contamination measured in the restricted areas in vegetation, peat and mineral soils were 2367,1566 and 651 becquerels radiocaesium per kilogramme, respectively. The levels of contamination in peat and mineral soils have reduced by approximately 15 to 20 per cent. Variable changes have been seen in herbage with reductions of up to 50 per cent. depending on location and species. The soil—plant—animal transfer of radioactivity is complex and is influenced by many factors. Hence, it is not possible to predict when the remaining restrictions will be removed.

Measurements of caesium levels in sheep are the best way of monitoring the change in caesium status of the soils and vegetation.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the radioactive substances found in *(a)* peat, *(b)* mineral soils and *(c)* vegetation in Northern Ireland as a result of the Chernobyl incident; for what period of time the various plants found in hill forage retained such substances with particular reference to heather; and what has been the uptake of such substances by deer in the affected areas.

Mr. Ancram: The radioactive substances found in peat, mineral soils and vegetation in Northern Ireland as a result of the Chernobyl incident are isotopes of caesium—caesium-137 and caesium-134. Hill forage, including heather, in the restricted areas in Northern Ireland still contains these substances. The uptake of these isotopes measured in deer in the affected areas has been very low.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

Sir John Wheeler: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that the individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act, unless the data are exempt. When IT services are contracted out, the data protection principles and the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, apply to both the owner of personal data and the service provider. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Wildlife Numbers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary for Northern Ireland what recent studies he has made into the number of *(a)* badgers, *(b)* foxes, *(c)* hares, *(d)* rabbits, *(e)* grey crows, *(f)* magpies, *(g)* otters and *(h)* feral mink in Northern Ireland; what information he has as to whether each species is increasing, diminishing or stable in population; and what is the impact of each species on farm animals and fish stocks in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

(a) *Badgers*—The Department of Agriculture(NI) is currently funding a study, by Queen's university Belfast, of the distribution and abundance of the badger in Northern Ireland. The results of the investigation are not expected to produce any conclusive evidence about the impact of badgers on farm animals but should provide useful information on badger numbers and habitat.

(b) *Foxes*—I am not aware of any recent studies into the number of foxes in Northern Ireland.

(c) *Hares*—I am not aware of any recent studies into the number of hares in Northern Ireland. However, the Department of the Environment(NI) is part-funding a postgraduate student at Queen's university Belfast to undertake a three-year study into the distribution of hares, commencing January 1994.

(d) *Rabbits*—I have no information on any recent studies into the number of rabbits in Northern Ireland.

(e) and (f) *Grey Crows and magpies*—The only information the Department of the Environment(NI) has on the numbers of these birds is from the British Trust for Ornithology's common bird census. In the UK as a whole these species increased in numbers by 168 per cent.—magpies—and 164 per cent.—grey crows—during the period 1968-91. The only data for Northern Ireland specifically relate to magpies during the period 1983-92. This revealed an increase in numbers of 27 per cent.

I am not aware of any studies on the impact of each species on farm animals and fish stocks in Northern Ireland.

(g) *Otters*—Studies completed on an all-Ireland basis in 1981 and 1991 showed that this species is widespread in Northern Ireland, but recorded the presence of otters and made no attempt to assess their abundance.

I am not aware of any studies into the impact of otters on farm animals and fish stocks.

(h) *Feral Mink*—I am not aware of any recent studies into the number of feral mink in Northern Ireland or the impact of feral mink on farm animals and fish stocks. It is, however, generally believed that mink are now present throughout Northern Ireland wherever there is suitable habitat.

EMPLOYMENT

Work Leavers

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his best estimate of the number of people who leave the work force each year; and if he will differentiate between those who leave due to retirement, ill health, unemployment and other reasons.

Miss Widdecombe: Of those people classified as economically inactive—not employed or International Labour Organisation unemployed—in the spring 1993 labour force survey for Great Britain, 1,050,000 said that they had been in employment a year earlier. Reasons given for leaving their last job were: retirement—23 per cent.; ill health—14 per cent.; redundancy, dismissal or temporary job ending—17 per cent.; other reasons—45 per cent. Further, of those people classified as ILO unemployed in spring 1993, 950,000 said that they had been in employment a year earlier. The reasons given for leaving employment were redundancy or dismissal—39 per cent.; temporary job ending—16 per cent.; other reasons—45 per cent.

Economically Active Population

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women are economically active at age (i) 55, (ii) 56, (iii) 57, (iv) 58, (v) 59, (vi) 60, (vii) 61, (viii) 62, (ix) 63, (x) 64, (xi) 65 years and (xii) over 65.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates from the labour force survey of economic activity rates by age, for Great Britain in summer 1993, are given in the table:

Economic activity rates by age
Summer 1993 (not seasonally adjusted)
Great Britain

Per cent.

Age (years)	*Males*	*Females*
55	81	61
56	79	58
57	79	56
58	70	47
59	68	45
60	66	34
61	56	30
62	53	21
63	46	21
64	40	17
65	17	8
over 65	6	3

Special Aids to Employment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people in the Doncaster area currently benefit from the special aids to employment scheme; and how many disabled people he expects to lose their jobs once employers have to pay 50 per cent. of the cost of special aids in the workplace.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the current financial year, since 1 April 1993, there have been eight disabled people in the Doncaster area helped by the special aids to employment scheme.

In reaching final decisions about the details of the access to work scheme, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend Lord Henley are considering carefully a range of representations made by disability and employer groups including representations about the proposed employer contribution. My right hon. Friend hopes to announce decisions soon.

Bridging Allowances

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area were in receipt of a bridging allowance at the latest available date, and on that date in each year since 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 19 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about bridging allowance.

The information you have requested, taking 16 and 17 year olds together, is provided in the attached table. Unfortunately, separate figures for each age group are not available, nor are the December 1988 and 1989 figures for Doncaster. However, the table provides figures for Yorkshire and Humberside for these dates, together with comparable figures for following years.

Bridging allowance can be paid to young people as long as they are registered at a Careers Office for Youth Training (YT) and have left or lost a job or YT place. Youth Training Bridging Allowance was introduced at the same time as YT to allow a young person to find another YT place if their existing one proved unsuitable. Bridging Allowance is available to young people outside the child benefit extension period.

It is a short term allowance paid for up to 40 days in any 52 week period while a young person finds another job or YT place.

I hope this is helpful.

Numbers in receipt of bridging allowance in Doncaster and Yorkshire and Humberside: December 1988–December 1993

	Doncaster	*Yorkshire and Humberside*
December 1988	—	1,224
December 1989	—	841
December 1990	38	917
December 1991	43	777
December 1992	39	672
December 1993	28	475

Labour Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the current average length of time males aged *(a)* over 55 years, *(b)* over 35 years and under 55 years and *(c)* over 16 years and under 35 years remain unemployed in the Doncaster area;

(2) what is the current average length of time females *(a)* over 55 years, *(b)* over 35 years and under 55 years and *(c)* over 16 years and under 35 years remain unemployed in the Doncaster area.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is given in the table on the "median" durations of unemployment, with respect to computerised records only—the vast majority of all claims —of those claimants whose spell of unemployment was completed in the period between 11 November 1993 and 9 December 1993. At this small area level information on the "mean" duration of unemployment of these claimants is available only at disproportionate cost.

Median Durations of claimant unemployment in the Doncaster Travel-to-work Area

Age	*Median Duration of Unemployment (weeks)*	
	Male	*Female*
17-34	12·0	12·0
35-54	12·6	19·5
55 and over	36·8	156·0

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of adults *(a)* male and *(b)* female registered unemployed in the Doncaster area in December (i) 1979, (ii) 1983 and (iii) 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: Figures for comparable travel-to-work areas are available only from June 1983 and are given in the table:

Unadjusted Claimant Unemployment for the Travel-to-Work area of Doncaster

	Male	*Female*
December 1983	12,258	5,857
December 1993	11,856	2,928

Youth Employment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds in the Doncaster area who entered full-time employment in each year from 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Disabled People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list for the last five years the number of disabled individuals in the Doncaster area who have benefited from the Government's present provision of assistance towards *(a)* special aids to employment, *(b)* adaptation to premises, *(c)* fares to work and *(d)* the personal reader scheme;

(2) what has been spent in the last five years in the Doncaster area on disabled individuals on assistance towards *(a)* special aids to employment, *(b)* adaptation to premises, *(c)* fares to work and *(d)* the personal reader scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 19 January 1994:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of disabled individuals and what has been spent in the last five years in the Doncaster area on assistance to people with disabilities on the Special Schemes; *(a)* special aids to employment *(b)* adaptation to premises *(c)* fares to work and *(d)* the personal reader scheme.

The information you have asked for is not held centrally and I have asked my people to investigate the availability of the details you request. I will send details to you as soon as they are available.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for the Doncaster area the companies that currently display the two-tick symbol denoting them as positive about disabled people and are complying with the criteria required.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 19 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question requesting a list of companies in the Doncaster area who currently display the disability symbol (the "two-tick symbol") denoting them as positive about disabled people.

Unfortunately I am unable to enclose the list you request with this reply. As you may know, the disability symbol was first introduced in 1990. It was reviewed towards the end of 1992 and, in order to clarify its meaning and improve its impact, we have introduced changes to the initiative which came into effect on 1 June 1993.

These changes have meant that the earlier symbol users needed to re-examine their practices and, in some cases, to introduce changes before confirming whether or not they would continue to use the symbol. My field disability service has been working to contact all symbol users, discuss the new commitments and confirm which employers would continue under the new arrangements.

Although we have recently compiled a draft list of symbol users throughout the country, we are not yet satisfied that older users of the symbol who are not continuing as symbol users have been fully weeded out. It is, of course, very important that we are able to provide a full and accurate list of organisations using the symbol and we are reluctant to release it, or any parts of it, until we have had a further opportunity to check its accuracy.

The checking process is now in hand and I would hope to write to you again within the next few weeks with a list of current symbol users in the Doncaster area. The national list of symbol users will also be included.

I hope this is helpful.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the current measures he is taking to reduce youth unemployment in the Doncaster area; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: All young people aged under 18, who are not in a job or full-time education, are guaranteed the offer of a suitable youth training place if they want one. On 9 December, the latest date for which information is available, there were five young people in the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council area who were covered by the guarantee and had been waiting for a place for eight or more weeks. This is 86 per cent. fewer than in March last year.

The Employment Service and the TEC deliver an extensive programme of employment, enterprise and training initiatives to help employment prospects for unemployed people. In addition to this mainstream provision, the following schemes are available specifically for young people in the 18 to 25 years age group: the Doncaster education business partnership; the careership programme; pre-release courses involving the Employment Service, the careers service and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders; a mentoring programme; and workshops advising on job search and careers.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Early results have shown some significant savings, and much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, many details are commercially confidential.

Scientists

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what data he holds on the numbers of scientists at postgraduate and postdoctoral level leaving their profession for *(a)* other employment and *(b)* employment abroad.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department does not collect statistics on this subject. However a recent report by the Science and Engineering Policy Studies Unit on "The Migration of Scientists and Engineers 1984 to 1992", shows that, while 0·6 per cent. of university staff in these disciplines emigrated in 1992, the rate of recruitment of staff to the United Kingdom from other countries was higher at 1·3 per cent.

Youth Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training scheme or youth training places there were in the Doncaster area in each year since 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is unavailable prior to 1991; however, since the opening of the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council in 1991 the number of YTS or youth training places in the Doncaster area have been as follows:

Year	*Places*
1991-92	2,348
1992-93	2,464
1993-94	2,394

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17 year-olds are currently on waiting lists for youth training places in the Doncaster area; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: As at 9 December 1993, in the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council area, there were five young people who had been waiting more than eight weeks for a place on youth training. This is due to constant co-operation between Barnsley and Doncaster TEC, Doncaster careers service and Doncaster training suppliers.

Science Postgraduates

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of science postgraduates who successfully complete their doctorates within British universities have found employment in the United Kingdom within *(a)* six months and *(b)* one year for each of the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: The percentage of those gaining science doctorates in 1991 who were in employment at the end of that year was as follows:

	Per cent.
Biology	76
Physical Sciences	63
Mathematical Sciences	74
Engineering and Technology	78

These statistics are based on a special analysis of the annual "First Destinations Survey of Graduates" carried out by the universities.

Statistics are not available for other years or on the definitions requested.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in manufacturing industries in the Yorkshire and Humberside region on 1 December *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1989 and *(d)* 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is shown in the table:

Employees in manufacturing: Yorkshire and Humberside

	Number
December 1979	698,800
December 1983	510,400
December 1989	501,000
September 1993[1]	437,600

[1] Latest available date.

Investors in People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for the Doncaster area, the name of the employers who have been given the Investors in People award and the names of the employers who have made a commitment to meeting the standards; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Employers in the Doncaster area who have achieved the Investors in People award are as follows:

Bridon Ropes Ltd.
Bullseye Motorist Centre
J I Case (UK) Ltd.
Reed Northern Newspapers
Rockware Glass
Weldricks

Employers who are committed to Investors in People status are as follows:

Doncaster MBC Personnel and Catering Services Directorate
Doncaster/Rotherham Group Training Association
L J Monks
The Aucklands Nursing Home
ACE Conveyors Equipment Ltd.
David Hall Partnership
DBL Associates
Rossington Comprehensive School
Walkers Solicitors
Benton House Nursing Home
Norwell Structural and Site Services
Danite Hard Metals
South Yorkshire Training Trust
Mr. Tony (Hairdressing)
Frigoscandia Ltd.
Miller Brother (Doncaster) Ltd.
Doncaster College
DEYT (Training Provider)
Hexthorpe First School
Colbear Dixon
Roger Worth Training
DONBAC
Yorkshire Training Centre
G P Holdings
ESL (Training Provider)
Darfen
BLP Group
RFS Engineering
Lindholme Prison

Wages

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the median, highest decile/lowest decile, upper quartile, lower quartile and mean weekly and hourly earnings of *(a)* male, *(b)* female, *(c)* manual, *(d)* non-manual and *(e)* all full-time workers on adult rates in Yorkshire and Humberside, the north and Great Britain for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested can be found in part E of the new earnings survey for each year since 1979. Details of decile, median and quartile earnings are published in table 116 and average earnings in tables 122 and 123. Copies of the report can be found in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the average weekly and hourly earnings of *(a)* manual, *(b)* non-manual and *(c)* all part-time workers on adult rates in Yorkshire and Humberside, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Humberside, the North and Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is provided in the table:

Average gross weekly earnings of part-time employees on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: April 1993

	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*
Yorkshire and Humberside	73·1	105·8	92·5
West Yorkshire	71·2	109·9	94·4
South Yorkshire	73·1	101.3	89·7

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Humberside	73·3	104·2	91·5
North Yorkshire	78·3	—	92·8
North	70·6	98·3	87·1
Great Britain	75·1	109·8	97·0

Average gross hourly earnings of part-time employees on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: April 1993

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·90	5·35	4·76
West Yorkshire	3·88	5·42	4·82
South Yorkshire	3·89	5·28	4·72
Humberside	3·76	5·24	4·58
North Yorkshire	4·15	—	4·87
North	3·77	5·04	4·54
Great Britain	3·96	5·67	5·03

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions his Department has given to the Health and Safety Executive in the light of the Peto report on the projected increase in the number of deaths from mesothelioma.

Mr. Michael Forsythe: I have given no specific instructions; Professor Peto's estimates are based on statistical data provided by the Health and Safety Executive. He has not yet produced a written report.

The HSE and Professor Peto are co-operating in closely analysing the data more fully and determining their possible significance. Consideration is also being given to setting up an epidemiological study to subject the estimates to further investigation.

New Businesses

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of new business start-ups in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: The enterprise allowance scheme —EAS—began in 1982-83. In April 1991, EAS was replaced by the business start-up scheme. The numbers of new business start-ups each year are shown in the table.

	Enterprise Allowance/Business Start Up
1982-83	2,500
1983-84	27,600
1984-85	46,000
1985-86	60,000
1986-87	86,800
1987-88	106,300
1988-89	98,500
1989-90	78,000
1990-91	60,000
1991-92	50,000
1992-93	41,000
[1]1993	21,700

[1] April-October.

Irvine Offices

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much it cost his Department to move the Irvine unemployment benefit office and the Irvine jobcentre into the same purpose-built facility in Irvine.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 19 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about how much it cost his Department to move the Irvine Unemployment Benefit Office and the Irvine Jobcentre into the same purpose built facility in Irvine.

Since 1990 the Employment Service (ES) has been pursuing a policy of bringing together Unemployment Benefit Offices (UBO) and Jobcentres with the aim of providing a more efficient and effective service to our clients. Already 824 offices have been integrated nationally in this way and ES plan to have 1,100 such outlets by March 1996. Irvine featured as part of this programme of integration and the new office opened for business on 9 August 1993.

The new Jobcentre at Irvine has been acquired on a 25-year lease at an annual rental of £115,400 subject to five-year rent reviews. Capital costs of fitting out were £338,000. Costs will be offset by the disposal not only of both the former UBO and Jobcentre but also premises for the Jobclub which is now accommodated in the new building. Investment appraisal of the new office running costs over a 25-year period demonstrates that it is a cheaper option than retention of the former premises.

I hope this is helpful.

Coltman Precast Concrete Ltd.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he was notified of potential redundancies made by Coltman Precast Concrete Ltd.; whether this notification was made within the time period required under section 193 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992; what other representations he has received in relation to the notice of redundancies; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information supplied under the notification provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 is given in confidence.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number, type and funding of apprenticeships currently in Nottinghamshire, the east midlands and England.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates of the number of apprentices are available from the labour force survey. Latest available figures indicate that, in summer 1993, 12,100 people in the east midlands, and 172,000 people in England were undertaking apprenticeships. Figures for Nottinghamshire are not available.

The labour force survey gives figures by industry, by occupation and by personal characteristics of apprentices. Information on funding is not available.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are in place to evaluate the effectiveness and performance of training and enterprise councils.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department undertakes regular evaluation of the range of programmes delivered by the training and enterprise councils—TECs—and assesses the contribution of the TEC movement to the performance of those programmes.

The performance of individual TECs against contract is monitored by the Department's regional offices. Information on the performance of individual TECs in delivering Employment Department programmes is used to construct inter-TEC comparison tables. A copy of these tables for 1992-93 has already been placed in the Library.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what view the Health and Safety Commission has expressed to the Minister in the interim report of its review of regulations regarding pre-1974 health and safety regulations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I have placed a copy of the report in the Library, along with a copy of my response to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, and I have written to the hon. Member, enclosing a personal copy.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The Department has calculated that the effect on its budget for 1994-95 of the abolition of the 80 per cent. statutory sick pay reimbursement rate will be more than offset by a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions.

Departmental Accommodation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the date and the terms upon which his Department took out a lease on the accommodation currently occupied at Dyson's chambers, Briggate, Leeds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Derek Fatchett, dated 19 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the Employment Service premises at Dyson's Chambers, Briggate, Leeds.

It may be helpful if I explain that it is not Government Policy to disclose details of any of the leases it negotiates, as these are Commercial in Confidence. I can say, however, that the Department of the Environment, Property Holdings, acquired this property for the Government Common User Estate and was able to achieve a substantial rent free period. At the expiration of that period my agency will be paying Property Holdings £400,000 per annum by way of internal rent. The lease commenced on 1 January 1993.

I hope this is helpful.

Unemployment

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report,* columns *105-106,* what is the formal International Labour Organisation definition of unemployed.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* The International Labour Organisation definition of unemployment as used, for example in compiling labour force estimates, counts as unemployed those people who at the time of interview were without work—that is, working less than one hour per week—were available to start work within the next two weeks, and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained.

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each scheme operated by his Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The career development loan —CDL—scheme, run in partnership with three high street banks—Barclays, the Co-operative and the Clydesdale—is the only loan scheme operated by the Employment Department. The objective of the scheme is to provide assistance to people who wish to undertake vocational education or training of their own choice, but who are unable, on their own, to raise sufficient funds to pay for it. The programme helps to encourage individuals to take greater responsibility for their own education and training. Details of the number and value of unrecovered CDLs, where a default notice has been issued, are given in the table for each year since the start of the scheme. The cost associated with recovering defaulted loans are borne primarily by the lending banks. The Department incurs minimal cost—on average, less than £400 per year total costs over the last four years.

Unrecovered CDLs
(Loans where a default notice has been served)

Year	Number	Total Value (£)	Average Value (£)
1986-87	3	2,469	823
1987-88	14	15,402	1,100
1988-89	40	40,955	1,024
1989-90	115	187,515	1,631
1990-91	419	798,249	1,905
1991-92	1,113	2,539,291	2,281
1992-93	1,501	3,550,631	2,366
1993-94	1,233	3,242,991	2,630
Total	4,438	10,377,503	

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made on the effect which the next steps programme will have on equal opportunities in public service employment; and what steps he is taking to monitor the effect.

Mr. Davis: The Government are committed to a policy aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity in civil service employment. It is the responsibility of all agency chief executives to implement that policy effectively within their organisations. Progress on equal opportunities across the civil service, including the agencies where 60 per cent. of civil servants now work, is monitored by OPSS. The latest progress reports on women and ethnic minorities, which continue to show steady improvement including increasing representation in management grades, were published last month and copies placed in the Library of the House. The progress report on disabled civil servants will be published in the spring.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report".

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information as requested is not held centrally and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Scanning Radiometer

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what support his Department is giving to back basic scientific development of the along-track scanning radiometer, which was announced by the Department of the Environment on 21 December 1993.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government make funds available under the science budget to the research councils, which determine their priorities in accordance with the terms of their royal charters.

The Natural Environment Research Council—NERC—will contribute £1·8 million towards the cost of building the advanced along-track scanning radiometer—AATSR. The remainder of the total cost will be provided by the Department of the Environment and the Australian space office.

The AATSR has been developed from two previous instruments: the ATSR1 and ATSR2, towards which the Science and Engineering Research Council—SERC—provided funds of £7·3 million and £12·3 million respectively.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will qualify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in his Department's cost for ministerial cars between 1990-91 and 1992-93; how many cars were involved in each year; how many of these cars are for Government Whips and which Whips have cars personally allocated to them; how many were for Government Whips in 1990-91; and how many were personally allocated at that date.

Mr. David Davis: The increase in the costs borne by the Office of Public Service and Science for ministerial cars between 1990-91 and 1992-93 was due mainly to increases in the prices charged by the Government car service—and restructuring of GCS tariffs—the addition in April 1992 of a vehicle for use of the holder of the second ministerial post established at the inception of the OPSS, and more intensive use of the GCS generally.

In 1990-91 three vehicles were allocated to ministerial use, of which two were allocated for the use of the Chief Whip (Commons) and the Leader of the House and Chief Whip (Lords) respectively. The total number of allocated vehicles was increased to four from April 1992.

Research

Dr. Spink: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for Government spending on research; and what proportions were spent on (i) applied research and (ii) fundamental research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Government research and development activity is analysed into the internationally agreed OECD Frascati categories of basic, applied and experimental development. The latest expenditure figures, for 1991-92, were published in the 1993 annual review of Government-funded research and development and are as follows:

	£ million	(i) Applied Per cent.	(ii) Basic Per cent.
Civil R and D	2,780·9	47·0	48·4
Defence R and D	2,267·0	17·8	nil
Total R and D	5,047·9	33·9	26·7

The remaining R and D is classified as experimental development.

A similar analysis for the outturn year 1992-93 will be published in the forward look of Government-funded science and technology in April 1994.

Bypasses

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what provisions of the citizens charter assist private citizens wishing to ascertain the cost-benefit analysis provided by local authorities to the Ministry of Transport in respect of bypass schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter aims to ensure that there is no secrecy about how public services are run, how much they cost, who is in charge, and whether or not they are meeting their standards. In line with this principle, there are no restrictions on private citizens looking at the results of cost-benefit analysis provided by local authorities to the Department of Transport in respect of bypass schemes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ethnic Minority Grants

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the actual spending by his Department on section 11 grant for 1992-93 for each local authority;

(2) if he will estimate the number of posts which will be lost in 1994-95 as a result of cuts in section 11 funding;

(3) if he will list the actual amount of section 11 grant allocated by his Department to each local authority for the first two quarters of 1993-94;

(4) what is the total allocation of spending by his Department on section 11 grant for 1994-95; and if he will list the individual allocations for each local authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Correspondence

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time taken by him to reply to letters received from official spokespersons of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Mr. Howard: In the period from 1 January 1993 to 31 December 1993 the average time taken to reply to letters received from the hon. Member and his colleagues the hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) was 25 working days.

Prisoners

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were sentenced to a prison term under each offence category for the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the number and percentage who were fine defaulters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. William Ross, dated 19 January 1994:

RECEPTIONS UNDER SENTENCE

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many people were sentenced to a prison term under each offence category for the latest year for which figures are available; and the number and percentage who were fine defaulters.

The information requested is shown in the attached table.

Receptions into prison service establishments by offence, 1992[1]

Offence	*Immediate imprisonment*	*In default of payment of a fine*	*All*	*Percentage in default of payment of a fine*
All Offences	51,324	19,977	71,301	28
Violence against the person	7,082	1,313	8,395	16
Murder	234	0	234	0
Manslaughter	142	0	142	0
Other Homicide and attempted Homicide	435	6	441	1
Wounding	4,461	678	5,139	13
Assaults	1,219	510	1,729	29
Cruelty to Children	30	1	31	3
Other offences of violence against the person	561	118	679	17
Sexual Offences	1,858	28	1,886	2
Buggery and indecency between males	172	4	176	2
Rape	527	4	531	1
Gross indecency with children	161	—	161	—
Other sexual offences	998	20	1,018	2
Burglary	9,479	1,318	10,797	12
Robbery	2,988	34	3,022	1
Theft and Handling	9,249	3,561	12,810	28
Taking and driving away	1,310	437	1,747	25
Other thefts	6,291	2,725	9,016	30
Handling stolen goods	1,648	399	2,047	19
Fraud and Forgery	1,807	674	2,481	27
Frauds	1,677	538	2,315	28
Forgery	130	36	166	22
Drugs offences	3,168	448	3,616	12

Offence	Immediate imprisonment	In default of payment of a fine	All	Percentage in default of payment of a fine
Other Offences	11,364	11,042	22,406	49
Arson	480	19	499	4
Criminal damage	1,027	1,464	2,491	59
Immigration Act 1977	17	2	19	11
In charge or driving under the influence of drink or drugs	1,236	546	1,782	31
Other motoring offences	3,846	5,811	9,657	60
Offences relating to prostitution	26	113	139	81
Drunkenness	41	569	610	93
Vagrancy	42	66	108	61
Other	4,649	2,452	7,101	35
Offence not recorded	4,329	1,559	5,888	26

[1] Provisional figures.

Prisons

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates in prison establishments within England and Wales were disciplined for the possession of an unlawful drug during 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 19 January 1994:

POSSESSION OF AN UNLAWFUL DRUG

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many inmates in prison establishments within England and Wales were disciplined for the possession of an unlawful drug during 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993. The numbers are 2,650, 2,798, 2,041 and 1,759 respectively. They include those found guilty of inciting or assisting other prisoners to possess controlled drugs. The 1990 figures is part-estimate and the 1993 one is provisional.

Probation

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what would be the extra costs involved in resourcing the probation service to work with people sentenced to less than 12 months' imprisonment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Adult offenders sentenced to less than 12 months' imprisonment are not subject to statutory supervision on release, but the probation service already offers supervision on a voluntary basis. If all offenders in this category were supervised on the same statutory basis as offenders sentenced to longer terms, the annual additional cost would be of the order of £13 million.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation orders were made with added conditions, as a proportion of all probation orders made in England and Wales for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: The latest published information shows that some 26 per cent. of probation orders commenced in 1992 had additional requirements, but that in the first three months after the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 on 1 October 1992 this rose to 29 per cent.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of persons on *(a)* probation and *(b)* community service orders had a previous custodial sentence at the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean: The latest available figures were published in summary probation statistics England and Wales 1992 which is available in the House of Commons Library. The percentage of persons commencing supervision by the probation service with a previous custodial sentence in 1992 were *(a)* 38 for probation and *(b)* 32 for community service orders.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to meet the National Association of Probation Officers, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation or the Central Probation Council to discuss changes in the probation budget.

Mr. Maclean: I plan to meet representatives of the Central Probation Council and the Association of Chief Officers of Probation to discuss issues of current concern. I have no immediate plans to meet the National Association of Probation Officers.

Horse Thefts

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many horse thefts have been reported to the police in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by county, the number of reported incidents of horses being stolen in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Community Service

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reduce the minimum age for community service.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans at present to bring forward legislation to lower the minimum age for community service of 16; but I want to consider, as part of the review of national standards for community sentences,

increasing the scope for younger offenders to undertake tasks of a reparative nature for the benefit of local communities as part of effective supervision programmes.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase or strengthen community penalties.

Mr. Maclean: I plan to strengthen community penalties through the review of national standards now in progress.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the recommendations made by the firearms consultative committee in each year since it was set up; which of them have been the subject of a circular issued by him indicating that the recommendations should be implemented; what information he has as to whether those recommendations have been implemented; and by which police forces they have been implemented.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A summary of the committee's recommendations is contained in each of its four annual reports, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Revised guidance on the definition of antique weapons and collecting of firearms was issued to chief officers of police following a recommendation made by the committee in its third annual report. In addition, Home Office circulars have been issued which include advice on implementing recommendations made by the committee on revised criteria for approved rifle and pistol clubs and the EC weapons directive.

Details of the other recommendations of the committee which have been implemented were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 15 December 1993—column *657*.

The administration of the firearms licensing system is the responsibility of individual chief officers of police. Detailed records of individual force practice are not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all grant allocations made under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for the year 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the studies for which *(a)* Ernst and Young and *(b)* Towers Perrin were engaged in the two years prior to the establishment of the Sheehy inquiry; and what was the cost thereof.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Details of the contracts awarded by the Home Office during the period July 1990 to July 1992 to the specified companies are as follows:

July 1990-July 1992	*Total Value*
Consultant	
Towers Perrin	—
Ernst and Young	
Court Escort Area Survey and associated research	—
Consultancy assistance in ensuring VFM from the Court Escort Service.	—
Firearms licensing costs.	—
Validation of IT strategy.	—
PROMIS/SPITS Strategy Study	—
Feasibility of Artificial Intelligence.	—
	£433,930

Immigration

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has issued to the immigration department concerning arresting alleged illegal immigrants during their wedding services.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Instructions to the immigration service stress that visits to register offices to detain offenders under the immigration laws are particularly sensitive and should normally be undertaken only where the individual's whereabouts before and after the wedding have been and will be unknown.

I am not aware of any recent case where an immigration offender has been arrested during a marriage service but know of two cases where illegal entrants were detained prior to their intended marriages.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the west midlands inquiry unit's use of early morning raids on the homes of suspected illegal immigrants.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have not received any recent representations about early morning visits carried out by immigration service staff attached to the midlands inquiry unit.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Howard: The Home Office is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 competing for quality programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Once it has been finalised, much of the information requested will be published in aggregate form in the "Citizens Charter Second Report". On an individual project basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Prison Population

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes are planned in prisoner numbers at HMP *(a)* Armley, *(b)* Brixton, *(c)* Ford, *(d)* Full Sutton, *(e)* Hull, *(f)* Lindholme, *(g)* Moorland, *(h)*

Pentonville, *(j)* Wandsworth, *(k)* Wolds and *(l)* Wormwood Scrubs over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 19 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about prisoner numbers at 11 prison establishments.

The number of prisoners received by the Prison Service is not directly subject to planning but depends upon the decisions of the courts. In order to cater for expected growth in the population, the Prison Service is planning to build six new prisons and is preparing plans to build new places in existing establishments. Final decisions have not yet been taken on which prisons will have their capacity expanded. These are, therefore, no firm proposals to build new accommodation in any of the establishments you list.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many communications he has received during the consultation on deregulation on *(a)* the Breeding of Dogs Acts 1973 and 1991, *(b)* the Pet Animals Act 1951, *(c)* the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 and *(d)* the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925; how many were in favour and how many against; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of responses which the Department has received to its consultation letter concerning the deregulation review of certain Acts is as follows:

	In favour of retaining the present controls	*In favour of deregulation*
The Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 and 1991	11	1
The Pet Animals Act 1951	13	3
The Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963	11	2
The Performing Animals (Regulations) Act 1925	6	0

Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution his Department made to the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in terms of financial support, practical support for particular events, and the provision of information.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My Department continued its funding of the retired and senior volunteer programme, which was represented on the UK core advisory group for the year, and of the retired executives action clearing house. In 1993 the grant to the retired and senior volunteer programme was £50,000 and to the retired executives action clearing house £41,592. It also funds many other organisations such as the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, which though not aiming specifically at older people encourage volunteering by people of all ages. Ministerial colleagues and I made regular reference in our speeches to the importance of older volunteers.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which programmes and events for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations he has been directly involved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Combination Orders

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many combination orders have been made since 17 October 1992; and how many have been breached to date.

Mr. Maclean: Combination orders were introduced on 1 October 1992 by the Criminal Justice Act 1991. Between 1 October 1992 and the end of June 1993 it is estimated that some 5,300 combination orders have commenced in England and Wales probation areas. Information on breaches is not yet available.

Strip Searches

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many strip searches have been carried out in England and Wales in the last five years; and for what purposes strip searches are carried out.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Jean Corston, dated 19 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about strip searching.

Prisons are not required to maintain statistics of the number of strip searches carried out. Strip searching is a routine security measure, carried out under the provisions of Rule 39 of the Prisons Rules 1964, to which all prisoners are subject. It enables prison officers to detect small items of contraband, such as drugs or a weapon, which may be concealed about the person and which might not be discovered in an ordinary rub-down search. The prospect of being strip-searched also acts as a deterrent to concealing such items.

City Status, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to support Doncaster being awarded city status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the title of city is an honour conferred by the sovereign, by letters patent, on the recommendation of the Home Secretary. The title is nowadays a very rare distinction, granted only in exceptional circumstances and usually in connection with a royal occasion. Any application for city status on behalf of Doncaster would be considered in the usual way.

Football (Policing)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the total number of police officers on duty at Carling premiership and Endsleigh football league matches in England and Wales, the total number of police officers as a percentage of the total attendances for those matches and the total cost of those officers for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not held centrally.

Door Supervisors

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he or his Department have received on a national registration scheme for door supervisors.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the past six months, four letters have been received on this matter.

In addition, Home Office officials have met a group of interested parties, to discuss local regulatory schemes. Consideration is now being given to proposals prepared by that group and further discussions will take place shortly.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will bring forward proposals for a national registration scheme for door supervisors;

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a national registration scheme for door supervisors.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no plans to introduce such a scheme.

Fir Tree Grange Probation Hostel

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from magistrates, the police and the probation service concerning his decision to close Fir Tree Grange approved probation hostel.

Mr. Maclean: No direct representations have been received from the police; representations have however been made by Easington magistrates court and by a Member of Parliament and a Member of the European Parliament on behalf of members of Durham probation service. A 234-name petition against closure, including signatories from all three of these areas, has also been received.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who was consulted before the decision was taken to close Fir Tree Grange approved probation hostel.

Mr. Maclean: For reasons of confidentiality it was not appropriate for consultation outside the Department to take place in advance of the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received *(a)* in support of and *(b)* in opposition to the closure of Fir Tree Grange approved probation hostel.

Mr. Maclean: *(a)* None, *(b)* four, plus a 234-name petition.

Asylum

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the granting of political asylum to Rashid Ghannouchi; if he has now given further consideration to his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Representations expressing concern about this case have been received from several hon. Members, the Government of Tunisia and some members of the public. The decision has been re-examined and I am satisfied that it was correct. There are no present grounds for withdrawing Mr. Ghannouchi's refugee status. I will be writing to the hon. Member in response to his recent letters on this matter.

Royal Veterinary College

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from the department of veterinary pathology at the Royal Veterinary college in regard to his proposals about aggravated trespass; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a letter from Professor Bleby of the Royal Veterinary college about our proposals. A number of right hon. and hon. Members have also sent copies of this letter to the Home Office. A copy of our reply will be forwarded to the right hon. Member.

Safer Cities Programme

Mr. Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to make an announcement about the selection of areas for the safer cities phase 2 programme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I announced on 29 December that decisions have been made on the first wave of projects to be set up under phase 2 of the safer cities programme and on the organisations which will manage them on our behalf. The competitive nature of the bids received together with the commitment of additional resources from key local agencies means that projects can be set up in all 10 of the shortlisted areas.

After careful evaluation of the tenders two organisations have been chosen to run the projects: Crime Concern and the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders—NACRO. Both organisations have significant experience in crime prevention, project management and working with voluntary agencies.

Crime Concern will manage projects in Blackburn, Burnley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Manchester, Merthyr Tydfil and Plymouth and NACRO in Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield. Projects will start to come on stream early in the new year.

Further waves of phase 2 projects are planned, but as safer cities funding will be included in the single regeneration budget from 1 April 1994 decisions about future projects will be taken in conjunction with the Department of the Environment.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to draw up a plan for the implementation of the forest principles agreed at the Rio summit.

Sir Hector Monro: Our plan for the implementation of the forest principles agreed at the Rio summit will be published shortly.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to sell off any of the forests

owned by the Forestry Commission in the Roxburgh and Berwickshire constituency under its current disposals programme;

(2) if he will list all forests owned by the Forestry Commission in the Roxburgh and Berwickshire constituency.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission is preparing a list of all its woodlands in the hon. Member's constituency, and this will identify those which are currently being considered for sale. I shall send a copy to the hon. Member and I shall also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list Forestry Commission property in the Cunninghame, South constituency and in Ayrshire as a whole.

Sir Hector Monro: There are no Forestry Commission woodlands in the hon. Member's constituency. The commission is currently preparing a list of its woodlands in Ayrshire and I shall send a copy to the hon. Member. I shall also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Livingston Development Corporation

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of assets owned by Livingston development corporation.

Mr. Lang: The corporation's annual report 1992-93 shows that the value of Livingston's total fixed assets at 31 March 1993 was £238·7 million.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what target for capital receipts from sale of property and land he has set for Livingstone development corporation for the next two years.

Mr. Lang: The provisional targets set are as follows:

£ million

	Housing	*Industrial, Commercial and Land*	*Total*
1994-95	7·677	26·900	34·577
1995-96	8·375	42·340	50·715

These will be the subject of further discussion with the development corporation before final targets are set.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: The cost of providing cars for Ministers in my Department increased by £11,877—5 per cent.—over the period 1990-91 to 1992-93. The difference is due to modest cost increases in a number of areas, notably fuel and maintenance costs and salaries and associated staff costs.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Lang: The Data Protection Regstrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protections principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Departmental Files

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish Office files were destroyed last year; and what general subject matter, by category, was contained in them.

Mr. Land: A total of 155,097 files—out of a total of over 1·5 million—were destroyed during 1993 following consultation with the Scottish Record Office. The subject matter covered the full range of Scottish Office functions. The split among Departments is:

	Number
Agriculture and Fisheries	7,904
Environment	15,509
Education	[1]48,002
Industry	5,660
Home and Health	[2]70,616
Central Services	7,406

[1] Includes case files relating to student awards.
[2] Includes case files relating to teacher and NHS pensions.

General Practitioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioners received gross payments in excess of £200,000 per year in each year since 1991-92.

Mr. Stewart: The information is not available for 1991-92 and is available for 1992-93 only on a practice basis. In 1992-93 the average payment per general practitioner within a practice exceeded £200,000 in 12 practices containing a total of 13 practitioners.

All 12 of the practices were dispensing practices and the payments included all payments in respect of dispensing —including payments for the supply of drugs—as well as the usual gross payments in respect of the provision of general medical services.

Museums and Galleries (Attendances)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the attendance figures for 1993 reported by the national museums and galleries in Scotland, broken

down into the individual institutions but including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1992.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* The information is as follows:

	1993	*Percentage change since 1992*
National Museums of Scotland	1,072,716	+6·70
National Galleries of Scotland	746,508	−1·66

The national museums of Scotland comprise the Royal museum of Scotland buildings at Chambers street and Queen street, Edinburgh, the Scottish Agricultural museum, the Scottish United Services museum, the Museum of Flight, the Museum of Costume and the Gasworks museum. The national galleries of Scotland comprise the National Gallery of Scotland, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the Scottish National Portrait gallery.

Special Education Services

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had in relation to proposed local government reform from Mr. Sandy Watson, director of education for Dundee, on behalf of the Scottish Directors of Education, relating to the provision of specialist education services for the handicapped, pupils in music, and other groups, dependent on large-scale education authorities for the current standard of provision.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* I have received a number of representations from Mr. Watson in his capacity as secretary to the professional association of the education directorate, on behalf of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland in connection with our proposals for local government reform.

In his most recent letter, dated 14 December 1993 written on behalf of the association and other bodies and addressed to all Scottish Members of Parliament, Mr. Watson expressed concern that small authorities with reduced spending power would have difficulty in maintaining professional support services and that special needs provision would be vulnerable. I believe this concern is capable of being satisfactorily addressed within the Government's proposal.

Salmon

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation he has now had, following the report of the Salmon Advisory Committee, about the provision of fish passes and fish screens; and whether he now intends to make regulations on this question under the provisions of the Salmon Act 1986.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* Consideration is now being given to the responses received, in the latter part of 1993, from the wide range of interests consulted on proposals for new Scottish fish pass and fish screen regulations. I hope to lay the regulations before Parliament by the summer.

Scottish Art

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish the submission received from the trustees of the national galleries for Scotland in respect of the proposal to build a new gallery of Scottish art; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish representations received by him in respect of the proposal to build a new gallery of Scottish art; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has not yet received any fully developed and costed proposals from the board of trustees and it would therefore be premature for him to make a statement. It will be for the board in the first instance to decide whether or not to publish details of its submission.

My right hon. Friend will certainly taken into account all of the representations received on this issue but it would be inappropriate to publish representations put to him in correspondence, some of which have been marked specifically as "confidential".

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date a cheque was sent to Mr. Laurence Peterken, terminating his employment; what was the amount of the cheque; what the payment was in respect of; and when this cheque was cashed.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* Greater Glasgow health board sent Mr. Laurence Peterken on 4 November 1993 a cheque for £36,447·45, representing six months' pay in lieu of notice and payment for work undertaken on 1 and 2 November. The cheque, which had already been cancelled, was returned uncashed by Mr. Peterken to Greater Glasgow health board on 23 November.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the appointment offered to Mr. Laurence Peterken on 12 November 1993 of special projects director was conditional on his not accepting the six months' pay in lieu of notice granted by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* When Mr. Peterken was appointed special projects director, he relinquished all claims for payment of whatever kind other than pension payments and outstanding salary and performance-related pay relative to his employment with Greater Glasgow health board. This was a condition of his appointment and it would have applied to any payment in lieu of notice.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hamilton, (Mr. Robertson) of 14 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *604*, what was the sum involved in granting Mr. Laurence Peterken six months' pay in lieu of notice, and for what reason no payment had been made to Mr. Peterken by 14 December 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The sum involved in respect of six months' pay in lieu of notice to Mr. Laurence Peterken was £36,223·50. The cheque, which had already been cancelled, was returned uncashed by Mr. Peterken to Greater Glasgow health board on

23 November in accordance with the conditions relating to his appointment as special project director with the national health service in Scotland. No payment had therefore been made to Mr. Peterken by 14 December either in lieu of notice or as compensation for leaving Greater Glasgow health board prematurely.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of the changes to statutory sick pay provision upon his departmental budget for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The abolition of reimbursement for statutory sick pay will be offset, at least in part, by a 0·2 per cent. reduction in employer's national insurance contributions. Any additional costs will be absorbed within my Department's existing running costs baseline.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 20 January 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of savings that have been made in the management of magistrates' courts since the publication of the scrutiny report on Magistrates' Courts in 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *543*.

Mr. Llew Smith To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what savings on expenditure on the magistrates court service will result from the decisions announced in the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice".

Mr. John M. Taylor: The purpose of the proposals in the White Paper is to provide clearer lines of accountability, to secure maximum management co-operation with other parts of the justice system and to guarantee the judicial independence of magistrates and their legal advisers, as well as to yield improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. As the efficiency gains which each magistrates' courts committee —MCC—achieves by implementing the White Paper reforms will depend largely on decisions taken at local level, it is difficult for the Government to estimate with any accuracy the total savings to be made. However, evidence from those MCCs which have already implemented some of the White Paper proposals suggests that, within each MCC, the resulting improvements in value for money exceed the transitional costs.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the political balance of magistrates in each county in Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates for each county in Wales on the latest available information, and based on their political affiliations on appointment, is as follows:

	Conservative	*Labour*	*Liberal Democrats*	*Plaid Cymru*	*Independent/ Not known*
Clywd	128	100	72	17	19
Dyfed	72	48	43	38	36
Mid Glamorgan	84	120	39	8	66
South Glamorgan	135	92	59	9	40
West Glamorgan	108	129	44	5	61
Gwent	115	97	34	2	56
Gwynedd	48	27	28	36	45
Powys	29	20	25	2	19

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish the names of members of all the bodies in Wales who select magistrates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The members of the 13 advisory committees responsible for recommending candidates for the magistracy in Wales are as follows:

CLWYD
Chairman
Sir William Gladstone, BT JP
Members
Mrs. C. M. Johnson, JP
E. M. W. Griffith, Esq. CBE DL
Miss R. Whittingham, JP
Mrs. C. T. Owen, JP
Mrs. J. Jones, JP
A. Blackwell, Esq. JP
J. P. Williams, Esq. JP
T. Lloyd, Esq. JP
N. Phillips, Esq. JP
Mrs. A. K. Larsen, JP
Dr. J. P. Davies, JP
C. Crump, Esq. JP
Mrs. D. C. Ellis

DYFED—CARMARTHEN
Chairman
D. C. Mansel Lewis, Esq. JP
Members
Mrs. M. E. C. Jones, JP
E. O. James, Esq. JP
Mrs. M. Lloyd, JP
T. G. Evans, Esq. JP
Mrs. P. A. Williams
Mrs. B. M. Jones, JP
Dr. Edwards, JP
Mrs. E. E. Jenkins, JP
G. C. Price, Esq. JP

DYFED CEREDIGION
Chairman
W. R. G. James, Esq. JP
Members
J. D. P. Evans, Esq. JP
G. R. Evans, Esq. MBE JP
J. H. Lewis, Esq.
Mrs. M. R. E. Roderick, JP
Mrs. M. G. James, JP
Mrs. G. A. T. Kidd
G. J. Morgan, Esq. JP

DYFED PEMBROKE
Chairman
Mrs. C. F. Ramsden, JP
Members
T. G. Davies, Esq. OBE
Mrs. M. L. J. Firmin, JP
J. D. Harry, Esq. JP
D. Fellows, Esq.
D. W. Banner, Esq. JP
Mrs. C. A. Morgan, JP
G. Sizer, Esq. JP

MID GLAMORGAN
Chairman
M. A. McLaggan, Esq. JP

Members
R. C. Q. Picton-Turbervill, Esq. JP
Dr. S. H. Treasure, JP
W. H. Coleman, Esq. JP
D. C. Jones, Esq.
Mrs. E. I. Evans, JP
G. Morgan-Jones, Esq. JP
Mrs. C. Eynon

SOUTH GLAMORGAN
Chairman
His Honour Judge M. Gibbon, QC
Members
A. S. Martyn, Esq. JP
Mrs. J. Sainsbury, JP
R. W. Lee, Esq. JP
Mrs. M. E. Drake
G. Patten, Esq. JP
Mrs. E. S. Williams, JP
Mrs. J. L. Loudon, JP

WEST GLAMORGAN
Chairman
Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Michael Llewellyn, BT JP
Members
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E. J. D. Roberts, Esq.
Mrs. M. F. Goodchild, JP
S. J. R. Page, Esq. JP
E. M. H. Evans, Esq. JP
D. W. W. Thomas, Esq. JP
C. C. Jones, Esq. JP
T. C. Wignall, Esq.
Miss M. Hughes, JP
Miss D. I. Jones, JP
Miss M. Lody, JP
Mrs. J. M. Edwards, JP
J. Warman, Esq.
G. D. Beynon, Esq. JP
H. F. Jones, Esq.

GWENT
Chairman
R. Hanbury-Tenison, Esq. JP
Members
R. M. Hunt, Esq. JP
S. A. J. P. Bosanquet, Esq. JP
Mrs. B. E. Jones, JP
G. Jenkins, Esq. JP
D. Turnbull, Esq. JP
St. J. R. Goff, Esq. JP
G. S. Evans, Esq. JP
Mrs. M. Thomas
Mrs. M. L. Davies, JP
A. W. Davies, Esq.
J. R. Trace, Esq. JP
Lady Crawshay, CBE JP

GWYNEDD-ANGLESEY
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I. O. Davies, Esq. JP
J. Rowlands, Esq. JP
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W. E. Williams, Esq. JP
G. I. Jones, Esq. JP
G. Morris Jones, Esq.

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Reverend G. Williams, JP
E. Jones, Esq. JP
Mrs. P. A. Williams, JP
J. E. Hooson, Esq. JP
H. T. Jones, Esq. JP

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Mrs. G. W. Jones, JP
A. Morgan, Esq.
Mrs. E. Win Jones, JP
Mrs. H. M. Roberts, JP
Mrs. C. Lawson, JP

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Chairman
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D. M. Jones, Esq.
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T. G. Stephens, Esq.
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Mrs. J. A. Yewdall, JP
D. W. L. Rowlands, Esq. JP

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Chairman
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Members
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M. A. Pugh, Esq.
H. J. Watkins, Esq. JP
H. S. Harries, Esq. JP
J. H. M. Powell, Esq. JP
B. Williams, Esq. JP
Mrs. E. M. Edwards, JP
W. J. Elliott, JP
Mrs. A. M. Jones, JP
D. R. Jones, Esq. JP

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the balance of gender among magistrates in each Welsh county.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The balance of gender among magistrates in each Welsh county on the latest available information is as follows:

	Male	*Female*
Clwyd	188	149
Dyfed	140	100
Mid Glamorgan	186	131
South Glamorgan	176	160
West Glamorgan	208	139
Gwent	171	133
Gwynedd	107	74
Powys	49	47

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of information technology services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make

provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Matrimonial Cases

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what instructions have been issued to the civil courts on passing information concerning parties to matrimonial proceedings to the Home Office immigration policy enforcement group; by what authority such instructions are given and such information is passed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: An arrangement was made last November between officials from my Department and from the Home Office immigration and nationality department for the courts to inform them of divorce cases where:

either of the parties involved has previously sought British citizenship, and

following their marriage in the United Kingdom, the parties separated on the same day.

The courts are not aware whether parties to cases have previously sought British citizenship, and this information was therefore not supplied. Information under the second heading was supplied to the Home Office, but has not been used by them in connection with any proceedings involving either party. This arrangement has now been discontinued.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department in 1990-91; and if he will quantify the cost of the factors which have led to changes in this cost subsequently.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are two main factors which have led to an increase in the unit cost per Government car service car for Ministers in my Department. The first is the effect of inflation on GCS costs, particularly pay, vehicles and fuel. The second factor is that during this period the GCS reconstructed its charges to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its full costs in 1990-91.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to use the underspend on the criminal legal aid budget *(a)* to benefit the civil legal aid budget and *(b)* otherwise.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On the basis of actual expenditure to the end of November 1993, it now seems likely that the total net expenditure on legal aid in the financial year 1993-94 will be £1,225 million compared to a provision of £1,283·2 million. The majority of the shortfall—£37 million—relates to criminal legal aid, where the number of bills paid has fallen short of expectations. Most of the rest of the shortfall relates to civil legal aid where payments made to the legal aid fund in respect of costs and damages have exceeded expectations. The Lord Chancellor has no present plans to change the general policy in respect of legal aid, which is currently being examined as part of the fundamental review of his Department's expenditure. Whether it would be possible or desirable to make any changes to the legal aid scheme would not necessarily depend on prospective spending in a single year, but would have to be based on an assessment of what could be afforded over a period of years.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are in hand to improve the quality of information available to the Government in respect of legal aid costs; and when he proposes to publish the reasons for the increased costs per case for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A number of measures are being vigorously pursued by both the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Legal Aid Board to improve the quality of information on legal aid costs and on the usage of legal aid generally. The Lord Chancellor's Department has launched the legal aid management information systems project—LAMIS—which will provide a more comprehensive and accessible database on legal aid and which will be more relevant to the Department's present and future needs.

Additionally, in conjunction with the Legal Aid Board and Her Majesty's Treasury, the Department is carrying out a comprehensive review of its forecasting methods. The first stage of the review, dealing with the methods used in forecasting expenditure, is almost concluded. The next stage will involve extensive research in order to quantify major factors within the legal aid environment that drive expenditure. In addition, new systems are currently being developed by the Legal Aid Board. These developments include new systems for assessing civil and magistrates courts' bills, and for building case profiles.

The reasons for the increase in costs per case are many and complex. Legislative and procedural changes, the amounts paid to lawyers, and the amount of work done in each case are just some of the major factors which underlie the rise in costs.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what practical steps he has taken to ascertain whether there has been a rise in the number of litigants in person which can be attributable to the changes in legal aid eligibility conditions.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has asked courts administrators to gather the observations of court staff on the number of litigants beginning proceedings in person and has made arrangements for the collection of data on cases in which one or both of the parties is unrepresented at the hearing.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what research he has asked the Legal Aid Board to undertake to discover the grounds on which offers of contributory legal aid are refused; and what plans he has to commission such research.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board is planning to carry out research into refusal of offers of legal aid in the financial year beginning on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement about the Lord Chancellor's objectives for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor today published a management statement for the Legal Aid Board; I have placed a copy in the Library of the House. This document sets out the framework within which the board operates; its functions, aims and objectives; its relationship with the Department, and its accountability to Parliament and the Lord Chancellor. It also sets out in some detail the Lord Chancellor's medium-term objectives for legal aid and the role that the board will play in achieving them. To complement this document, the Legal Aid Board has today published its corporate plan for the years 1994-95 to 1996-97.

Convictions (Court of Appeal)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many convictions have been quashed by the Court of Appeal since the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 on the grounds of *(a)* unreliable police evidence, *(b)* unreliable confession evidence, *(c)* unreliable forensic or other expert evidence and *(d)* other grounds.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, in the period since January 1985, when the relevant sections of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 came into force, a total of 2,123 appeals against conviction have been allowed in part, or in whole, by the Court of Appeal criminal division.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Portugal

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss with the Portuguese authorities the death in Portugal of Paul Kenney.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I informed the hon. Member during the Adjournment debate on this matter on 10 *Official Report*, columns 650-64, that I would send the Portuguese authorities a copy of the *Hansard* record. This I have now done. We shall continue to press the Portuguese authorities for an explanation.

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which his Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Goodlad: The table lists consultancies awarded by the diplomatic and aid wings of the Department to accountancy firms in 1992 and 1993 to consider work practices within Departments. The Department did not award any such consultancy contracts to merchant banks in either year. The table does not include the many consultancies awarded under the aid programme to developing countries or the know how fund.

Firm	*Consultancy*	*Value £*
Coopers and Lybrand		
(a) Diplomatic Wing		
1992	Project Support Office	19,000
	Market Testing Advice	7,000
	Quality Review	38,700
	Attitude Survey and follow up	42,250
	Market Testing	10,000
1993	Market Testing Advice	41,300
	IT Financial Management Accounting System—FMAS	94,400
(b) Aid Wing		
1992	Market Testing—Service Specification: Overseas Pensions Department	3,800
	Privatisation proposals	21,200
1993	Market Testing—A Review of Potential Suppliers	25,500
	Review of Office Services	65,000
	Reviewing the Status of Crown Agents and CDC	94,000
Ernst and Young		
(a) Diplomatic Wing		
1992	OED IT Procurement System	58,800
1993	OED IT Procurement System	11,500
Firman Jack		
(a) Diplomatic Wing		
1992	Chessington Interface	10,400
1993	Baselining Posts Overseas Accounting System	15,200
	Baselining Posts Reconciliation Accounts System	3,600
	Financial Management Accounting System	3,300
	Chessington Interface	20,200
	Contingency Planning	1,900
KPMG Management Services		

Firm	Consultancy	Value £
(a) Aid Wing		
1992	Market Testing Review, NRI	5,700
1993	Review of Services provided by OACD	46,000
	Costing and Pricing Study NRI	5,400
Price Waterhouse		
(a) Diplomatic Wing		
1992	Baselining and Maintenance of Finance Accounts IT system	318,800
	Review of Posts Overseas Accounts System	71,000
1993	Maintenance of Finance Accounts IT system	180,000
Stoy Hayward		
(a) Diplomatic Wing		
1993	Programme Manager Financial Management Accounting system—FMAS	95,100

Members' Gifts

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each occasion since 1964 when gifts presented to hon. Members have been transported to the United Kingdom in diplomatic bags.

Mr. Goodlad: The Vienna convention on diplomatic relations does not permit the use of the diplomatic bag for the carriage of non-official items on behalf of persons who are not designated as entitled by the convention. Accordingly, personal gifts presented to hon. Members may not be transported by diplomatic bag.

Records of materials carried by diplomatic bag are destroyed within 12 months of the bag having reached its destination. A scrutiny of the extant records indicates that no exception has been made to these rules in the past 12 months. Data on earlier bag movements are no longer available.

Turkey

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which representatives of Kurdish people he expects to meet during his forthcoming visit to Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: During his visit to Ankara my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to meet a wide cross-section of people from a variety of regions and ethnic backgrounds.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions on arms sales and their use he expects to have during his forthcoming visit to Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As usual on such visits, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs shall seek opportunities to promote the sales of British products, including military equipment for defence purposes.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what journalists' organisations he will meet during his forthcoming visit to Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs shall meet a range of Turkish media representatives in Ankara. He does not plan to meet any journalists' organisations.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Turkey about the release of detained journalists and the free publication of newspapers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Turkey was heavily criticised for continuing limitations on freedom of expression, particularly in the media, at a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting in Warsaw in September. Through such international forums and in our own meetings with Turkish Ministers and officials we make plain our concern about this and other human rights issues. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs shall do so during his visit.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Educational Broadcasting

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to ensure that schools in rural areas in Wales will be able to pick up frequencies of educational radio programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The BBC has announced plans to transfer the educational programmes at present on Radio 5 to other networks. I understand that the BBC believes that this will improve coverage and quality of reception of these programmes.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of educational broadcasting on television and radio in Wales.

Mr. Brooke: The Government hope to publish a White Paper in the spring setting out proposals for the future of the BBC, including its role in providing educational broadcasting in all parts of the United Kingdom.

S4C and HTV are required to provide educational programmes in their television services. There are no similar requirements on independent radio services, although I understand that two local radio stations have agreed to include some Welsh language education programmes in their services.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many hours were dedicated to Welsh language educational broadcasts on *(a)* radio and *(b)* television for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: According to the information available to me, the number of hours dedicated to Welsh language educational broadcasts by the BBC and S4C, in each of the last five years, were:

Year	*Radio*	*Television*
1989-90	152	90
1990-91	159	150·05
1991-92	166	133·10
1992-93	167	125·45
1993-94[1]	297	98·3

[1] Includes projected figures for 1994. The figures include both programmes for schools and adult education programmes.

Broadcasting (Restrictions)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to make arrangements to revoke section 10 of the Broadcasting Act 1990 withdrawing notices to the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the British Broadcasting Corporation requiring those organisations to refrain from sending any broadcast matter as directed; how many households in the United Kingdom he estimates are able to receive television and radio broadcasts originating in the Irish Republic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* I have been asked by the Prime Minister to review the broadcasting restrictions; I expect to report to him shortly. We hold no information on the reception in the United Kingdom of Irish television or radio broadcasts; any such reception from terrestrial sources is the result of fortuitous overspill of transmissions and is not protected from interference from other signals.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance with the eighth data protection principle.

The Solicitor-General: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and to the registrar's powers to promote compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that any further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Attorney-General what statutory provisions apply to the duty of a Minister of the Crown to sign a public interest immunity certificate.

The Solicitor-General: The duty of a Minister of the Crown to sign a public interest immunity certificate arises at common law and not under statute.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Attorney-General if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

The Solicitor-General: For the period 1990-91 to 1992-93 there was an increase in the cost of providing cars for Ministers of £9,700 accounted for primarily by (i) increases in pay, and the cost of vehicles and fuel, and (ii) restructuring by the Government car service of its charges to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its full costs in 1990-91.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

The Solicitor-General: The Departments for which the Attorney-General is responsible are currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form. On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Bromley Council (Fraud)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *767*, what has been the result of the inquiry by the Metropolitan police concerning the alleged fraud within *(a)* the social services department and *(b)* the environmental health department of Bromley council; and if he has now reached a decision in regard to prosecution.

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service awaits the results of further inquiries carried out by the Metropolitan police into the alleged fraud within the social services department of Bromley council and when these are made available a decision will be taken.

The results of inquiries into allegations concerning the environmental health department of Bromley council are currently being considered by the Crown Prosecution Service.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General what restrictions apply to persons appearing before Lord Justice Scott's inquiry being represented by counsel; and under what authority those restrictions have been made.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

The procedures of the Scott inquiry are a matter for Lord Justice Scott. They are set out in his note "Proposed procedures for hearings before Lord Justice Scott", announced on 31 March 1992. I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which his Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Boswell: During 1992 and 1993 the Department awarded consultancy contracts to the following firms:

(a) Accountancy Firms
- Audit Consultancy and Training Ltd.
- Accountancy Personnel
- Capita Management Consultancy Ltd.
- Coopers and Lybrand
- CSL Group Ltd.
- E. A. Alcock Ltd.
- Ernst and Young Management Consultants
- KPMG Management Consulting
- Michael Paige Finance Ltd.
- Price Waterhouse
- Touche Ross

(b) Merchant Banks
- N. M Rothschild

The consultancies were as follows:
- Advice to the Department on the application of the Government's private finance initiative in education
- Review of the Department's Central Accounts Branch
- Internal Audit Assistance
- Preparation of Colleges for Independence
- Financial M.anagement Survey at the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council
- Scoping Study for Information Services Branch
- Corporate Plan for Information Services Branch
- Market Testing Assistance
- Telecommunications and Distance Working within the Department
- Financial Management Survey at the Agriculture and Food Research Council
- Teachers' Pensions Agency Customer Survey
- Review of Data Collection Processing
- Financial Management Survey of Charging at Research Councils
- Audit of Pensions Administration System Project
- Financial Review at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art
- Financial Consultancy; Grant Maintained Schools Sector
- Capital Equipment Survey at Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges
- Review of Filing Storage Strategy for Teachers' Pensions Agency
- Assistance in Preparing Colleges for Independence from Local Authority Control
- Local Education Authority Income and Expenditure Review
- Review of Outturn Expenditure Returns for Grant Maintained Schools and Local Education Authorities
- Financial Management Survey at the National Curriculum Council
- Review of Pensions Payments Options for Teachers' Pensions Agency
- Future Strategy Consultancy
- Review of Grant Maintained Schools
- School Curriculum Assessment Authority Accountancy Review
- Systems Review at School Curriculum Assessment Authority
- Financial Management Review of City Technology Colleges
- Impact of Regulations and Statistics on Schools
- Review of Payments to Grant Maintained Schools
- Objectives Setting Staff Training
- Scoping Study for Teachers' Pensions Agency
- Grant Maintained Schools Business Consultancy
- Review of VAT costs to Grant Maintained Schools
- Financial Management Survey at Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges

The total value of the contracts was £2·39 million.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Forth: The level of charges for ministerial cars is determined centrally by the Government car service—GCS. I am informed by GCS managers that there are two main factors which have led to an increase in the cost per GCS car for Ministers in this Department in 1990-91. The first is the effect of inflation on GCS costs, particularly pay, vehicles and fuel. The second factor is that during this period the GCS restructured its charges to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its full costs in 1990-91.

Mobile Classrooms

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy over a number of mobile classrooms being in permanent use due to acute lack of space in the main school buildings; and what financial assistance he intends to give to local authorities to overcome such difficulties by undertaking capital work at the schools involved.

Mr. Forth: The provision of school places, whether in permanent or temporary accommodation, is a matter for local education authorities and school governors. Capital spending levels and priorities as between projects and schools are also a local matter. My right hon. Friend gives high priority in the distribution of capital resources to funding new school places where demand is growing; and the level of funding is based on the new places being in permanent rather than temporary accommodation.

Bentley Drive School, Birchells

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he or one of his ministerial colleagues intends to visit Bentley Drive primary school, Birchells, Walsall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Ministers from the Department have no plans at present to visit Bentley Drive primary school, Walsall.

Walsall Schools (Capital Works)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made that Walsall council has the necessary financial means to undertake capital works in schools.

Mr. Forth: Walsall and all other local education authorities are invited to submit bids for annual capital guidelines, which are then distributed on the basis of our published criteria. Walsall's ACGs reflect the extent to which its bids meet the criteria. In addition to the ACGs —which through basic credit approvals set the level of authorities' borrowing for capital purposes—and any supplementary credit approvals issued, Walsall can also use a proportion of any capital receipts realised, and transfers from revenue budgets, to fund its capital programmes.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools there were in each local authority in England by 1 January; how many in each case had held ballots under section 61 of the Education Act 1988; how many ballots in each resulted in votes in favour of seeking grant-maintained status; and how many ballots in each case resulted in votes against seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The tables provide details of the number of maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority area and as at 1 January, the number of schools at which ballots under section 61 of the Education Reform Act 1988 have been held and the results of those ballots.

Ballots on the question of grant-maintained status: Primary Schools

LEA	*Schools*	*Schools at which ballots held*	*"Yes" votes*	*"No" votes*
Avon	369	5	0	5
Barking	55	0	0	0
Barnet	89	5	2	3
Barnsley	96	1	1	0
Bedfordshire	218	3	3	0
Berkshire	275	10	7	3
Bexley	64	4	3	1
Birmingham	336	11	6	5
Bolton	105	1	1	0
Bradford	167	7	5	2
Brent	64	4	4	0
Bromley	78	7	6	1
Buckinghamshire	290	8	6	2
Bury	71	2	1	1
Calderdale	91	4	4	0
Cambridge	267	9	7	2
Camden	41	0	0	0
Cheshire	454	8	5	3
Cleveland	203	0	0	0
Cornwall	249	1	1	0
Corporation of London	1	0	0	0
Coventry	109	1	0	1
Croydon	98	3	3	0
Cumbria	306	22	18	5
Derbyshire	450	13	8	6
Devon	442	7	2	6
Doncaster	127	5	4	1
Dorset	200	2	1	1
Dudley	83	1	1	0
Durham	298	0	0	0
Ealing	92	4	4	0
East Sussex	219	0	0	0
Enfield	70	4	1	3
Essex	581	78	72	6
Gateshead	82	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	262	12	11	1
Greenwich	79	1	1	0
Hackney	70	1	1	0
Hammersmith	38	1	1	0
Hampshire	580	18	18	2
Haringey	77	0	0	0
Harrow	54	0	0	0
Havering	74	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	288	2	0	2
Hertfordshire	432	13	10	3
Hillingdon	72	11	11	0
Hounslow	62	0	0	0
Humberside	354	5	3	2
Isle of Scilly	4	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	46	0	0	0
Islington	57	0	0	0
Kensington	27	2	2	0
Kent	570	24	22	2
Kingston	36	1	1	0
Kirklees	158	2	0	2
Knowsley	68	0	0	0
Lambeth	77	5	5	0
Lancashire	605	5	3	2
Leeds	249	3	1	2
Leicester	334	2	0	2
Lewisham	72	1	1	0
Lincolnshire	293	30	26	4
Liverpool	198	0	0	0
Manchester	174	0	0	0
Merton	49	1	0	1
Newcastle	82	1	0	1
Newham	67	0	0	0
Norfolk	397	19	15	4
North Tyne	61	2	1	1
North Yorkshire	394	2	0	2
Northamptonshire	270	13	10	3
Northumberland	143	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	426	1	0	1
Oldham	104	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	241	1	1	0
Redbridge	56	0	0	0
Richmond	39	0	0	0
Rochdale	76	7	4	3
Rotherham	115	0	0	0
Salford	88	0	0	0
Sandwell	112	0	0	0
Sefton	94	0	0	0
Sheffield	164	17	15	2
Shropshire	214	3	3	0
Solihull	70	1	1	0
Somerset	229	5	3	2
South Tyneside	58	0	0	0
Southwark	75	5	5	0
St. Helens	72	1	1	0
Staffordshire	414	4	3	1
Stockport	110	0	0	0
Suffolk	255	0	0	0
Sunderland	105	0	0	0
Surrey	372	21	19	2
Sutton	43	4	3	1
Tameside	82	1	0	1
Tower Hamlets	73	0	0	0
Trafford	78	0	0	0
Wakefield	130	2	2	0
Walsall	106	3	2	1
Waltham Forest	61	1	0	1
Wandsworth	72	5	3	2
Warwickshire	244	0	0	0
West Sussex	246	0	0	0
Westminster	42	0	0	0
Wigan	125	0	0	0
Wiltshire	294	17	14	3
Wirral	106	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	101	1	0	1
	18,905	507	398	114

Ballot on the question of grant-maintained status: Secondary Schools

LEA	Schools	Schools at which ballots held	"Yes" votes	"No" votes
Avon	60	4	2	2
Barking	8	0	0	0
Barnet	21	11	10	1
Barnsley	15	2	0	2
Bedfordshire	71	19	12	7
Berkshire	59	12	10	2
Bexley	17	6	5	1
Birmingham	79	24	17	7
Bolton	16	3	3	0
Bradford	88	8	6	2
Brent	13	12	11	2
Bromley	17	14	13	1
Buckinghamshire	45	11	10	1
Bury	14	0	0	0
Calderdale	16	8	7	1
Cambridge	44	23	17	8
Camden	11	3	2	1
Cheshire	68	10	4	7
Cleveland	44	3	0	3
Cornwall	31	0	0	0
Corporation of London	0	0	0	0
Coventry	19	0	0	0
Croydon	20	9	9	2
Cumbria	42	15	15	0
Derbyshire	61	24	14	10
Devon	64	9	6	3
Doncaster	34	1	0	1
Dorset	56	14	14	2
Dudley	22	9	7	2
Durham	43	1	0	1
Ealing	13	8	6	2
East Sussex	34	1	0	1
Enfield	17	6	5	1
Essex	105	73	72	4
Gateshead	13	1	0	1
Gloucestershire	43	32	29	6
Greenwich	15	1	0	1
Hackney	10	1	0	1
Hammersmith	10	1	1	0
Hampshire	94	22	18	4
Haringey	9	0	0	0
Harrow	10	2	1	1
Havering	19	7	4	3
Hereford and Worcester	76	8	5	3
Hertfordshire	88	29	26	5
Hillingdon	15	15	14	1
Hounslow	14	3	2	1
Humberside	60	4	0	4
Isles of Scilly	1	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	21	0	0	0
Islington	9	0	0	0
Kensington	4	1	1	0
Kent	136	71	69	4
Kingston	10	4	4	0
Kirklees	34	5	3	2
Knowsley	11	3	1	2
Lambeth	10	5	5	0
Lancashire	106	16	9	7
Leeds	46	1	1	0
Leicester	79	8	5	4
Lewisham	13	2	0	2
Lincolnshire	63	28	28	0
Liverpool	36	5	3	2
Manchester	28	1	0	1
Merton	11	1	0	1
Newcastle	22	1	0	1
Newham	14	1	1	0
Norfolk	52	16	12	4
North Tyne	26	3	2	1
North Yorkshire	59	2	0	2
Northamptonshire	65	19	14	6
Northumberland	61	3	1	2
Nottinghamshire	82	7	3	5
Oldham	15	1	0	1
Oxfordshire	44	2	0	2
Redbridge	14	2	1	1
Richmond	8	0	0	0
Rochdale	14	3	1	2
Rotherham	18	0	0	0
Salford	18	4	1	3
Sandwell	20	4	2	3
Sefton	22	1	0	1
Sheffield	32	8	6	2
Shropshire	37	7	7	0
Solihull	13	2	1	1
Somerset	39	2	2	0
South Tyneside	11	0	0	0
Southwark	14	5	5	0
St. Helens	12	1	0	1
Staffordshire	85	10	5	5
Stockport	14	2	0	2
Suffolk	77	1	0	1
Sunderland	17	0	0	0
Surrey	51	14	14	0
Sutton	14	8	8	0
Tameside	18	5	3	2
Tower Hamlets	15	2	1	1
Trafford	16	6	4	2
Wakefield	38	0	0	0
Walsall	21	9	7	4
Waltham Forest	16	2	2	0
Wandsworth	10	8	7	1
Warwickshire	37	9	8	1
West Sussex	41	3	0	3
Westminster	8	1	0	1
Wigan	21	1	1	0
Wiltshire	44	22	16	7
Wirral	21	4	2	2
Wolverhampton	20	6	5	1
	3,657	827	648	204

Footnotes to the tables:

Column B

1. The figures for number of schools use data derived from the Index for Educational Establishments.

Column C

2. The figures show total number of schools at which one or more ballots have been held.

Columns D and E.

3. The totals are of definitive ballot results. In some cases, where the first ballot had a turnout of under 50 per cent., a second ballot was required to achieve such a result.

4. The combined totals of "Yes" and "No" may exceed the number of schools at which ballots have been held *(Column C)* because some schools have gone through the complete balloting process more than once, (as distinct from requiring a second ballot to achieve a definitive result).

Column E

5. Includes two tied ballot results.

Schools (Capital Guidelines)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give a breakdown of the schools' annual capital guidelines for 1991-92, 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 showing, in each case, the amounts for *(a)* commitments, *(b)* basic need, *(c)* removal of surplus places, *(d)* special education, *(e)* local education authority liability for projects in voluntary-aided schools and *(f)* general improvements and showing national totals for each.

Mr. Forth: I have placed the information requested in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines exist for the use by police of informants in relation to their pursuit of fighting large-scale drug traffic.

Mr. Charles Wardle: General guidelines about the use of informants by the police are set out in Home Office circulars Nos. 97/1969 and 9/1992, copies of which are available in the Library. These circulars deal with the police use of informants to investigate all crime and not specifically drug-related crime.

Crime, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the measures he is taking to reduce crime in Durham.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Durham constabulary has resources to maintain a strong and effective police service. At the end of September 1993 the force strength was 1,375 police officers and 539 civilians. This represents an increase in strength of 63 police officers and 39 civilians since 1979. Under the recently announced parish constable initiative, a parish constable was appointed to the Langley parish on 17 January 1994.

The Government have also encouraged the development of effective crime prevention programmes. Nine crime prevention panels are in operation in the area, along with over 900 neighbourhood watch schemes covering over 105,000 households. In addition the Durham Agency Against Crime has been set up locally as a partnership to improve the quality of life for the whole community by supporting crime prevention initiatives. Durham constabulary has seconded an officer to the agency. The recent publication of two major law and order Bills underlines the Government's commitment to firm action against crime on all fronts.

Prisons (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is the policy of his Department that information on relevant embassies and support organisations and on specialist provision available within the prison for help for foreign nationals is given to foreign nationals serving sentences in prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement and list the prisons where such information is now available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 20 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Prison Service policy on giving information to foreign national prisoners on relevant embassies and support organisations, and on specialist provision available within the prison.

The Prison Service recognises the particular needs of foreign national prisoners and encourages dissemination of appropriate information to them, including sources of internal and external support.

A considerable quantity of the information outlined in your question is contained in the Foreign Prisoners' Resource Pack which has been distributed to all Prison Service establishments to assist both prisoners and those who work with them. Other information may also be provided by individual establishments or other agencies, but details are not kept centrally.

Bail Hostels

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list where bail hostels are located in each county; and which of these take women.

Mr. Maclean: The current list of bail and probation/bail hostels in England and Wales is as follows—those hostels which take female residents are noted in the third column.

Probation/bail hostels

Probation area	*Hostel*	*Sex*	*Location*	*Beds*
Avon	Ashley House	Male/Female	Bristol	20
	Brigstocke Road	Male	Bristol	29
	Bridge House	Male	Bristol	18
Bedfordshire	Bedford	Male/Female	Bedford	25
	Napier Road	Male/Female	Luton	23
Berkshire	Elizabeth Fry	Male/Female	Reading	20
	Manor Lodge	Male	Old Windsor	27
	St. Leonards	Male	Reading	23
	Wellesley House	Male	Windsor	18
Buckinghamshire	Milton Keynes	Male/Female	Great Holme	16
Cambridgeshire	Peterborough	Male	Peterborough	32
Cheshire	Bewsey Street	Male/Female	Warrington	20
Cleveland	The Crescent	Male	Middlesborough	27
Cornwall	Meneghy House	Male/Female	Camborne	18
Cumbria	Bowling Green	Male	Carlisle	24
Derbyshire	Burdett Lodge	Male/Female	Derby	25

Probation area	Hostel	Sex	Location	Beds
Devon	Lawson House	Male	Plymouth	20
Dorset	Bournemouth	Male	Bournemouth	27
	Weston	Male/Female	Weymouth	27
Durham	Fir Tree Grange	Male	Durham	28
East Sussex	Brighton	Male/Female	Brighton	16
Essex	Basildon	Male/Female	Basildon	32
	Windyridge	Male/Female	Nayland	30
Greater Manchester	Bradshaw	Male	Bury	29
	Hopwood	Male/Female	Manchester	20
	Ascot House	Male	Stockport	22
	St. Josephs	Male	Manchester	29
	Wilton Place	Male/Female	Manchester	29
	Withington Road	Male/Female	Manchester	37
Gloucestershire	Ryecroft	Male/Female	Tredworth	16
Hampshire	The Grange	Male/Female	Portsmouth	18
Hereford and Worcester	Braley House	Male/Female	Worcester	23
Hertfordshire	St. Albans	Male	Watford	26
Humberside	Queens Road	Male	Hull	22
Kent	Fleming House	Male/Female	Maidstone	23
Lancashire	Highfield House	Male	Accrington	18
	Hoole House	Male	Elswick	24
Leicestershire	Charnwood Lodge	Male	Leicester	18
	Kirk Lodge	Male/Female	Leicester	35
Lincolnshire	Wordsworth House	Male	Lincoln	26
London Inner	Bedford/Shenley	Male	London	30
London Inner	Camden House	Male/Female	London	29
London Inner	Ellison House	Male	London	25
London Inner	KPH	Male/Female	London	19
London Inner	St. Edmunds	Male	London	25
London Inner	St. Mungo	Male	London	25
London Inner	St. Vincents	Male	London	24
London Inner	West Park	Male	London	22
London Middlesex	Corfton Road	Male	London	20
London Middlesex	Seafield Lodge	Male	London	14
London North East	Westbourne House	Male	London	40
London South East	Beckenham Road	Male	Beckenham	20
Merseyside	Adelaide House	Female	Liverpool	22
Merseyside	Canning House	Male	Liverpool	27
Merseyside	Southwood	Male	Liverpool	23
North Wales	Plas-y-wern	Male	Wrexham	12
Norfolk	John Boag House	Male	Norwich	29
Northants	Bridgewood	Male	Northampton	23
Northants	Stone House	Male/Female	Northampton	24
Northumbria	Ozanam House	Male/Female	Newcastle upon Tyne	27
Northumbria	St. Christophers	Male/Female	Newcastle upon Tyne	22
Notts	Astral Grove	Male	Nottingham	15
Notts	Southwell House	Male/Female	Nottingham	16
Notts	Trent House	Male/Female	Nottingham	22
Oxfordshire	Abingdon Road	Male/Female	Oxford	22
South Glamorgan	Mandeville House	Male	Cardiff	26
Somerset	Glogan House	Male/Female	Bridgewater	19
Staffordshire	Wenger House	Male	Newcastle under Lyme	42
Suffolk	Lightfoot House	Male	Ipswich	22
Suffolk	The Cottage	Male	Ipswich	18
Surrey	St. Catherines	Male	Guildford	19
West Midlands	Bilston	Male	Wolverhampton	15
West Midlands	Carpenter House	Male	Birmingham	16
West Midlands	Crowley House	Female	Birmingham	18
West Midlands	Elliot House	Male	Birmingham	20
West Midlands	Stoke Green	Male	Coventry	22
Warwickshire	Kenilworth Road	Male	Leamington Spa	18
Warwickshire	McIntyre House	Male	Nuneaton	18
Yorkshire South	Centre 45	Male/Female	Sheffield	36

Probation area	Hostel	Sex	Location	Beds
Yorkshire South	Norfolk Park	Male/Female	Sheffield	49
Yorkshire South	Rookwood	Male/Female	Doncaster	39
Yorkshire West	Albion Street	Male	Dewsbury	24
Yorkshire West	Cardigan House	Male	Leeds	23
Yorkshire West	Elm Bank	Male	Cleckheaton	17
Yorkshire West	Ripon House	Male/Female	Leeds	19
Yorkshire West	St. Johns House	Male	Leeds	28

Bail hostels

Probation area	Hostel	Sex	Location	Beds
Cheshire	Bunbury House	Male	Ellesmere Port	22
	Linden Bank	Male/Female	Sandbach	22
Cleveland	South Bank	Male	Middlesbrough	27
Devon	Dudley Centre	Male/Female	Newton Abbott	22
Greater Manchester	Chorlton Hostel	Male/Female	Manchester	27
Hampshire	Dickson House	Male/Female	Fareham	28
	Southampton	Male/Female	Southampton	22
Humberside	Scunthorpe	Male	Scunthorpe	22
Kent	Dover Bail	Male/Female	Dover	18
Lancashire	Blackburn	Male	Blackburn	18
Leicestershire	Howard House	Male	Leicester	20
London Inner	Canadian Avenue	Male	London	24
	Kelley House	Female	London	28
	Tulse Hill	Male	London	27
London South West	Kew	Male	London	14
Merseyside	Merseybank	Male	Liverpool	28
North Wales	Ty Newydd	Male/Female	Bangor	12
Northumbria	Cuthbert House	Male/Female	Gateshead	22
	Pennywell	Male/Female	Sunderland	22
Oxfordshire	Clarks House	Male/Female	Oxford	27
Staffordshire	Lichfield Road	Male	Stafford	20
West Glamorgan	Emroch House	Male	Port Talbot	15
West Midlands	Marshall House	Male	Wolverhampton	22
	Stonnall Road	Male	Aldridge	12
	Sycamore Lodge	Male	Warley	32
	Welford	Male	Aston	26
Yorkshire South	Town Moor	Male	Doncaster	32
Yorkshire West	Howden House	Male/Female	Leeds	27
	Walmer Villas	Male	Bradford	18

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the bail/probation hostels in Britain; and what was the average occupancy rate of each hostel in 1990, 1991, 1992 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean: Occupancy figures for 1990 are not readily available. The remainder of the information requested is as follows:

Average occupancy in approved hostels

Area	Hostel	1991-92 Per cent.	1992-93 Per cent.	September '93 Per cent.
Avon	Ashley House	85·2	71	75
	Brigstocke Road	74·7	64	80
	Bridge House	51·4	68	84

Area	Hostel	1991-92 Per cent.	1992-93 Per cent.	September '93 Per cent.
Bedfordshire	Bedford Bail	[1]—	43	41
	Napier Road	80·2	68	60
Berkshire	Manor Lodge	79·3	43	53
	Elizabeth Fry	76·0	53	47
	St. Leonards	74·0	48	46
	Wellesley House	83·2	52	58
Buckinghamshire	Milton Keynes	68·2	74	84
Cambridgeshire	Peterborough	85·5	70	78
Cheshire	Bewsey Street	59·5	66	91
	Bunbury House	[1]—	60	64
	Linden Bank	[1]—	79	70
Cleveland	The Crescent	71·7	59	38
	South Bank	78·0	72	59
Cornwall	Meneghy House	68·0	62	58
Cumbria	Bowling Green	70·6	59	69
Derbyshire	Burdett Lodge	62·5	51	79
Devon	Lawson House	68·4	[1]—	59
	Dudley Centre	69·6	43	52
Dorset	Bournemouth	72·1	68	47
	Weston	68·3	61	86
Durham	Fir Tree Lodge	68·0	40	50
East Sussex	Brighton	57·0	50	75
Essex	Windyridge	86·4	60	38
	Basildon	59·7	65	55
Gloucester	Ryecroft	67·2	39	76
Greater Manchester	Hopwood House	84·5	72	70
	Wilton Place	67·6	70	85
	Chorlton	57·5	65	67
	Withington Road	78·9	68	69
	Ascot House	[1]—	59	80
	Parkfield	81·8	42	[1]—
	Bradshaw House	83·5	52	64
	St. Josephs	87·7	68	74
Hampshire	Southampton Bail	[1]—	52	77
	Carlisle House	81	60	[1]—
	Dickson House	51·8	48	68
	The Grange	91·5	55	64
Hereford and Worcester	Braley House	83·7	68	88
Hertfordshire	St. Albans	65·8	45	67
Humberside	Queens Road	80·2	55	54
Inner London	St. Edmunds	71·2	42	64
	KPH	91·7	84	95
	Ellison House	76·9	53	70
	Tulse Hill	63·5	59	51
	St. Vincents	83·5	46	48
	St. Mungos	82·4	62	84
	Bedford/Shenley	36·8	64	66
	Kelley House	72·6	48	68
	Canadian Avenue	[1]—	82	89
	West Park	82·5	57	78
	Camden House	53·7	35	71
Kent	Hollywood Manor	63·3	57	[1]—
	Fleming House	75·9	67	78
	Dover Bail	53·9	57	45
Lancashire	Highfield House	70·6	75	65

Area	Hostel	1991-92 Per cent.	1992-93 Per cent.	September '93 Per cent.
	Blackburn	81·3	74	41
	Hoole House	49·7	68	76
Leicestershire	Charnwood Lodge	84·3	59	85
	Kirk Lodge	69·7	47	75
	Howard House	93·7	73	78
Lincolnshire	Wordsworth House	60·3	70	70
Merseyside	Southwood	87·6	75	82
	Merseybank	[1]—	42	74
	Canning House	81·6	64	58
	Adelaide House	67·4	54	54
Middlesex	Corfton Road	88·8	44	83
	Seafield Lodge	80·3	67	88
North East London	Westbourne	68·6	73	74
Norfolk	John Boag	63·5	74	70
Northamptonshire	Bridgewood	82·1	72	83
	Stone House	75·5	69	36
Northumbria	Ozanam House	83·9	66	82
	St. Christophers	78·0	48	90
	Pennywell	72·1	74	76
	Cuthbert House	78·3	73	87
North Wales	Plas-y-wern	96·8	96	94
	Ty Newydd	93·9	94	87
Nottinghamshire	Astral Grove	80·5	64	79
	Southwell	62·5	57	81
	Trent House	57·0	50	70
Oxfordshire	Abingdon Road	67·0	74	43
	Clark's House	42·8	72	73
Somerset	Glogan House	88·5	69	54
South East London	Beckenham Road	55·2	54	85
South Glamorgan	Mandeville House	69·4	31	63
South West London	Kew	87·1	52	87
South Yorkshire	Rookwood	65	61	56
	Norfolk Park	84·1	67	52
	Centre 45	80·4	86	81
	Town Moor	64·3	72	53
Staffordshire	Wenger House	87·8	65	82
	Stafford Bail	76·6	65	81
Suffolk	Lightfoot House	81·8	61	55
	The Cottage	86·1	75	85
Surrey	St. Catherines	85·4	58	60
Warwickshire	McIntyre House	94·2	80	90
	Kenilworth Road	69·7	49	71
West Glamorgan	Emroch House	77·3	81	90
West Midlands	Sycamore Lodge	40	77	75
	Crowley House	64	46	61
	Bilston	78	94	98
	Stoke Green	79·2	79	68
	Stonnall Road	86·1	[1]—	96
	Welford House	56·9	69	64
	Marshall House	81	86	91
	Carpenter House	80·2	81	81
West Yorkshire	Howden House	86·2	79	78
	Walmer Villas	87	78	86
	Albion Street	[1]—	33	85

Area	Hostel	1991-92 Per cent.	1992-93 Per cent.	September '93 Per cent.
	Ripon House	71·4	76	91
	Elm Bank	96	90	80
	St. Johns	95·2	78	94
	Cardigan House	62·2	69	91

[1]— Denotes hostel which is closed or has yet to be opened.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of persons remanded to a bail hostel during 1992 were charged with a subsequent offence.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not readily available.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken by the Home Office to deal with objections to the sitings of local bail hostels during the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: In June 1990 the Home Office advised probation and voluntary managing committees of the need to assess local opinion as part of the process of developing an approved bail hostel; and in January 1993 the Home Office issued a development guide which stressed the importance of providing opportunities for local consultation and giving proper consideration to the views expressed. From time to time, Ministers and officials have, as necessary, met residents or their representives to discuss the issues raised by hostels proposals.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice will be given to local magistrates who subsequently wished to consider a remand to a hostel in the event of the closure of a specific bail hostel.

Mr. Maclean: It will be for the probation service concerned to bring to the attention of magistrates courts the facilities offered by approved hostels in its own or a neighbouring area.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what objections to proposals to open a bail hostel the Home Office and local probation committees have received during the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: In most cases where a new bail hostel has been proposed local residents and others have made representations against its development, arguing mainly on cost, crime and planning grounds.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of persons remanded to a bail hostel during 1992 were breached for failure to comply with conditions;

(2) how many persons were remanded to a bail hostel in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not readily available in the form requested.

Door Supervisors

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many door supervisors have been prosecuted for violent or drugs-related offences committed while on duty since 1 January 1990;

(2) if he will publish a breakdown, by police authority area, of the number of door supervisors who have been prosecuted for violent or drugs-related offences carried out while on duty since 1 January 1990.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally.

Licensing Laws

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take as a result of representations received by his Department to last year's consultation document on the reform of the licensing laws.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The provisions for a system of children's certificates for suitable bar premises in England and Wales in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill reflect widespread support for that proposal among respondents to the consultation document. Action on the other, more complex proposals in the document, and the responses to them, is under consideration.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a Bill to reform the licensing laws.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no present plans to introduce a Bill concerned solely with reform of liquor licensing law in England and Wales.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Howard: Last Christmas 450 cards were sent by Home Office Ministers; 8,450 by civil servants; and 11,012 by executive agencies. The cost of purchasing and posting these cards was £7,705 and £4,120 respectively. It is not possible to estimate accurately the cost of staff time in sending these out but this would have been minimal.

Racial Attacks

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many racially motivated attacks are perpetrated by whites on non-whites and by non-whites on whites; and what are the figures expressed as proportions.

Mr. Maclean: Our best source of information is currently the 1988 and 1992 British crime surveys. The British crime survey estimate is that 82 per cent. of all incidents of violence and threats thought by Afro-Caribbeans and Asians to be racially motivated were perpetrated by whites. No information is available about

perpetrators of incidents involving white victims, as the British crime survey asked only Afro-Caribbean and Asian respondents about their perception of racial motivation. The 1994 survey will extend these questions to all respondents.

This estimate is among the results contained in "Ethnic Minorities' Experience of Crime and Racially Motivated Incidents"—research and planning unit paper No. 82. This is due to be published in February by the Home Office research and statistics department.

Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the procedure for the appointment of lords lieutenant in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* West Yorkshire, *(c)* Essex and *(d)* London; if he will give the name in each case, home residence, occupation, and date of appointment of the current (i) lord lieutenant, (ii) vice lord lieutenant and (iii) each deputy lord lieutenant; and how nominations can be made for these positions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Lords lieutenant in England and Wales are appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Nominations of candidates for lords lieutenant can, when a vacancy occurs, be made to the relevant clerk to the lieutenancy, the outgoing lord lieutenant or the Prime Minister's secretary of appointments. For vice lords lieutenant, recommendations can be made to the clerk to the lieutenancy or the lord lieutenant. The appointment of deputy lieutenants is a matter for the lord lieutenant, subject to the non-disapprobation of the Queen.

A list of the names of serving lords lieutenant, vice lords lieutenant and deputy lieutentants in south Yorkshire, west Yorkshire, Essex and London together with, where available, dates of appointment, is being placed in the Library of the House. Deputy lieutenants are required by section 133(2)(a) of the Reserve Forces Act 1980 to have a place of residence in, or within seven miles of the boundary of, the county or area. Lords lieutenant and vice lords lieutenant would generally be expected to comply with these residential requirements. Details of the occupation of the lords lieutenant, vice lords lieutenant and deputy lieutenants could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Howard: I refer to my reply to the hon. Member's question of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *661*. I understand that higher pay, vehicle and fuel costs and price restructuring to recover full costs were the main factors in the increased charges for ministerial cars supplied by the Government car service.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure for expenses to community-based drug agencies, paid by prison governors, in the years 1990 to 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 20 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question as to what was the total expenditure for expenses to community-based drug agencies, paid by Prison Governors, in the years 1990 to 1993.

Information in the form requested is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the results of the parliamentary Boundary Commission inquiry for Essex to be published.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the outcome of the inquiry is likely to be published in the spring.

Drugs (Holland)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the measures introduced in Holland over the last 10 years to deal with the use of cannabis, cocaine and heroin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We keep in close touch with developments in drugs policy within Europe and further afield, both through the formal European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations drugs forums and through informal contact. My right hon. and learned Friend discussed various aspects of drugs policy with the Dutch Minister of Justice, Mr. Hirsch Ballin, when he visited London in September 1993.

Nothing in the Dutch experience has so far seemed to justify our changing the system of controls provided under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Squatting

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions he has held with local authorities during the last 12 months about the occupation of council housing stock by squatters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what date his Department became responsible for issues relating to squatting and what changes of responsibility, *(a)* in respect of detailed responsibilities and *(b)* in regard to being the lead department have taken place in the past 10 years;

(3) with what other Departments of State and in respect of which responsibilities, his Department shares responsibility for issues relating to squatting.

Mr. Maclean: Fifty-seven local authorities responded to the Home Office consultation exercise on squatting conducted in 1991-92, out of which our current proposals arose. We have had no further discussions with local authorities on this subject in the last 12 months.

Several Government Departments have an interest in the problem of squatting, and the leading interest may vary

according to which aspect of the problem is under consideration. The Home Office is responsible for the criminal law as it relates to squatting and other forms of intrusion on to property. In particular, we have responsibility for the existing criminal provisions related to squatting in sections 6 and 7 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, and for any proposals to extend the criminal law regarding squatting or other forms of trespass. The civil law relating to trespass, including squatting, is a matter for the Lord Chancellor's Department. Government policy in relation to housing issues, including homelessness, and to local authorities, is primarily a matter for the Department of the Environment. No changes have taken place in these respective responsibilities over the past 10 years. Other Government Departments with an interest in this subject include the Scottish Office, the Northern Ireland Office, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Electoral Law

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is now in a position to publish the reports of the working parties into electoral law and procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The working groups set up as part of the post-election review will report shortly and, when the reports are available, my right hon. and learned Friend will place copies in the Library and supply them to others who ask for copies. Representatives of the political parties, returning officers and the local authority associations will be invited to discuss the reports at a meeting in March.

Domestic Fires

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of deaths and serious injuries as a result of domestic fires in each year since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of fire-related deaths and casualties from fires attended by local authority fire brigades in the United Kingdom are published in table 6 of the annual Home Office statistical bulletin, "Summary Fire Statistics, United Kingdom", copies of which are in the Library. Figures for 1982 to 1992 are in the edition for 1992—Home Office statistical bulletin issue 28/93—and for 1981 in the edition for 1991—issue 27/92. The number of deaths from fires in dwellings has declined from 780 in 1981 to under 600 in 1992, although non-fatal casualties have risen from 6,300 to 11,200. Most of the rise is accounted for by an increase in the numbers reported by fire brigades as casualties due to "asphyxiation or overcome by gas or smoke".

Complaints Audit Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *338-39*, if he will publish the number of complaints about immigration law and practice brought under the existing complaints system, monitored by the new complaints audit committee, and the number of occasions on which disciplinary action has been taken against those responsible for abuses in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of letters of complaint about the conduct and efficiency of immigration service staff in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1992-93	500
1991-92	404
1990-91	337
1989-90	414
1988-89	549

Information about the number of cases in which disciplinary action was taken under the existing system is not readily available.

Probation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the weekly cost of *(a)* a probation order, *(b)* community service order, *(c)* bail hostel place and *(d)* average prison place for the latest date available.

Mr. Maclean: The weekly costs for 1991-92, the latest year for which comparable figures are available are *(a)* a probation order, £23; *(b)* community service order, £22; *(c)* bail hostel place, £179; *(d)* average prison place, £442.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation reports, probation orders and community service orders were made or written in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information published in "Probation Statistics England and Wales 1992" shows that 41,000 probation orders and 43,000 community service orders commenced in 1992 and 197,000 pre-sentence reports were written by the probation service. A copy of the publication is held in the House of Commons Library.

Information for the whole of 1993 is not yet available but the following estimates have been produced for the first three quarters of 1993.

Comparison of first three-quarters of 1992 and 1993

England and Wales	*Number of persons/reports* *1992*	*[1]1993*
Commencements of:		
Probation orders	33,200	29,600
Community service orders	32,600	35,400
Pre-sentence reports written[2]	149,200	137,400

[1] Estimated.
[2] Social inquiry reports prior to 1 October 1992.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources will be made available to the probation service to deal with the projected work load in 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's spending plans for the probation service together with work load forecasts are set out in the three-year planning document for the service covering the period 1994-97, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation reports, probation

orders and community service orders are projected for 1996; and how many reports and orders were completed in 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The projected caseloads in 1996-97 have been published in the "Three year plan for the probation service 1994-97". A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Table. Caseloads and numbers of reports written England and Wales

	1990-91	*Number of persons/reports [1]1996-97*
Caseload at end of period for:		
Probation orders	54,200	46,600
Community service orders	25,90	29,900
Pre-sentence reports written[2]	197,800	229,400

[1]Projected
[2]Social inquiry reports before 1 October 1992

Doncaster Prison

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which companies were considered by the Prison Service to run the new prison at Doncaster.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 20 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Doncaster prison.

Five bids to manage Doncasyter prison were received in response to the Invitations to Tender. The companies concerned were Mancare; UK Detention Services Ltd; Securicor Custodial Services Limited; Group 4 Prison and Court Services Limited; and Premier Prison Services Limited.

Bailiff of Jersey

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account he has taken of whether the speech of 22 December 1993 made by the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Peter Crill, to the Rotary club is compatible with his roles as Chief Judge and Speaker of the States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Bailiff has kindly provided us with the text of his speech on 22 December. In his capacity as Privy Counsellor with special responsibility to the Crown for Jersey, my right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the speech requires no comment or other action on his part.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *947*, if he will list the organisations that were consulted before the Government prepared its submission to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations in August in respect of its obligations under the international covenant of civil and political rights.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 2 December 1993 to an earlier question from him, *Official Report*, columns *680-81*.

Local Authority Fraud

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the longest interval between the inception of a fraud squad investigation into local authority fraud and the commencement of a consequent prosecution.

Mr. Maclean: Records are not held in a form which would provide this information.

Patient S

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available copies of the post mortem and pathology reports relating to the case of Patient S whose case was heard by the Court of Appeal on Friday 14 January and who subsequently died on Sunday 16 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Primates

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of establishments approved by his Department as suitable sources of primates in accordance with EC Council directive 92/65.

Mr. Soames: I have been asked to reply.

Arrangements for the approval of such establishments by the Agriculture Departments in Great Britain, in accordance with directive 92/65/EEC, will be put in place shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Japan (Nuclear Energy)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the implications for existing and future nuclear trade with Japan of the Japanese Atomic Energy Commissioner's report on nuclear policy and non-proliferation strategy released in November 1993.

Mr. Eggar: The report reaffirms the main thrust of Japanese civil nuclear policy, including their continued commitment to the recycling of plutonium and nuclear non-proliferation.

Export Credits Guarantee Advisory Service

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the members of the Export Credits Guarantee Advisory Service since 1985, giving details of appointment date and affiliation or employer of the appointee.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Appointee	Affiliation or employer	Appointment Commenced	Ended
R. J. Dent, Esq.	Baring Brother	1 August 1980	1985
J. N. Scott, Esq.	The General Electric Co.	1 August 1980	1986
Sir Jeffrey Benson	National Westminster Bank	1 September 1981	1987
W. J. A. Dacombe, Esq.	Rea Brothers plc	1 August 1982	1986
M. D. McWilliam, Esq.	Standard Chartered Bank	1 August 1982	1987
W. Hogbin, Esq. CBE	Taylor Woodrow International Ltd.	1 August 1983	1988
W. G. Barrett, Esq.	Midland Bank	1 August 1983	1986
R. H. Geroge, Esq. CBE	Celluware Group	1 June 1984	1991
E. L. Brooks, Esq.	Rothmans International plc	1 November 1984	1991
P. W. Bulfield, Esq.	J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co.	1 October 1985	1988
T. W. B. Sallitt, Esq. CBE	Hawker Siddeley Group	1 April 1986	1990
Sir Peter Leslie	Barclays Bank plc	1 September 1986	1992
A. G. Gormly, Esq. CBE	Trafalgar House plc	1 February 1988	
Hon. D. Douglas-Home, CBE	Morgan Grenfell and Co.	1 March 1988	1993
S. M. F. Harris, Esq.	Guardian Royal Exchange	1 March 1988	1991
Professor K. Scholes	Sheffield Business School	1 April 1988	1991
D. G. Eustace, Esq.	British Aerospace plc	1 August 1988	1992
F. M. P. Riding, Esq.	Lloyds Bank plc	1 August 1988	1991
R. T. Fox, Esq. CBE	Kleinwort Benson Group	1 July 1991	
Sir Derek Thomas, KGMG	N. M. Rothschild and Son Ltd.	1 October 1991	
C. Smallwood, Esq.	TSB Group plc	1 October 1991	
Sir Robert Davidson	Balfour Beatty Ltd.	1 October 1991	
Viscount Weir	The Weir Group plc	1 November 1991	
J. W. Melbourn, Esq.	National Westminster Bank	1 November 1991	
G. W. Lynch, Esq.	Hiscox Syndicates Ltd.	1 July 1993	
B. P. Dewe Mathews, Esq.	J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co.	1 July 1993	
T. M. Evans, Esq. CBE	Foster Wheeler Ltd.	1 August 1993	
Sir Frank Lampl	Bovis Construction Group	1 August 1993	
D. B. Newlands, Esq.	The General Electric Co.	1 August 1993	

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes have been made in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987 since it came into force.

Mr. Needham: The Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987 was amended six times between its entry into force on 1 January 1988 and 15 December 1989, when it was replaced by the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989. Since then, two further Export of Goods (Control) Orders have been made, one in 1991 and its replacement in 1992.

It would not be possible other than at disproportionate cost to describe all the changes made by these various orders and associated amendments. Changes introduced since 1987 have included wide-ranging relaxations of export controls agreed by COCOM and implementation of agreements reached on significant extensions of controls in the non-proliferation export control regimes, namely, the Australia group, the nuclear suppliers group and the missile technology control regime. A broad end-use control aimed at enhancing non-proliferation controls was introduced and expanded in amendments Nos. 6 and 7 to the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, made in 1990 and 1991 respectively.

Car Manufacturers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to require car manufacturers to stamp cars with the date of manufacture and car dealers to state that date on the sale documents.

Mr. Sainsbury: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade currently have any such plans.

By law, all motor cars must at some stage during the manufacturing process, be stamped with a vehicle identification number. Consumers can therefore request dealers to decode this number and provide the date at which it was stamped on the vehicle.

Smokeless Fuel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department has as to dangers to domestic customers using smokeless fuels from *(a)* European Community countries and *(b)* other countries; what representations he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department has received representations from a number of organisations about the safety of petroleum coke for domestic use. Very few complaints were received from users of petroleum coke. No information was given about the country of manufacture of the fuel. However, all petroleum coke for domestic use in this country is imported, the majority coming from north America.

Over the period from 1989 to 1991, when the majority of the representations were received, my Department investigated various claims that this fuel was unsuitable for domestic use. After examination of the available evidence, it was concluded that the fuel should not pose undue risks to consumers provided that sensible precautions were taken for its use. Accordingly, my Department advised suppliers of petroleum coke that consumers should be provided with written instructions for safe use of the fuel, and, in this regard, reminded them of their responsibilities under section 10—the general safety requirement—of the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

The recommended safety precautions are that petroleum coke:

must only be used in an open-grate fire and never in a closed appliance;

must always be blended, before use, with another solid fuel that will produce sufficient ash residue to protect the metal parts of the fire.

A fine-mesh fire guard should be used—as with any solid fuel.

Distance Selling Directive

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the effects of the proposed distance selling directive on the tourism industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have had a number of such representations. I agree with them that the proposals in the revised draft of the distance selling directive submitted to the EC Council of Ministers on 22 October would be extremely damaging to the tourist industry. The Greek presidency has however suggested some amendments to this draft which would go some of the way to meeting the industry's concerns. We will continue to have these concerns very much in mind when negotiation of the directive resumes in Brussels.

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, for each scheme operated by his Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Eggar: While the Department has the powers under sections 7 and 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 to make selective financial assistance available in the form of loans, these powers have not been exercised since 1988. However, two earlier loans made under section 7 and totalling £1,147,693 were designated as unrecovered in 1990-91, one of £62,000 in 1991-92 and none in 1992-93. It is not possible except at disproportionate cost to provide the total number and value of all unrecovered loans made by the Department, nor to calculate the annual expenditure on recovering loans.

Electricity Privatisation

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what research has been undertaken into the costs and benefits of the agreements reached with Electricité de France before, during and after the electricity privatisation process; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to commission an independent inquiry into the benefits and cost to British consumers of the agreements which were reached with Electricité de France about payments made before, during and after the electricity privatisation process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's policy towards trade in electricity across the interconnector was set out in the coal review White Paper—Cm 2235. The commercial arrangements for trade across the interconnector are a matter for those electricity companies that have contracts with Electricité de France. It is for the Director General of Electricity Supply to satisfy himself as to the non-leviable status of electricity imports across the interconnector.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning payments made to Electricité de France during the electricity privatisation process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received a number of representations about electricity trade across the interconnector. The background to the arrangements for this trade is set out in the coal review White Paper—Cm 2235—from paragraph 7.95.

Coal Imports

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the latest figures for coal imports for each month in 1993; what is the breakdown for each port in the United Kingdom; and what were the comparable figures for each month in 1992.

Mr. Eggar: Estimated coal imports for 1993 are still subject to revision, but the latest estimates for the periods requested are:

	1992	*1993*
January	2,217	1,950
February	1,709	1,400
March	2,049	1,300
April	1,445	1,400
May	1,986	1,300
June	1,943	1,400
July	1,801	1,550
August	1,403	1,500
September	1,512	1,800
October	1,250	1,500
November	1,671	1,450
December	1,353	[1]

[1]Not yet available.

A breakdown of coal imports by port for 1993 is not available.

Dishwashers

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce measures to penalise manufacturers of dishwashers who include faults in the design of the machines which impose additional costs to their customers in terms of repairs and maintenance.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 18 January 1994]*: Under the Sale of Goods Act 1979 consumers already have a right of redress against suppliers of faulty goods.

Household Goods

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to regulate the after-sales agreements offered by manufacturers of household goods.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 18 January 1994]*: The Department of Trade and Industry published a consultation paper on consumer guarantees in February 1992. Further consideration of this issue has been delayed pending the publication, which took place last month, of the EC Commission's discussion paper on the same subject.

Communications and Transport Deregulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will publish a list of all material sent to the communications and transport deregulation task force by outside persons and organisations, together with the dates on which such material was received by the task force;

(2) if he will publish a list of all meetings held between the communications and transport deregulation task force and outside persons and organisations, together with the dates of such meetings.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 18 January 1994]*: The eight deregulation task forces, of which the transport and communications task force was one, were independent of Government. My Department provided a secretariat but task force members held their own meetings from time to time and collected evidence for their own use. It is not therefore possible to provide a complete list of meetings with organisations or of material provided in evidence.

Power Lines

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to the report of the public inquiry into the construction of power lines from Lakenby to Pickton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 January 1994]*: My Department has received the inspector's report and will make a decision in due course.

GATT

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what affect the GATT agreement will have on EC regulations affecting British industry.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 January 1994]*: Certain changes in EC legislation will be needed to implement the EC's obligations under the GATT agreement. The main ones will be the changes in the common external tariff to give effect to the agreed cuts in tariffs on imports; and changes to EC rules on anti-dumping and countervailing duties to reflect the new GATT rules in these areas.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of how GPT Ltd. will be affected *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Coventry by GATT.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 January 1994]*: GATT will produce higher world economic growth through progressive trade liberalisation. This will lead to greatly increased opportunities for exporters and boost job creation, technological innovation and industrial development. Negotiations to secure improvements to the offers made in December are still under way and full details of the tariff cuts in individual sectors are not yet available.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what criteria GATT will improve the prospects for British industry.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 January 1994]*: British exporters will benefit greatly from higher world growth, the opening up of overseas markets, improved trade rules and a more stable international trading environment. The average cut in bound tariff rates on exports of industrial products from the European Community to the United States is 49 per cent. and to Japan 57 per cent. British services exporters and innovators will benefit from the inclusion of services and intellectual property in the multilateral trading system for the first time. The opening of new public procurement markets will also benefit British suppliers of goods and services. British industry will also benefit from the reduction of tariffs on imports of components and raw materials into the United Kingdom.

Stratford Rail Station

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to publish studies done by his Department into the possibilities afforded to East Anglian economic regeneration by development of an international passenger station at Stratford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 19 January 1994]*: My Department has not undertaken such studies.

Electronic Components

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received from Conner Peripherals (UK) Ltd. relating to the Government's policy on import duties on electronic components and products imported into the United Kingdom from non-European Union countries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the import duties imposed by the Government on electronic components and products imported into the United Kingdom by non-European Union countries;

(3) what representations he has received from the electronics sector relating to the Government's policy on import duties on electronic components and products imported into the United Kingdom from non-European Union countries; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will make a statement on changes since 1990 on the import duties levied on electronic components and products imported into the United Kingdom by non-European Union countries;

(5) what action his Department is taking to safeguard the United Kingdom electronic industry against imports from non-European countries.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 January 1994]*: The common customs tariff charged on imports into the United Kingdom of electronic components and products ranges from 4 per cent. to 14 per cent. There have been no changes in the common customs tariff since 1990.

There have been discussions with a number of United Kingdom electronic sector companies, including Conner Peripherals (UK) Ltd., about the application of the European Community's tariff regimes, in particular the temporary suspension of duty and tariff quota schemes, whereby EC tariffs can be suspended on items not available from within the EC. Following these discussions, an EC tariff quota on imports of hard disk drives was dicontinued with effect from 1 January 1992.

Anti-dumping duties have been imposed by the EC on certain electronic components in response to unfair trading practices which have been injurious to EC industry. However, the Government continue to believe that the reduction or elimination of tariffs is the most effective way of encouraging the overall development of markets and increasing the volume of business.

SCOTLAND

NHS Trusts (Pay)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many cars each national health service trust and health board has bought as part of a payment package for senior personnel in the last year; and what is the average value of such cars.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Glenochil Prison

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what refurbishments are presently taking place at Glenochil prison; and if he will list the contracts awarded with the details of the financial costs of each and the total costs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have asked Mr. E. W. Frizzell, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to arrange for a reply to be given to the hon. Member.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 20 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about refurbishments currently taking place at Glenochil Prison. The information is as follows:

Refurbishment projects	*Awarded to*	*Costs (including VAT) £000s*
Replacement of the electronic locking cell system	WHS Ltd.	1,542
Alterations to the wood machine area in the worksheds	Institution's own workforce	8
Damage repairs to 'A' Hall and fitting of new locks throughout the prison as a result of a recent hostage incident	Institution's own workforce	60
		1,610

Prisoners

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many short-term prisoners have, at the half way point of their sentence, been *(a)* released, *(b)* charged with a further offence after their release, *(c)* convicted of a further offence committed after their release, *(d)* returned to prison to serve out their full sentence and *(e)* returned to prison on a new sentence since 1 October 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is currently not collected centrally, save that the number of prisoners returned to prison to serve out their full sentence under section 16 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 is being collected on a monthly basis from 1 January 1994. The Scottish Prison Service prisoner records database, to come into operation in summer 1995, will hold some information on releases and previous custodial sentences.

Badgers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by county the number of badgers shot and gassed in each year since 1988; and what percentage of those badgers were subsequently shown to have tuberculosis.

Sir Hector Monro: The badger population in Scotland is widely dispersed in the countryside and does not pose an animal health risk. Consequently, badgers have never been subject to official controls on animal health grounds and it has never been necessary to shoot badgers in Scotland. Gassing as a control mechanism was discontinued in Great Britain in 1982.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Lang: The 1992-93 market-testing programme in the Scottish Office has now been completed and the outcomes are being analysed, in consultation with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report".

Departmental Files

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many files were retained from public scrutiny for a further 25 years; and what was the general subject matter by category, contained in them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Over the last 12 months, a total of 77 files with special closure periods—longer than 30 years—were transferred by Scottish Office Departments to the Scottish Record Office. They included information that was supplied in confidence and documents containing private information about individuals. As such, they fell within the Government's published guidelines on extended or special closures.

Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what complaints he has received about the operation of the incinerator at Falkirk and District royal infirmary; and what action he will take to ensure that there is no health risk caused by the operation of the incinerator.

Mr. Stewart: Over the last year or so, I have received several complaints about the fumes from the clinical waste incinerator chimney located at Falkirk and District royal infirmary.

On each occasion, inquiries have been made and at this time I am content that the clinical waste incinerator is operating within the statutory requirements. As a safeguard, additional fume monitoring is planned even although the local authority monitoring the situation agree that the emissions are within present guidelines.

Smear Tests

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the amount of time taken by each health board in Scotland to notify patients of the results of smear tests for cervical cancer; (2) if he will make a statement on the guidelines issued by the Scottish Office on the amount of time which should be taken by Scottish health boards to notify women of the results of their smear tests for cervical cancer.

Mr. Stewart: Health boards have been set a target of a maximum of 14 days average for the reporting of results to the patient.

Information is not collected centrally on the time taken by each health board but the current average processing time for cervical smears examined by NHS laboratories in Scotland is 11 days.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the procedures used by Ayrshire and Arran health board in carrying out screening for cervical cancer; and what is the average amount of time taken to notify patients of the results of smear tests within the Ayrshire and Arran health board area.

Mr. Stewart: Cervical screening procedures followed in Ayrshire and Arran health board comply with existing guidance. There is a three-yearly call-recall system in place for all women aged 20 to 60 years and the laboratory staff at Crosshouse hospital participate in an external quality assurance scheme.

Information is not collected centrally on the time taken by GPs, hospitals or clinics to report the results but the national target is 14 days on average.

The current average processing time for cervical smears examined at Ayrshire and Arran health board's laboratory is 10 days.

Sporting Rates

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the total revenue accrued to Scottish local authorities through sporting rates in 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Stewart: The total revenue accrued to Scottish local authorities through sporting rates in each of the four years is estimated at around £2 million.

Tied Cottages

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female agricultural workers live in tied cottages in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: There are no official figures of the number of agricultural workers living in tied cottages. The results of a sample survey of earnings and hours of agricultural workers indicate that 48 per cent. of male regular hired workers and 10 per cent. of female regular hired workers in Scotland in 1992 lived in a house or cottage as part payment of wages. These figures may not however accurately reflect the number of salaried managers living in a tied house.

Domestic Fires

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of deaths and serious injuries in Scotland as a result of domestic fires since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Figures for serious injuries are not available. The available figures are as follows:

	Casualties	
Year	*Fatal*	*Non-fatal*
1980	122	712
1981	126	862
1982	126	863
1983	136	1,126
1984	128	1,290
1985	144	1,276
1986	132	1,499
1987	138	1,372
1988	146	1,591
1989	88	1,605
1990	115	1,624
1991	117	1,696
[1]1992	82	1,614

[1] Provisional figures

Source: Home Office Fire Statistics based on reports from local authority fire brigades

There has been an encouraging decrease in the number of fatalities since 1989, which may be due to a combination of factors, including implementation of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988—and subsequent amendment regulations—and the active promotion of smoke alarms. While there has in contrast been an increase in non-fatal casualties, this may be connected with a growing awareness amongst fire brigades of the effects of gas and smoke inhalation and a consequent increase in casualty recording.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Scottish Office's involvement in the recent consultation by the Department of Trade and Industry into relaxation of the Furniture and Furnishings Fire (Safety) Regulations 1988 and the Night Wear Safety Regulations 1985; and whether his Department favours the relaxation of these regulations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The initial consultation undertaken by the Department of Trade and Industry was restricted to individual companies, trade associations and other organisations—including local authority associations, and consumer and safety groups—which that Department considered might have an interest in the provisions of the particular regulations. Other Government Departments were not invited to comment at that stage. If any proposals emerge, as a result of the initial consultation, for the provisions of the regulations to be amended, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be formally consulted because of his responsibilities for fire safety matters in Scotland.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the latest estimates by the Registrar-General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in

Scotland, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures expressed as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is given in the tables. For clarity of presentation, table A includes figures for regions, islands areas and the whole of Scotland. The population figures in table B have been prepared by a method that involves a certain degree of approximation and therefore they must be treated with some caution.

Table A: Local Government Areas

Local government area	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1992) (a)*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1993 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1992) (b)*	*(b) as a percentage of (a)*
SCOTLAND	4,062,331	3,931,429	96·8
Borders Region	84,593	84,421	99·8
Berwickshire	15,533	15,632	100·6
Ettrick and Lauderdale	28,040	27,803	99·2
Roxburgh	28,672	28,569	99·6
Tweeddale	12,347	12,417	100·6
Central Region	216,661	211,094	97·4
Clackmannan	37,903	36,806	97·1
Falkirk	113,793	110,598	97·2
Stirling	64,966	63,690	98·0
Dumfries and Galloway Region	118,360	116,950	98·8
Annandale and Eskdale	29,902	29,579	98·9
Nithsdale	45,412	44,540	98·1
Stewartry	19,136	19,107	99·8
Wigtown	23,910	23,724	99·2
Fife Region	276,720	266,883	96·4
Dunfermline	101,554	96,861	95·4
Kirkcaldy	116,857	114,365	97·9
North East Fife	58,308	55,657	95·5
Grampian Region	414,201	401,816	97·0
Aberdeen City	177,559	170,689	96·1
Banff and Buchan	67,625	66,721	98·7
Gordon	59,796	59,114	98·9
Kincardine and Deeside	42,194	40,700	96·5
Moray	67,027	64,592	96·4
Highland Region	160,896	159,035	98·8
Badenoch and Strathspey	9,074	9,351	103·1
Caithness	20,725	20,647	99·6
Inverness	49,806	48,562	97·5
Lochaber	15,027	14,912	99·2
Nairn	8,473	8,497	100·3
Ross and Cromarty	38,128	37,375	98·0
Skye and Lochalsh	9,258	9,225	99·6
Sutherland	10,405	10,466	100·6
Lothian Region	607,795	589,561	97·0
East Lothian	68,084	67,541	99·2
Edinburgh City	364,293	350,581	96·2
Midlothian	62,622	60,979	97·4
West Lothian	112,796	110,460	97·9
Strathclyde Region	1,811,308	1,740,266	96·1
Argyll and Bute	50,668	48,995	96·7
Bearsden and Milngavie	32,306	31,606	97·8
Clydebank	36,546	35,184	96·3
Clydesdale	45,791	44,592	97·4
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	49,115	47,422	96·6
Cumnock and Doon Valley	33,528	33,110	98·8
Cunninghame	108,359	105,208	97·1
Dumbarton	61,765	57,525	93·1
East Kilbride	66,761	65,051	97·4
Eastwood	47,497	46,674	98·3
Glasgow City	549,034	518,416	94·4
Hamilton	83,794	80,750	96·4
Inverclyde	71,666	70,304	98·1
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	64,170	62,638	97·6
Kyle and Carrick	91,171	89,206	97·8
Monklands	80,257	77,727	96·8
Motherwell	112,961	108,282	95·9

Local government area	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1992) (a)*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1993 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1992) (b)*	*(b) as a percentage of (a)*
Renfrew	158,855	153,571	96·7
Strathkelvin	67,063	64,005	95·4
Tayside Region	316,249	306,224	96·8
Angus	76,556	74,129	96·8
Dundee City	138,469	133,570	96·5
Perth and Kinross	101,224	98,525	97·3
Orkney Islands Area	15,372	15,553	101·2
Shetland Islands Area	17,220	16,499	95·8
Western Isles Islands Area	22,959	23,127	100·7

Table B: Parliamentary Constituencies

Parliamentary constituency	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1992) (a)*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1993 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1992) (b)*	*(b) as a percentage of (a)*
Aberdeen North	62,700	60,242	96·1
Aberdeen South	61,800	59,389	96·1
Angus East	66,400	64,223	96·7
Argyll and Bute	50,700	48,995	96·6
Ayr	68,000	66,495	97·8
Banff and Buchan	67,600	66,721	98·7
Caithness and Sutherland	31,100	31,113	100·0
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	56,700	55,821	98·4
Central Fife	57,700	56,491	97·9
Clackmannan	51,000	49,538	97·1
Clydebank and Milngavie	49,500	47,900	96·8
Clydesdale	64,900	62,978	97·0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	49,100	47,422	96·6
Cunninghame North	57,200	55,564	97·1
Cunninghame South	51,100	49,644	97·2
Dumbarton	61,800	57,525	93·1
Dumfries	62,800	61,876	98·5
Dundee East	60,700	58,570	96·5
Dundee West	61,800	59,624	96·5
Dunfermline East	53,000	50,700	95·7
Dunfermline West	54,200	51,713	95·4
East Kilbride	66,800	65,051	97·4
East Lothian	68,100	67,541	99·2
Eastwood	65,900	64,506	97·9
Edinburgh Central	59,400	57,127	96·2
Edinburgh East	47,600	45,779	96·2
Edinburgh Leith	58,900	56,662	96·2
Edinburgh Pentlands	58,400	56,171	96·2
Edinburgh South	64,800	62,330	96·2
Edinburgh West	61,700	59,331	96·2
Falkirk East	54,100	52,550	97·1
Falkirk West	51,700	50,220	97·1
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	55,500	55,074	99·2
Glasgow Cathcart	47,300	44,623	94·3
Glasgow Central	50,800	47,963	94·4
Glasgow Garscadden	43,400	40,975	94·4
Glasgow Govan	48,300	45,629	94·5
Glasgow Hillhead	60,900	57,524	94·5
Glasgow Maryhill	51,000	48,109	94·3
Glasgow Pollok	48,500	45,786	94·4
Glasgow Provan	38,800	36,625	94·4
Glasgow Rutherglen	56,000	52,903	94·5
Glasgow Shettleston	55,300	52,263	94·5
Glasgow Springburn	48,700	46,016	94·5
Gordon	84,300	82,654	98·0
Greenock and Port Glasgow	53,200	52,185	98·1
Hamilton	64,700	62,364	96·4

Parliamentary constituency	Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1992) (a)	Parliamentary electors on the 1993 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1992) (b)	(b) as a percentage of (a)
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	71,700	70,955	99·0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	64,200	62,638	97·6
Kincardine and Deeside	70,800	68,218	96·4
Kirkcaldy	53,500	52,322	97·8
Linlithgow	63,300	61,884	97·8
Livingston	63,300	61,905	97·8
Midlothian	62,500	60,831	97·3
Monklands East	50,600	49,041	96·9
Monklands West	51,900	49,903	96·2
Moray	67,000	64,592	96·4
Motherwell North	60,500	57,955	95·8
Motherwell South	52,500	50,327	95·9
North East Fife	58,300	55,657	95·5
North Tayside	58,800	57,135	97·2
Orkney and Shetland	32,600	32,052	98·3
Paisley North	48,100	46,491	96·7
Paisley South	49,600	47,937	96·6
Perth and Kinross	68,500	66,672	97·3
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	61,200	59,430	97·1
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	58,000	56,967	98·2
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	44,200	44,201	100·0
Stirling	60,000	58,786	98·0
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	64,100	61,678	96·2
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	40,400	40,220	99·6
Western Isles	23,000	23,127	100·6

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the criteria applied by the Scottish Office in making awards of regional selective assistance; what safeguards exist in the event of the ownership of a company in receipt of regional selective assistance changing; how the Scottish Office polices companies in receipt of regional selective assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The criteria for regional selective assistance include location, investment, jobs, need, viability and private sector financial support. In the event of a change in ownership, an offer of assistance may be transferred to the new owners, or alternatively the grant may be withheld or recovered depending on the circumstances of the case. Throughout the term of each offer of assistance, and always prior to any payment of grant, detailed company progress reports are obtained which have been certified by independent accountants.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what amount of money was received by Conner Peripherals (UK) Ltd. in regional selective assistance in the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what amount of money was received by Amkor Anam (Europe) Ltd. in regional selective assistance before its announcement of the closure of its plant in Irvine.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. member to my answer on 5 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *239*.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to meet CARE80 concerning the line of route for the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Officials from the Scottish Office Industry Department roads directorate and their consultants will be meeting members of CARE80 on 25 January. In due course, they will be providing me with a detailed report of all their consultations, including the discussions with CARE80, for my consideration. Thereafter, a final decision will be taken on the proposed route for the M80 and this will be immediately followed by the publication of the draft statutory procedures.

Glasgow-Cumbernauld Railway Line

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has received for the electrification of the Glasgow-Cumbernauld railway line; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no such plans.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given Scottish councils concerning compliance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Sir Hector Monro: Guidance has been issued to local authorities accompanying orders, codes of practice and regulations made under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Specific guidance has been issued on recycling, in the form of a waste management paper on the compilation of waste recycling plans and on the environmental

standards that should normally be applied to industrial processes covered by local authority air pollution control. The hazardous waste inspectorate, as an ongoing part of its responsibility, gives advice to local authorities with respect to their duties under relevant legislation on waste management matters including part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Further advice is given at meetings of the Scottish Pollution Control Co-ordinating Committee.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which councils in Scotland have failed to meet any of the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: It is for Scottish local authorities to ensure that they comply with the duties imposed upon them by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. However, the Scottish Office has monitored compliance with the provisions of section 30 of the Act relating to administrative arrangements for the separation of authorities' waste disposal and waste regulation functions, and to section 49 of the Act, which concerns the submission of recycling plans to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Currently, the City of Edinburgh and the City of Glasgow district councils have still to advise him of their arrangements for separating waste regulation from waste disposal. Draft recycling plans have yet to be submitted by:

Caithness district council
Dunfermline district council
Lochaber district council
Moray district council
Motherwell district council
Nairn district council
Sutherland district council
Western Isles council
Wigtown district council

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his officials have had with Kyle and Carrick district council concerning compliance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990; what was the outcome of such discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Officials of the Scottish Office had routine discussions with Kyle and Carrick district council on 30 June 1992 about matters concerning waste regulation. The outcome of these discussions was a letter to the council specifying matters to be dealt with under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Refuse Collection

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what problems have been reported to the Scottish Office regarding arrangements for refuse collection in Perth and Kinross district council area; what action has been taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: One complaint was recently received about the cost of commercial waste collection. The matter was brought to the attention of the district council's director of environmental health. On the basis of information received from the council a reply was sent to the complainant.

Minimal Access Surgery

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the report produced by Professor Alfred Cuschieri on implications for the NHS of minimal access surgery.

Mr. Lang: This valuable and timely report is being published today as a focus for public debate on the important issues surrounding the development of minimal access therapy—MAT. Commissioned jointly by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department and the Department of Health, the report is intended as a contribution to the development of strategic planning for these new techniques in the NHS.

The report has already been referred to the medical and nursing advisory committee north and south of the border and the views of other interested bodies will be sought as appropriate.

MAT offers the prospect of major advances in patient care, but also requires the development of new skills. In the vital areas of training and technique evaluation, we have recently announced the establishment of two MAT training units in England and one in Scotland as a joint initiative by the Government and the Wolfson Foundation to ensure that clinicians are properly and fully trained to produce the best possible outcomes for patients.

As the report highlights, widespread introduction of these new techniques will represent very major change for the NHS. The interests of patients will of course be at the forefront of the development of MAT and we are already using Professor Cuschieri's report as the basis for work on establishing the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of these treatments to ensure maximum benefit for patients.

Jury System

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he has made with his review of the jury system and the not proven verdict.

Mr. Lang: I am today publishing a consultation paper seeking views on a number of proposals for improving the jury system and on the future of our system of verdicts, including the not proven verdict. The proposals in relation to juries are aimed at more effective selection of juries which are representative and willing to serve, and at a reduction in the inconvenience suffered by those cited to attend court for jury service. The paper also sets out the case for and against the retention of the three verdict system. I hope that the proposals made and questions raised in this paper will stimulate the widest possible debate.

This consultation paper is the third in a series seeking views on proposals for improving the delivery of justice in Scotland. We are inviting comments by 15 April. A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library.

Electronic Components

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations the Scottish Office has received from Conner Peripherals (UK) Ltd. relating to the Government's policy on import duties on electronic components and products imported into the United Kingdom from non-European Union countries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from the electronics sector in Scotland relating to the Government's

policy on import duties on electronic components and products imported into the United Kingdom from non-European Union countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* The only representation received by my right hon. Friend in connection with duties paid on imports of electronic goods and components was one last year from Conner Peripherals. Following consultation with ministerial colleagues with responsibility for Customs and Excise, he provided a helpful and detailed response to the company.

In addition, both the Scottish Office and the Department of Trade and Industry provided at official level considerable assistance to Conner towards maximising the European content of its product and more specifically on gaining a greater understanding of the complex tariff issues.

WALES

Council Tax

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice has been given to councils to ensure that an additional bathroom or kitchen for the use of a person with a disability attracts a reduction in council tax payments, apart from that given on page 20 of Welsh Office pamphlet "Council Tax—Liability, Discounts and Exemptions".

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Advice on the application of the Council Tax (Reduction for Disabilities) Regulations 1992 —SI 1992 No. 554—and the Council Tax (Reduction for Disabilities) (Amendment) Regulations 1993—SI 1993 No. 195—is contained in the revised council tax practice note No. 2 on liability, discounts and exemptions, issued to all billing authorities in July 1993.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what regulations along the lines of SI 1990 No. 2475 introduced to exempt extensions and granny flats from the standard charge provision of the community charge legislation have been made to ensure that such extensions are not classified as separate dwellings under the council tax legislation;

(2) what provisions have been made to ensure that extensions built to provide facilities for the disabled are not classified as separate dwellings.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. Where a property contains more than one self-contained unit of separate living accommodation, it will be treated as two or more dwellings. Each of those dwellings, if it is not an exempt dwelling, will be subject to a separate council tax bill. Comparison with community charge arrangements is not appropriate. Community charge was a personal tax, whereas council tax is a property tax with a personal element.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of response times by ambulances to 999 calls for Wales, and for each of the health authority or trust areas within Wales, and the times as percentages of the average for the United Kingdom and for England and Scotland.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The ambulance service in Wales standard response times are:

	50 per cent. minutes	*95 per cent. minutes*
South Glamorgan	7	14
Clwyd, Gwent, Mid and West Glamorgan	8	18
East Dyfed, Gwynedd, Pembrokeshire and Powys	8	21

The information requested for Wales is shown in the table:

Percentage of ambulances arriving within respective target times:

	50 per cent.		*95 per cent.*	
	Year ended 31 March 1993	*6 months to 30 September 1993*	*Year ended 31 March 1993*	*6 months to 30 September 1993*
Clwyd	61	62	97	98
East Dyfed	59	60	94	93
Gwent[1]	54	52	96	97
Gwynedd	57	57	96	96
Mid Glamorgan	61	56	98	97
Pembrokeshire	42	45	88	90
Powys[1]	47	44	89	88
South Glamorgan[1]	54	58	91	94
West Glamorgan	61	57	95	92
Wales	57	56	95	95

[1] Part of the area managed by the South and East Wales ambulance NHS trust.

Information on the ambulance services in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be sought from the appropriate Secretaries of State.

Morriston Hospital, Swansea

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his decision on the application of Morriston hospital, Swansea, for trust status.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect shortly to announce a decision.

Nurses Grading

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurse regrading appeals remain to be settled; what proportion this constitutes of the appeals made since 1989; and what are the number and percentages for each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Latest available information on the total numbers of clinical grading appeals still outstanding is as follows:

Health Authority	*At Employing Authority Level*	*At Welsh Appeals Committee (Regional) Level*	*At National Level (Negotiating Council)*
Clwyd		16	42
East Dyfed	4	75	7
Gwent	4	222	57
Gwynedd		77	13
Mid Glamorgan	90	309	39
Pembrokeshire		50	
Powys		55	62
South Glamorgan		206	25
West Glamorgan		72	14
Total	98	1,082	259

A significant number of appeals made since 1989 have been either withdrawn or not proceeded with and no reliable proportionate data are available.

I am optimistic that recent discussions between both sides of the Nursing and Midwifery Staff Negotiating Council will shortly result in new procedures for clearing all outstanding cases at the Welsh and national levels.

General Practitioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners received gross payments in excess of £200,000 per year in each year since 1991-92.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available centrally.

Welsh Low Pay Unit

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with representatives of local authority associations the setting up of a Welsh low pay unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many official Christmas cards were sent out in 1993 by *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* civil servants and *(c)* staff of Government agencies working in or to his Department; and how much these cards cost (i) to buy, (ii) to post and (iii) in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate costs.

Livestock Quota

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements are being made to lengthen the amount of time farmers in Wales are given to complete their livestock quota application forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: To enable quota allocations from the national reserve for 1993 to be made as quickly as possible and sheep annual premium payments thereafter to be made promptly, the Department set a deadline of 7 January for receipt of applications from sheep producers eligible to apply under categories 1 and 2. We are, however, prepared to process any applications received within a week of that date.

Ewe Premium

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure the continuation of the ewe premium supplement to farmers in less-favoured areas in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I will continue to ensure that the needs of farmers in the Welsh less-favoured areas are taken fully into account in determining supplements for ewe premium payments.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales were employed full-time in *(a)* the civil service, *(b)* the steel industry and *(c)* the media at the latest available date.

Mr. Redwood: The information is shown in the table.

Industry	[1]*Number*	*Date*	*Source*
Civil Service[2]	[3]30,535	April 1993	Civil Service Statistics, Her Majesty's Treasury
Steel industry	[4]16,000	November 1993	Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau
Media	[5]5,400	September 1991	Employment Department, Census of Employment 1991

[1] Number of full-time employees in Wales.
[2] Includes non-industrial and industrial civil servants working in United Kingdom Government Departments and bodies in Wales.
[3] Total relates to full-time equivalents. Part-time staff are counted as half units.
[4] Figures for full-time staff are not available separately from part-time staff in the data collected by the Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau. Very few

of the 16,000 employees at November 1993 are believed to be part-time.

[5] There is no single category in the standard industrial classification—1980—which relates exclusively to the media. The above figure is based on activity headings 4751, 4752, 4753, 8380, 9741 which include printing/publishing of newspapers, periodicals, and books; advertising; and radio/television services, theatres, etc.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of staff employed in the Welsh Office *(a)* 12 months ago and *(b)* at the most recent available date.

Mr. Redwood: The answer is:

(a) The number of full-time equivalent permanent staff employed by my Department as at 6 January 1993=2,429.

(b) The number of full-time equivalent permanent staff employed by my Department as at 6 January 1994=2,400.

Part-time staff are included as full-time equivalents.

The figures include staff seconded to other organisations but exclude casuals.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of staff employed in each of the four senior grades in the Welsh Office *(a)* 12 months ago and *(b)* at the most recent available date.

Mr. Redwood: The answer is:

(a) The number of staff employed in my Department in each of the four most senior grades as at 17 January 1993 are as follows:

	Number
Grade 1	1
Grade 2s	2
Grade 3s	12
Grade 4s	6
Total	21

(b) The number of staff employed in my Department in each of the four most senior grades as at 17 January 1994 are as follows:

	Number
Grade 1	1
Grade 2s	2
Grade 3s	12
Grade 4s	7
Total	22

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each scheme operated by her Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Jack: No schemes relating to programme expenditure are operated by my Department under which loans are currently available.

Premiums and Payments

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to ensure that all potential claimants under the sheep annual premium, suckler cow premium and arable payments schemes are made aware of the closing dates for applications to these schemes.

Mr. Jack: The closing dates for applications are clearly set out in the appropriate explanatory literature and claim forms for the schemes which are distributed to known producers. The closing dates are also publicised by press releases issued to all relevant media, including the farming press, when application forms for the schemes become available and again shortly before the closing dates.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of late claims received by regional service centres and divisional offices for the most recent year for (i) sheep annual premium, (ii) suckler cow premium and (iii) the arable area payments scheme.

Mr. Jack: The numbers of claims received by the nine regional service centres after the closing dates of the application periods for the schemes requested are as follows:

	Number
1993 Sheep annual premium scheme	1,082
1993 Suckler cow premium scheme	908
1993 Arable area payments scheme	87

Neptune Warning System

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to extend the Neptune warning system by installing tide gauges around the coast of south and west Wales.

Mr. Jack: The map I placed in the Library when answering the hon. Member's previous question on this subject on 11 January, *Official Report*, column *50*, shows that tide gauges are already in place at Holyhead, Barmouth, Fishguard, Milford Haven, Mumbles and Newport. There are no plans to install further gauges along the coast of south and west Wales at present. However, the Ministry has funded the development of a computer model for the Bristol channel and Severn estuary which is intended to improve the forecasts of potential coastal flooding issued by the national storm tide warning service for that part of south Wales and the relevant parts of England.

Agricultural Wages Board

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the effect of abolition of the agricultural wages board upon the numbers of agricultural workers entitled to claim housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Abolition of the statutory control of agricultural wages could affect the entitlement of

some agricultural workers to housing benefit. But it is not possible to estimate what the global effect might be, as this would depend on the details of individual agreements on pay and conditions.

Cattle Biodiversity

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to protect rare breeds of cattle and cattle biodiversity; what were the conclusions of the recent Cambridge conference on this matter; and what assessment expert advisers have made of the work being undertaken at the Bush estate outside Edinburgh.

Mr. Jack: I am aware of the scientific debate about diversity in cattle populations, and my Ministry is placing a research contract to establish the extent of genetic variation in rare and common breeds. The British cattle breeders conference at Cambridge in January 1994 heard a Food and Agriculture organisation paper about biodiversity in developing countries, a topic to which British scientists have made significant contributions. Research at the Bush estate funded by my Ministry includes work designed to enable genes for important characteristics from rare breeds to be located, facilitating their use in breeding programmes. Producers of rare breeds of cattle are of course, eligible for the same financial support provided to other beef producers under the suckler cow premium and beef special premium schemes.

Bees

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is her Department's policy that all bee colonies given antibiotic treatment by its officials for the control of European foul brood should receive a standard uniform dosage regardless of the number of bees in each colony; and what assessment she has made of the effect of such treatment on smaller bee colonies.

Mr. Jack: Different dosages are prescribed for large and small colonies. Experience has shown that our treatments are equally effective on all sizes of colony.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Service

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what savings he estimates will result from the introduction of market testing in the civil service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: In my statement to the House of Commons on 4 November 1993, I announced that provisional figures suggested that the "Competing for Quality" programme, of which market testing is part, had resulted in annual savings of approximately £100 million by 30 September 1993.

Further detail on the outcome of the programme will be published in the "Citizens Charter Second Report".

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the objective of removing equal opportunities requirements from private contractors bidding for Government contracts.

Mr. David Davis *[holding answer 19 January 1994]:* The Government and the civil service are committed to a policy of equality of opportunity both because it is right in terms of social justice and because it makes good business sense.

Where services are contracted out to private companies, the Government do not intend to require particular employment policies and practices, and such requirements will not be included in tender documents, although contracts may require compliance with United Kingdom law on equal opportunities if the contracted work is carried out wholly within the United Kingdom. EC directives impose restrictions on the Government's ability to take account of non-commercial matters.

British Geological Survey

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the savings which will result from the closure of the Newcastle office of the British Geological Survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The Natural Environment Research Council, NERC, of which the British Geological Survey, BGS, is a constituent part, estimates that closure of the Newcastle office will result in savings of approximately £86,000 per annum.

As an independent body established by royal charter, the NERC is responsible for the management of its own resources. The decision on the future of the Newcastle office is properly one for the BGS and the NERC, and not one for the Government.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Pensions

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in Durham have contracted out of occupational pension schemes and taken up private pension plans.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available.

Finance Bill

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make available to hon. Members the customary notes on the clauses of the Finance Bill.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. Notes on clauses are being placed in the Vote Office and in the Library of the House. In addition, the Treasury will, for the first time, be making the notes available to the public.

Income Tax

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), of 29 November, *Official Report*, columns *337-38*, if he will provide the information on tax liability by region.

Mr. Dorrell: Available information on the annual reduction in income tax liability by region for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92, compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime is given in tables. In view of the length of the tables, I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Members' Library.

Value Added Tax (Domestic Fuels)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 2 December regarding value added tax on domestic fuels, Ref. 0595/27.

Sir John Cope: I replied to this letter on Tuesday 18 January 1994.

International Monetary Fund (Russia)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy with regard to co-operation between the International Monetary Fund and Russia.

Mr. Nelson: The IMF and Russian authorities reached agreement on a programme to allow release of $1·5 billion of assistance under the systematic transformation facility —STF—in July 1993. We urge the fund and Russian authorities to continue their policy dialogue and reach rapid agreement on further action which can be supported by a second drawing under the STF and will enable a full stand-by arrangement and rouble stabilisation fund to be put in place.

Value Added Tax (Registration)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns *770-72*, if he will provide the figures for value added tax registrations and deregistrations for each calendar year since 1987.

Sir John Cope: Revised registration and deregistration figures by calendar year, from January 1987 to December 1993 are:

Registrations

Collection	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Belfast	3,413	3,952	4,373	4,226	3,607	3,674	4,086
Birmingham	13,973	16,550	18,169	16,297	14,044	13,291	14,942
Dover	6,186	7,795	7,552	7,104	6,575	5,859	6,496
East Anglia	7,874	9,474	9,625	8,475	8,564	8,061	8,800
East Midlands	10,591	12,799	14,354	12,100	10,592	9,429	10,719
Edinburgh	7,423	7,808	8,228	7,873	6,667	6,604	7,005
Glasgow	5,460	5,757	8,297	7,477	6,728	6,188	6,626
Leeds	10,515	12,821	14,124	12,496	11,035	10,256	10,332
Liverpool	9,866	12,246	13,239	12,548	10,724	9,815	9,945
London Central	5,492	5,214	5,346	5,290	4,614	4,772	5,728
London North and West	11,681	13,517	15,901	14,305	11,447	10,956	11,669
London Port	7,851	9,064	10,252	8,187	6,980	6,682	6,955
London South	13,028	14,482	16,573	14,875	12,455	11,699	14,541
Manchester	10,827	12,382	14,013	13,577	12,099	11,259	11,558
Northampton	15,518	18,390	19,060	17,345	13,299	12,087	12,986
Northern England	6,345	7,854	8,409	7,290	5,942	5,756	6,132
Southampton	12,194	13,807	16,261	12,903	10,744	9,658	10,932
South Wales and Borders	10,404	13,535	14,624	12,942	10,582	9,629	10,086
South West England	13,376	16,839	16,972	13,803	11,681	10,965	12,121
Thames Valley	16,027	19,230	21,141	20,223	17,639	16,615	17,551

Deregistrations

Collection	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Belfast	2,920	7,498	3,224	3,113	3,783	3,595	3,124
Birmingham	11,580	12,571	12,637	12,519	16,963	17,002	14,967
Dover	4,403	5,784	4,952	5,736	9,765	8,915	7,428
East Anglia	5,814	10,125	9,625	8,475	8,564	8,061	9,629
East Midlands	8,726	11,104	9,753	10,026	13,258	12,235	11,063
Edinbugh	6,108	9,562	6,042	6,065	7,440	6,757	6,944
Glasgow	4,494	5,095	6,279	6,178	8,035	7,033	6,599
Leeds	8,985	10,522	10,041	10,284	13,621	12,383	11,499
Liverpool	8,645	9,837	10,061	10,002	13,207	12,991	11,153
London Central	4,071	4,867	4,232	4,453	4,677	4,839	5,239
London North and West	8,421	8,568	9,938	10,687	13,765	15,070	13,124
London Port	5,722	6,741	6,457	5,913	10,275	10,048	8,796
London South	8,384	9,394	10,515	10,832	15,038	14,613	13,660
Manchester	9,670	9,822	10,248	9,641	13,571	13,387	12,637
Northampton	10,157	15,446	11,777	12,857	16,451	15,143	13,040
Northern England	5,354	6,283	5,998	6,357	7,686	7,242	6,929
Southampton	8,484	12,220	10,411	9,739	14,476	13,783	12,419
South Wales and Borders	8,156	14,380	10,296	10,437	14,394	11,902	11,635
South West England	10,525	16,687	11,716	11,751	16,461	15,811	13,690
Thames Valley	11,214	15,057	13,865	14,722	21,431	19,824	18,024

Rugby Union (Benefits)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements he makes for the taxation of income on benefits arising from the playing of Rugby Union football.

Mr. Dorrell: Under Rugby Union rules players are forbidden to receive payment for playing. If they were to do so, they would be taxed on their income in the same way as other sportsmen and women. Their income for tax

purposes would be arrived at in the way as for other people, taking account of payments of money and any other benefits.

Taxation

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product was taken by *(a)*income tax, *(b)* corporation tax, *(c)* capital gains tax, *(d)* inheritance tax, *(e)* VAT, *(f)* national insurance contributions, *(g)* excise duties, *(h)* council tax and its predecessors *(i)* business rates and *(j)* other taxes for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 January 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the table. The estimates for 1993-94 are taken from table 6·5 of the November 1993 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

General government receipts as a percentage of GDP[1]

Receipt/financial year	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*[2]1993-94*
(a) Income tax[3]	10·1	10·4	11·2	10·8	10·2	10·0	9·9	10·0	9·7	9·1	9·4	9·9	9·9	9·4	9·1
(b) Corporation tax[4]	2·3	2·0	1·9	2·0	2·0	2·6	3·0	3·5	3·7	3·9	4·2	3·9	3·2	2·6	2·3
(c) Capital gains tax[5]	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·5	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2
(d) Inheritance tax	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
(e) Value added tax	4·0	4·7	4·6	4·9	5·0	5·7	5·4	5·6	5·6	5·7	5·7	5·6	6·1	6·2	6·1
(f) National Insurance[6]	7·2	7·5	7·7	7·7	7·5	7·1	6·8	6·9	6·8	6·8	6·4	6·4	6·3	6·1	6·1
(g) Excise duties[7]	3·9	3·9	4·4	4·2	4·4	4·3	4·2	4·3	3·9	3·8	3·5	3·6	3·9	3·7	3·9
(h) Council tax	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·2	2·0	1·2	1·4	1·3
CC rates[8]	3·3	3·7	4·2	4·3	4·0	4·0	3·9	4·1	4·0	4·1	3·9	—	—	—	—
(i) NNDR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·0	2·1	2·4	2·3	2·0
(j) Other GG receipts	7·7	8·1	9·3	9·3	9·3	9·4	8·6	6·7	6·6	6·1	6·3	5·2	4·9	4·9	5·0

[1] GDP adjusted for the abolition of domestic rates.
[2] Estimates published in the November 1993 FSBR.
[3] Including surtax.
[4] Including advance corporation tax (ACT).
[5] Including estate duty.
[6] Includes National Insurance surcharge.
[7] Includes hydrocarbon oils, tobacco, beer, wine and made wine, spirits, cider and perry.
[8] Includes Northern Ireland rates until 1990. They are then included under NNDR.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* Letters answered by Treasury Ministers are generally acknowledged on receipt. Last year, 78 per cent. of such letters handled within central Treasury received a substantive reply within 15 working days. Statistics are not available on correspondence answered by officials in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Answers

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the numbers of answers given to each of the top 20 hon. Members in rank order in Session 1992-93.

Mr. Newton: The Members receiving the most written answers to questions in Session 1992-93, as recorded on the House of Commons Library's POLIS database, were as follows:

		Number
1.	The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith)	1,611
2.	The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)	1,058
3.	The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis)	1,039
4.	The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)	811
5.	The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn)	681
6.	The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe)	677
7.	The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley)	651
8.	The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd)	647
9.	The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes)	632
10.	The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins)	574
11.	The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)	572
12.	The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen)	571
13.	The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell)	546
14.	The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo)	542
15.	The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn)	538
16.	The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)	537
17.	The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)	532
18.	The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)	511
19.	The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)	480
20.	The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley)	451

NORTHERN IRELAND

EU Structural Funds

11. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action to discuss the subject of the distribution of European Union structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend met representatives of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action on 18 January to discuss a range of issues including the next round of the EC structural funds.

Forestry

12. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the area planted with forest trees on private land in Northern Ireland last year.

Mr. Ancram: The area of forest trees grant aided by the Department of Agriculture in 1992-93 was 911 hectares.

Border Roads

13. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many roads crossing the border with the Republic are closed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: There are 291 border crossing points recognised by the British and Irish Governments, of which 103 are currently subject to closure order.

The Government remain committed to maintaining security and to curbing the ability of terrorists to exploit the border. The responsibility for any inconvenience resulting from the closure of roads rests squarely on the terrorists.

Electricity Generation

14. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with electricity generators concerning further generating capacity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: None. Following the privatisation of the electricity industry in Northern Ireland responsibility for ordering new generating capacity rests solely with Northern Ireland Electricity plc. Northern Ireland's immediate power requirements will be met by the planned construction of an electricity interconnector with Scotland.

Security

15. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in the Province.

25. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on security in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis).

Student Grants

16. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will increase the block grant to education and library boards in Northern Ireland to enable discretionary grants to be paid to all students who are offered places on vocation-oriented courses at further and higher education institutions.

Mr. Ancram: No. The amount of funding to be made available for discretionary awards is a matter for each education and library board to determine in the light of the total resources at its disposal.

Vehicles

17. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vehicles there are in Northern Ireland in the categories *(a)* private, *(b)* goods and *(c)* heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Tim Smith: In December 1992, the date of the last annual census of vehicles licensed in Northern Ireland, there were 502,027 cars and motor cycles, 37,007 light goods vehicles and 16,289 heavy goods vehicles.

Dublin Bombing

18. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what requests for assistance in tracing the perpetrators of the 1973 Dublin bombing he has received from the Irish authorities; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to the bombing attack which took place in Dublin on 17 May 1974. Requests between police forces for assistance with ongoing criminal investigations are made on a confidential basis.

Political Developments

19. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest political developments for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The Government have intensified their efforts to develop dialogue between the two Governments and the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. I am holding further private, bilateral discussions with the Northern Ireland parties, following on earlier discussions last autumn, and we are continuing discussions with the Irish Government on matters of mutual interest, including constitutional issues. It remains our objective to return to multilateral talks involving the two Governments and four main constitutional parties at an appropriate point.

Prospects for Peace

20. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the prospects for peace in the Province.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The prospects for peace are principally governed by the future conduct of Sinn Fein/Provisional IRA. The joint declaration provides a balanced framework for democracy. It promotes the interests and aspirations of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland while compromising no essential principle. It provides a clear opportunity for Sinn Fein to become fully involved in democratic politics. It is now up to it first to renounce violence and to do so for good.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland in December 1991 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Tim Smith: At 12 December 1991 there were 101,270 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland representing 13·6 per cent. of the work force. The most recent figures show that at 9 December 1993 there were 99,947 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland representing 13·3 per cent. of the work force.

Political Parties

22. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what future talks he plans with the political parties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan).

Police Authority

23. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his discussions with the chair of the Police Authority on the future of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

27. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the chair of the Police Authority concerning the future of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

30. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the chair of the Police Authority concerning the future of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I held discussions with the chairman and members of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland on 13 December. We discussed the operation of the tripartite structure of policing in Northern Ireland and improvements necessary to clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability.

26. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his proposals for the future of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *1057-58*.

Irish Government (Talks)

24. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks he has had with the Irish Government relating to Northern Ireland.

29. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks he has had with the Irish Government relating to Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

Cross-border Trade

28. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest cross-border trade figures between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information requested is not available from United Kingdom Government sources. However I refer my hon. Friend to tables 9A and 9B of "Trade Statistics"—December 1992—published by the Central Statistics Office, Dublin, a copy of which is in the Library. These are the latest available figures.

Strip Searches

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches have been carried out in prison institutions in the last five years in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The purpose of full searching of prisoners in Northern Ireland is to detect items such as explosives, weapons, drugs and other illegal items in order to reduce the risk of escape and the potential for injury to prisoners, staff and visitors.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reasons alternative electronic methods are not used in place of strip searching in prison institutions.

Sir John Wheeler: There are no mechanical or electronic devices which can detect the wide range of contraband capable of being secreted on a prisoner's person.

Northern Ireland Economy

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current estimated figure of the Northern Ireland economy; what percentage of this is privately run; what percentage is in the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: The gross domestic product—GDP—of Northern Ireland in 1992 was £11,475 million at factor cost. An industrial breakdown of GDP is published in the December 1993 edition of the Central Statistical Office publication "Economic Trends", but GDP is not divided into public sector and private sector components.

Potatoes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the individual grants from the Local Enterprise Development Unit or the Industrial Development Board that have been taken up in each of the past five years by companies in the potato processing sector.

Mr. Tim Smith: The amounts of grants taken up by companies in the potato processing sector in each of the last five years were as follows:

Grants paid by the Industrial Development Board

Name of company	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*Total*
Tyto (NI) Ltd.	311,502	—	19,044	79,162	394,064	803,772
Tri-Sum Snacks Ltd.	—	—	—	2,897	—	2,897
Ballymoney Foods Ltd.	14,964	72,927	66,933	—	—	154,824
Avondale Foods (Craigavon) Ltd.	43,193	3,500	5,750	4,750	72,215	129,408
Avondale Foods Ltd.	—	—	73,699	186,423	54,750	314,872
Munchie Foods Ltd.	—	313,647	121,500	—	—	435,147
Total	369,659	390,074	286,926	273,232	521,029	1,840,920

Grants paid by the local enterprise development unit

Name of company	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*Total*
Balmoral Packaging	98,900	—	11,343	—	—	102,243
J. J. Quinn	4,800	—	10,200	—	—	15,000
Melmount Foods Ltd.	13,539	—	5,216	17,397	—	36,152
Munchie Foods Ltd.	16,114	1,012	—	—	—	17,126
North Down Foods	12,898	—	3,751	312	—	16,961
Brian Chapman	—	4,727	—	—	—	4,727
Glens of Antrim Potatoes	—	667	21,950	—	—	22,617
Malachy Scullion	—	45,859	11,281	13,926	11,584	82,650
Mr. and Mrs. V. Semple	—	1,387	—	5,363	—	6,750
Cullen Allen and Co. Ltd.	—	—	5,506	7,253	—	12,759
Seamus Donnelly	—	—	1,000	—	—	1,000
Oliver Kearney	—	—	—	4,200	—	4,200
Foyle Chipping	—	—	—	—	13,620	13,620
Willowbrook Farm	—	—	—	—	1,439	1,439
Robbie Pac	—	2,100	105,216	—	—	107,316
Total	144,251	55,752	175,463	48,451	26,643	450,560

Tied Cottages

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female agricultural workers live in tied cottages in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: No official figures are available for the number of agricultural workers living in tied cottages. However, based on the results of the 1992 earnings of hired labour survey, it is estimated that there were 170 male agricultural workers living in a house or cottage provided by their employer in 1992. No female workers are recorded as living in such accommodation.

HEALTH

Regional Budgets

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the budget for each regional health authority in real terms in each year from 1990 to 1995.

Mr. Sackville: Revenue expenditure by regional health authority for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 is shown in the table. Figures are at 1990-91 prices. Information is not yet available for subsequent years.

Regional Health Authority Expenditure

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Northern RHA	27,478,537	59,513,076	76,381,350
Yorkshire RHA	42,094,481	61,031,661	120,150,053
Trent RHA	21,981,765	163,408,188	156,923,670
East Anglian RHA	19,510,247	42,799,580	47,486,086
North West Thames RHA	18,672,204	54,023,761	110,434,860
North East Thames RHA	26,709,607	177,877,094	206,053,038
South East Thames RHA	32,250,181	234,430,266	144,510,066
South West Thames RHA	70,499,365	139,774,170	151,590,767
Wessex RHA	14,664,593	23,456,189	88,797,258
Oxford RHA	15,815,923	46,282,644	51,341,427
South Western RHA	13,755,806	80,806,944	87,290,815
West Midlands RHA	53,916,553	104,086,235	130,368,208
Mersey RHA	14,706,421	22,465,660	35,066,712
North Western RHA	26,804,020	61,085,551	68,555,968

Source: Annual accounts for regional health authorities.

Notes

1. The table shows the total revenue expenditure of regional health authorities—RHAs.

2. The figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are not comparable with those for 1990-91—which pre-date the national health service reforms. In particular:

The introduction of capital charges and other changes in accounting policy mean that the figures do not have the same basis.

Many RHAs became directly involved in the purchase of healthcare and related services for their region. Their 1991-92 and 1992-93 expenditure, therefore, includes substantial costs for patient treatment incurred under contracts with healthcare providers.

3. Following the implementation of the NHS reforms significant variations developed in the extent to which RHAs took on, retained or devolved, management support and operational services and the purchase of healthcare and in the extent to which their costs were borne or recharged to users. The expenditure of individual RHAs has also been influenced by other factors including variations in the size of the total populations served and the number of district health authorities comprising each region.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are those people currently appointed to serve on national health service trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 17 January at column *385* for details of those appointed as chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts. The appointment of executive directors rests with individual trusts.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what repayments of public divided capital were requested and paid by each NHS trust in the Northern region in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: There were no repayments of public dividend capital requested or paid by any national health service trust in the Northern region in 1991-92 or 1992-93.

Performance Review

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the remit of the chief medical officer's review of guidance on doctors' performance.

Dr. Mawhinney: The terms of reference for this group, which was established in October 1993 are:

"To review current guidance and procedures relating to doctors whose performance appears to fall below acceptable standards.

In the light of this review to make recommendations by 31 December 1993 to the Secretary of State for any necessary changes and further work needed".

Departmental Fuel Bills

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by location for each of her Department's properties in the Doncaster area the annual fuel heating bills by year for the last four years.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no properties in the Doncaster area. Information is available on national health service properties as follows:

Site	*Year*	*Fuel cost* £
Doncaster Royal Infirmary	1990-91	286,418
	1991-92	[1]—
	1992-93	328,770
Loversall Hospital	1990-91	170,457
Tickhill Road Hospital	1991-92	226,726
St. Catherine's Hospital	1992-93	209,988
Conisbrough Hospital	1990-91	18,003
(Closed August 1992)	1991-92	31,793
	1992-93	n/a
Montagu Hospital	1990-91	50,235
	1991-92	[1]—
	1992-93	58,950

[1]—Information in-complete

NB: Loversall, Tickhill Road and St. Catherine's Hospitals are all served by the same fuel system

The figures include the costs of the fossil fuels consumed by these sites—coal, gas and oil. It is not possible to identify the precise amounts for heating bills.

Paracetamol

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to reduce the incidence of self poisoning with paracetamol by ensuring that it is marketed only when it contains methanion, to minimise liver damage.

Mr. Sackville: There are serious reservations about the addition of an antidote—usually methionine—to such a widely used product, which is safe in normal use. This would expose possibly millions of people for sometimes lengthy periods to the antidote unnecessarily.

The supply of paracetamol is controlled in terms of the strength and pack size which may be supplied without the supervision of a pharmacist and the labelling must clearly state the recommended dose, with a warning that this should not be exceeded.

NHS Management Executive

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration the NHS management executive has given to advising newly appointed chairmen of the general time commitment expected of them for the remuneration they are paid; and what are the reasons for the decision reached.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service management executive has routinely provided guidance to new chairmen that their time commitment to their NHS authority or trust would be up to three days a week. No such guidance was issued to chairmen of fourth-wave NHS trusts, since at the time of their appointment the management executive's task force on corporate governance had not reported. The management executive will be issuing new guidance on chairmen's roles and responsibilities in a code of accountability for NHS boards to take effect from 1 April 1994, which will be based upon a requirement to fulfil clearly described responsibilities on a part-time basis.

Liquid Medicines

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of children being poisoned by liquid medicines have been reported to her Department in the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Physically Disabled People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of *(a)* elderly and *(b)* younger physically disabled people in the Doncaster area are currently accommodated in (i) private sector homes and (ii) council-owned homes.

Mr. Bowis: The latest available figures are for 31 March 1992. The percentages of residents in staffed residental care homes for elderly people in the Doncaster area were 37 per cent. in local authority homes and 58 per cent. in private homes. The percentages of residents in staffed residential care homes for younger physically disabled people were 100 per cent. in local authority homes and 0 per cent. in private homes.

Barnet FHSA

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many directors, managers, advisers and administrators have been employed by the Barnet family health services authority in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(2) how many directors, managers, advisers and administrators are currently employed by the Barnet health authority;

(3) how many directors, managers, advisers and administrators have been employed by the Barnet district health authority in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regions are only required to supply this information in an aggregated regional form. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir William Doughty, chairman of North West Thames regional health authority, for details.

Mental Health

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about a review of the Mental Health Act 1983; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have received a wide measure of support for the proposal, published in August 1993 in the report of the internal review of legal powers on the care of mentally ill people in the community, to amend the Mental Health Act with a new power of supervised discharge. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 28 December 1993 that she will be seeking the earliest opportunity to amend the Act to introduce this power. We have also received some representations including one from the Mental Health Act Commission for a wide review of the Act.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many social workers were working in the mental health field in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are in place to deal with patients with mental health problems who require admission to hospital but for whom no bed is available.

Mr. Bowis: It is for health authorities to make arrangements to provide appropriate care and treatment for those who require admission to hospital.

Edgware General Hospital

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors and nurses have been employed at Edgeware general hospital in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Wellhouse trust comprises Edgware and Barnet general hospitals. Available information on doctors of the trust is shown in the table.

Hospital and community health service doctors—30 September 1992

	Number
Number	70
Whole time equivalent	40·2

The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Tony Orton, chairman of the Wellhouse trust, for a breakdown of the numbers of doctors at each hospital and for the details of nursing staff.

Sharon Dalson

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has received the reports of the inquiry into the homicide of her children by Sharon Dalson, a former in-patient at a mental hospital.

Mr. Bowis: Yes.

London Hospitals

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in London had their hospital admissions cancelled twice in the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans her Department has to respond to the findings of the Peto report about the projected increase in the number of deaths from mesothelioma.

Mr. Sackville: None. It is for individual health authorities to ensure that the health care needs of their population are being met, including those with mesothelioma. Professor Peto's predictions on the expected number of deaths from mesothelioma are being considered by the Health and Safety Executive.

Young Offenders (Overseas Trips)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to issue guidelines to local authorities concerning sending young offenders abroad on safari trips at public expense; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We intend to issue guidance shortly.

Transplant Authority

Mr Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to the Unrelated Live Transplant Regulatory Authority.

Mr. Sackville They are:

Professor Martin Bobrow *(Chairman)*
Professor The Reverend Gordon R. Dunstan
Dr. Philip A. Dyer
Baroness Eccles of Moulton
Professor Mary G. McGeown
Mr. Stuart Macpherson
Professor Netar Mallik
Professor John R. Salaman
Miss Frances Smithers
Miss Sally Taber
Mr. James Wellbeloved

Death Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her most recent calculation of the totals of people who died in each of the past five years as a result of the use of *(a)* alcohol, *(b)* tobacco, *(c)* heroin, *(d)* cocaine and *(e)* cannabis.

Mr. Bowis: It is estimated that in the United Kindom about 110,000 deaths a year are related to smoking.

Alcohol is implicated directly or indirectly in a number of causes of death including cirrhosis of the liver, suicide, accidents, stroke, cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and oesophagus. Studies undertaken since 1985 suggest that a reasonable estimate of the total number of alcohol associated deaths would be around 25,000 per year in England and Wales.

Deaths with underlying cause described as drug dependence or non dependent abuse of drugs by type of drug and year of registration of death in the United Kingdom are:

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Morphine Type[1]	65	64	77	91	97
Cocaine	1	2	2	3	0
Cannabis	0	0	1	0	0

[1] This category includes heroin, methadone, opium, opium alkaloids and their derivatives, and synthetic drugs with morphine-like effects.

Deaths from poisoning by solid or liquid substances: accidental, suicidal and undetermined whether accidentally taken or purposely inflicted in Great Britain are:

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Heroin	22	24	36	34	44
Cocaine	5	6	4	2	10
Cannabis	2	2	3	2	4

Reference:
"Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1992", Home Office Statistical Bulletin No. 15/93.

Bed Occupancy

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute beds have been closed in each district health authority and each regional health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Information collected centrally is on the average

daily number of beds available in each regional and district health authority in each of the last five years and is published in "Bed availability for England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance or advice her Department has issued regarding bed occupancy rates; and what guidance or advice her Department has issued regarding bed occupancy requirements that may be laid down by health authorities;

(2) what advice or guidance her Department has issued regarding the vacant bed rate in acute medical or surgical wards.

Mr. Sackville: Hospitals are expected to make the most efficient use of the beds they have available so that they closely match expected patient activity.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines or advice her Department has issued regarding waiting times for beds in accident and emergency departments.

Mr. Sackville: The chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive has written to all health authorities today to ensure they agree explicit procedures with their hospital providers so that unacceptable delays do not occur. A copy of that letter is being placed in the Library.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average waiting time for a patient waiting to be admitted from accident and emergency departments in each regional health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many community psychiatric nurses were working within each regional health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Community Psychiatric Nursing staff by Region 1988-92

Whole time equivalents

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	190	190	200	200	370
Yorkshire	240	250	270	370	390
Trent	330	330	330	330	360
East Anglia	120	130	140	160	160
North West Thames	170	200	200	230	260
North East Thames	210	250	280	290	350
South East Thames	180	210	280	240	240
South West Thames	230	240	260	210	260
Wessex	210	230	210	230	260
Oxford	140	160	170	180	190
South Western	230	310	310	340	330
West Midlands	310	360	370	390	410
Mersey	200	200	220	230	240
North Western	300	320	340	350	400
Special Health Authority	10	10	10	0	10
England	3,080	3,380	3,600	3,760	4,210

Notes:

1. Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: Department of Health annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Nurse Clinical Grading Appeals

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out by health authority and regional health authority how many nurse clinical grading appeals are pending at an employing authority level, a regional level and a national level; what amount of money these claims involve; what steps are being made to speed the appeal process; and when she estimates this process will be completed.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of appeals outstanding is shown in the table. The number has dropped from just over 20,000 at 31 May 1993 to below 5,000 at 31 December 1993. No estimate of the total sum of arrears to be paid as a result of clinical grading appeals has been made. The Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council is currently discussing new procedures to speed up and streamline the appeals process. It is expected that all cases outstanding will be cleared before the end of 1995. Where a region has only a small number of appeals outstanding, all cases are expected to be cleared in the next few months.

Outstanding clinical grading appeals situation as at 31 December 1993

Region	*Employing authority level*	*Regional authority level*	*National level*	*Total*
Trent	0	683	68	751
North Western	58	502	150	710
West Midlands	134	371	52	557
Yorkshire	31	406	111	548
North West Thames	35	350	22	407
Mersey	139	123	96	358
South West Thames	0	0	321	321
North East Thames	18	219	20	257
South Western	0	152	63	215
Wessex	0	123	50	173
South East Thames	0	118	34	152
East Anglian	0	90	58	148
Northern	0	0	147	147
Oxford	0	0	75	75
Total	415	3,137	1,267	4,819

Notes

The table has been put together based on information supplied by regional health authorities.

Health Authorities, Cornwall

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current non-executive directors and members of the Cornwall district health authority, Cornwall, Community healthcare trust and the Royal Cornwall hospitals trust, together with the dates when they were appointed and the period of their respective appointments.

Dr. Mawhinney: They are:

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly District Health Authority

The Chairman of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly district health authority is Mr. John Askham. He was appointed on 1 April 1990 and his current term of office expires on 31 March 1994. South Western regional health

authority is responsible for the appointment of non-executive members. The appointment of executive members is a matter for the district health authority itself.

Cornwall Healthcare NHS trust

The acting chairman of the Cornwall healthcare national health service trust is Major General Ian Baxter. The non-executive directors of the trust and their term of appointments are:

Non-executive Director	*First appointed*	*Current term of office expires*
Major General Ian Baxter	1 April 1993	31 October 1995
Mr. Stuart Young	1 April 1993	31 October 1995
Lady Frances Banham	1 April 1993	31 October 1995
Mr. Alan Wilkes	1 April 1993	31 October 1995
Mrs. Jean Dunkley	1 April 1993	31 October 1995

Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust

The chairman of the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS trust is Mr. John Williams. He was appointed on 1 December 1993 and his term of office expires on 30 November 1997.

The non-executive directors of the trust and their terms of appointment are:

Non-executive Director	*First appointed*	*Current term of office expires*
Mr. Gilbert McCabe	1 November 1991	30 November 1997
Mr. Edward Latham	1 November 1991	30 November 1997
Mr. Colin Micklewright	1 November 1991	30 November 1995
Mrs. Doreen Henderson	1 October 1992	30 November 1995

There is currently a vacancy among the non-executive directors following Mr. Williams' appointment as chairman.

South West Regional Health Authority

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current membership of the South West regional health authority together with the dates when they were appointed and the period of their respective appointments.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chairman of the South Western regional health authority is Ms Rennie Fritchie. She was appointed on 1 August 1992 and her current term of office expires on 31 July 1994.

The non-executive members of South Western regional health authority, and their terms of appointment are as follows:

Non-executive director	*First appointed*	*Current term of office expires*
Sir John Kingman	26 July 1990	31 October 1996
Dame Margaret Fry	26 July 1990	31 October 1996
Mr. Douglas Strachan	1 November 1993	31 October 1995
Ms Nicolette Pain	1 November 1993	31 October 1995
Mr. Upert Woodburn	1 January 1993	31 October 1996

There is currently a vacancy on the board.

The appointment of executive members of the regional health authority is a matter for the authority itself.

Community Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the estimated outturn expenditure on care in the community in 1993-94 and the comparable figures for the previous two financial years.

Mr. Bowis: The community care reforms started on 1 April 1993. The information is not therefore available in the form requested.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the planned expenditure on care in the community over each of the next three financial years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is not available centrally for the total expenditure on community care services.

Psychiatric Beds

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* long-stay and *(b)* short-stay psychiatric beds have been closed in each regional health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: Information on specific bed closures is not available centrally but details of numbers of long-stay and short-stay psychiatric beds are published annually in "Bed Availability for England". The latest publication relating to 1992-93 is available in the Library.

Patient S

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will institute an inquiry into the circumstances of the death of patient S on Sunday 16 January, following the removal of the feeding tube.

Mr. Sackville: No. We understand that Frenchay healthcare national health service trust followed the correct procedure by seeking a court declaration that it was lawful not to resume life sustaining treatment, and thereby to allow the patient to die peacefully.

Hospital Beds (Waiting Times)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she will instigate an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the cases of a 94-year-old woman who spent 14 hours waiting for a bed at Leicester royal infirmary and a 22-year-old woman who waited 23 hours for a bed at King's College hospital, London; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what discussions she has had with health authority or hospital managers regarding recent cases of patients facing long waits at Leicester royal infirmary and King's College hospital, London.

Mr. Sackville: We regard such waits as unacceptable. Our objective remains to ensure that patients requiring admission are given a bed on a suitable ward as soon as possible after a decision to admit and that their dignity and comfort are maintained during any waiting period.

The chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive has today written to all health authorities reminding them of their responsibility to ensure that specific procedures are in place so that hospitals with

whom they contract are able to respond promptly to short-term fluctuations in the emergency work load and that unacceptable delays do not occur.

Smear Tests

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of women receiving smear tests by region for the latest available year and the percentage of those who develop carcinomas before their recall; and what is the recall period for each region.

Mr. Sackville: The number of women receiving smear tests by region for the latest available year is shown in the table. Information on interval cancers is not available centrally. District health authorities screen on at least a five yearly basis, though others screen more frequently in accordance with local health circumstances and priorities. Information on the frequency of screening by DHA is not currently routinely collected.

Response to invitations, all ages, by Regional Health Authority 1991-92

Regional Health Authority	*Number invited*	*Screened*
England Total	2,162,443	1,030,672
Northern	168,160	97,523
Yorkshire	113,454	67,377
Trent	208,265	124,192
East Anglia	104,557	66,310
North West Thames	139,761	40,634
North East Thames	204,111	43,733
South East Thames	138,091	42,363
South West Thames	172,637	74,514
Wessex	108,242	56,165
Oxford	104,223	64,028
South Western	152,279	92,138
West Midlands	294,017	146,145
Mersey	87,631	36,862
North Western	167,015	78,688

TRANSPORT

Rail Freight

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Railtrack's track access charges for freight rail services will be *(a)* agreed and *(b)* made public.

Mr. Freeman: Access charges, to be in place when Railtrack is vested, for existing rail freight services are being negotiated between Railtrack and the British Railways Board. Access charges for new rail freight services are a matter for commercial negotiation between the parties concerned. There is no general intention to publish access charges for each individual freight service because of commercial confidentiality. The publication of information by the rail regulator will be governed by sections 71 and 72 of the Railways Act 1993.

Motor Cycling

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people currently hold full motor cycle licences; and if he will arrange for this information to be included in his Department's annual publication "Transport Statistics Great Britain".

Mr. Key: Reliable estimates are not available. In 1989, the drivers census conducted by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency found some 4·75 million licence holders with full motor cycle entitlement. DVLA records contain some license holders who have subsequently died and many who have not ridden a motor cycle for many years. The number is likely to be an overestimate of the number of active riders. Because these statistics are unreliable they are not published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain".

Vehicle Licensing (Deregulation)

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations which were invited to respond to his consultation on the deregulation of vehicle licensing, and those which responded.

Mr. Key: The Department is playing a full and active part in the Government's deregulation review. We are currently examining the whole range of regulations administered by the Department, including vehicle licensing. Formal consultation will take place when proposals for change have been identified.

Smoke Tests

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the detailed specifications of the metered check of smoke to be introduced into the MOT test on 1 February.

Mr. Key: The metered check of smoke being introduced into the MOT test on 1 February is for light duty diesel-engined vehicles. The detailed specifications of the check are contained in the MOT tester's inspection manual. I have placed a copy of the relevant pages of the manual in the Library.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria have to be met for an A class trunk road to be designated as an A(M) road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: There is provision at section 16(5)(b) of the Highways Act 1980 for an existing all-purpose trunk road to be designated a motorway.

To come up to full motorway standard the road would need to meet the physical requirements for motorways. Designation as a motorway would also mean that certain classes of traffic would be prevented from using the road.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases the Child Support Agency is currently dealing with in *(a)* Scunthorpe and *(b)* South Humberside.

Mr. Burt: Information in the form requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to the national report of the agency's performance, which is placed in the Library each month.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the staff of the Child Support Agency are on performance-related pay.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. Hepplewhite to Mr. John Spellar, dated 19 January 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Question to the Secretary of State about the number of staff in the Child Support Agency who receive performance related pay.

The Agency operates its performance related pay scheme within the terms of the new national pay arrangements agreed by the Treasury and the Civil Service Trades Unions. These new arrangements have created a stronger link between pay and performance by replacing automatic annual increments with performance related progression. The level of any individual's performance related progression is governed by the Agency's personal review system.

In this system, each individual is set a number of challenging work and personal objectives, tailored to meet each person's experience and ability. Performance related pay is awarded in recognition of the level of individual performance achieved, maintained over a number of years.

The Agency now employs 4,937 staff all of whom are eligible for consideration for an award of performance related pay based upon the agreed arrangements which are available for inspection in the Library.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the gross annual budget of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency's gross allocation for 1993-94 is £119·8 million.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff employed by the Child Support Agency are on performance-related pay.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) by the chief executive of the Child Support Agency on 19 January.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money was paid by his Department in unemployment benefit in each of the last five years; and what was the average number of people in receipt of unemployment benefit in each of the last five years.

Mr. Burt: The information for the latest five years for which figures are available is in the table:

Unemployment benefit expenditure

	£ million
1987-88	1,468
1988-89	1,107
1989-90	733
1990-91	870
1991-92	1,604

Average number of people receiving unemployment benefit

	Number
1987-88	815,000
1988-89	600,000
1989-90	375,000
1990-91	425,000
1991-92	675,000

Notes:

1. Amounts of benefit are rounded to the nearest £ million.
2. Numbers of beneficiaries are rounded to the nearest five thousand.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals for disability living allowance have been lodged with the independent tribunal service in each month since its introduction.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available for any month prior to April 1992. The available information is in the table.

Month	Number of Appeals
1992	
April	45
May	149
June	117
July	177
August	204
September	178
October	373
November	496
December	520
1993	
January	704
February	1,296
March	963
April	3,607
May	2,182
June	3,044
July	3,789
August	3,277
September	3,162
October	2,400
November	2,385
December	2,090

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the amount of time taken by the independent tribunal service to deal with appeals, relating to disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The average length of time taken by the independent tribunal service to clear an appeal on disability living allowance is 14 weeks. Work is in hand to reduce this time.

Retired People

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many men under 65 years of age are *(a)* retired, *(b)* unclassified because their wives work over 16 hours a week and *(c)* classified in some other way for the same reason;

(2) how many men aged over 58 years are *(a)* retired, *(b)* unemployed and *(c)* unclassified because their wives are working more than 16 hours per week;

(3) how many women under 60 years of age are *(a)* retired, *(b)* unclassified because their husbands work over 16 hours per week and *(c)* classified in some other way when they have taken early retirement.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Table 1
Numbers registered as unemployed

	Number
Men aged under 65	2,135,000
Men aged 60 and over	48,000
Women aged under 60	624,000

Table 2
Numbers registered unemployed receiving neither unemployment benefit nor income support

	Number
Men aged under 65	229,000
Men aged 60 and over	9,000
Women under 60	106,000

Source: Figures are taken from the half-yearly analysis of unemployed claimants available in the Library.
Note: The latest available figures are as at 13 May 1993 and are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average age of retirement for *(a)* men and *(b)* women for each year since 1979.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available.

Lone Parents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures similar to those in his Department's tax-benefit model table, including the various component figures, showing net weekly spending power of a lone parent with children aged one and three years where *(a)* the parent is on income support, *(b)* the parent takes employment for 15 hours a week at £4 per hour, with £7·50 per week travel costs and £30 per week child care costs, *(c)* the parent takes employment for 20 hours a week at £3 an hour, with £10 per week travel costs and £40 per week child care costs and *(d)* the parent takes employment for 30 hours a week at £3 an hour, with £10 per week travel costs and £40 per week child care costs, assuming that the new child care allowance for lone parents is in operation.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is in the table. The level of child care and travel costs specified in the question are significantly higher than those typically encountered for lone parents at the level of earnings specified. Recent research[1] shows that the average weekly child care costs of working lone parents are £24·60 a week.

[1] "Families, Work, and Benefits" (Policy Studies Institute, June 1993).

Lone parent with two children aged 1 and 3
Earnings and benefit as at October 1994 (£)

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Gross earnings	0·00	60·00	60·00	90·00
Tax	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00
National Insurance contributions	0·00	1·44	1·44	4·44
Take home pay	0·00	58·56	58·56	85·56
Income support	67·55	23·99	0·00	0·00
Free welfare foods	5·18	5·18	0·00	0·00
Family credit	0·00	0·00	66·70	66·70
Child benefit	24·60	24·60	24·60	24·60
Rent	32·54	32·54	32·54	32·54
Rent rebate	32·54	32·54	32·54	23·73
Council tax	7·65	7·65	7·65	7·65
Council tax benefit	7·65	7·65	7·65	4·94
Total net income	137·52	152·52	190·05	208·24
Income net of rent and council tax	97·33	112·33	149·86	168·05
Childcare and travel costs	0·00	37·50	50·00	50·00
Income net of housing, childcare and travel costs	97·33	74·83	99·86	118·05

(a) Parent on income support.
(b) Parent takes employment for 15 hours a week at £4 per hour, child care costs of £30 per week and travel to work costs of £7·50 per week.
(c) Parent takes employment for 20 hours a week at £3 per hour, child care costs of £40 per week and travel to work costs of £10 per week.
(d) Parent takes employment for 30 hours a week at £3 per hour, child care costs of £40 per week and travel to work costs of £10 per week.

Notes: The tables include the following information:
1. April 1994 benefit rates.
2. April 1993 rates for rent, council tax and welfare foods.

Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes have taken place in the rate of unemployment benefit, plus other benefits payable to a married man with two children on average wages since 1979, using the rate for that year as 100.

Mr. Burt: Information is in the tables. The only benefit payable to a married man with two children on average earnings is child benefit.

Changes in the level of Unemployment Benefit since 1979

	Personal Benefit Standard Rate	Increase for Dependent Adult	Child
2 April 1979	100	100	100
15 November 1979	117	117	200
27 November 1980	131	131	147
26 November 1981	143	143	94
25 November 1982	159	158	35
24 November 1983	172	171	18
26 November 1984	181	180	—
28 November 1985	193	193	—
31 July 1986	196	195	—
9 April 1987	200	199	—
14 April 1988	208	207	—
10 April 1989	220	219	—
9 April 1990	237	236	—
11 April 1991	263	262	—
9 April 1992	274	273	—
15 April 1993	283	283	—

Note: 1979 rate = 100
[1]— Child dependency abolished 26 November 1984.
Source: Social Security Statistics 1993.

Unemployment Benefit—Earnings Related Supplement

	Maximum weekly rate
7 January 1979 to 5 January 1980	100
6 January 1980 to 2 January 1981	109
4 January 1981 to 2 January 1982	86

Note:
1. 1979 rate=100
2. Abolished for new claimants from 3 January 1982 and for all claimants from 30 June 1982.
3. *Source:* Social Security Statistics 1983.

Changes in the level of Child Benefit since 1979

Child Benefit	*First Child*	*Each other child*
2 April 1979	100	100
24 November 1980	119	119
23 November 1981	131	131
22 November 1982	146	146
21 November 1983	163	163
26 November 1984	171	171
25 November 1985	175	175
28 July 1986	178	178
6 April 1987	181	181
8 April 1991	206	181
7 October 1991	231	188
6 April 1992	241	195
12 April 1993	250	203

Note: 1 1979 rate=100
2. *Source:* Social Security Statistics 1983.
Social Security Statistics 1993.

National Insurance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the total amount of the Treasury supplement to the national insurance scheme in each year since 1979; and what is the estimated amount in each of the next three years.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

Year	*Sum paid into NI fund (£ million)*
1979-80	[1]2,343
1980-81	[1]2,848
1981-82	[1]2,433
1982-83	[1]2,591
1983-84	[1]2,807
1984-85	[1]2,597
1985-86	[1]2,163
1986-87	[1]2,412
1987-88	[1]2,135
1988-89	[1]1,653
1989-90	[2]nil
1990-91	[2]nil
1991-92	[2]nil
1992-93	[2]nil
1993-94	[3]7,589
1994-95	6,280
1995-96	[4]5,000
1996-97	[4]5,300

[1] Treasury supplement.
[2] The Treasury supplement was abolished from 1989.
[3] Treasury grant from 1993 onwards.
[4] Estimated figures provided by the Government Actuary's Department and rounded to nearest £100 million.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to hs answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *299*, if he will provide the names and the organisations represented in the experts convened as a group to consider the details of the proposed objective medical test for incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We have asked that panel members respect confidentiality until the exercise is completed. Subsequently, we intend to publish a report containing the membership of the panel, a summary of its work and findings and the results of the evaluation exercise.

The report will be published before regulations are laid.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department of abolishing age allowances for claimants of incapacity benefit who are over 45 years of age.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* It is estimated that abolishing the age allowances for people receiving the long-term rate of incapacity benefit who become incapacitated aged over 45 will provide net savings of less than £5 million in 1995-96 and around £15 million in 1996-97.

Note: Estimates, expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, are rounded to the nearest £5 million and are net of income-related benefit offsets. The estimates take account of the planned changes to additional pension and adult dependency increases.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department of abolishing the additional pension with the introduction of incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* It is estimated that abolishing additional pension for people who start receiving long-term incapacity benfit after April 1995 will produce net savings of around £20 million in 1995-96 and around £130 million in 1996-97.

Note: Estimates, expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, are rounded to the nearest £10 million and are net of offsetting changes in expenditure on age allowances and income-related benefits.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department of delaying payment of a higher rate of incapacity benefit after a year.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* It is estimated that extending the qualifying period for the long-term of incapacity benefit will produce net savings of around £110 million in 1995-96 and around £150 million in 1996-97.

Notes
1. Estimates expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, are rounded to the nearest £10 million and are net of offsetting changes in income-related benefit expenditure.
2. Estimates take account of the effect on incapacity benefit recipients of the planned changes in the qualifying conditions for the disability premium paid with the income-related benefits.

Rugby Union (Benefits)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to examine the charging of national insurance contributions arising from financial and other rewards derived from playing Rugby Union football.

Mr. Hague: If it emerged that players, contrary to the rules of the Rugby Football Union, receive payments for playing, the Contributions Agency would consider whether liability to national insurance contributions arises and, if so, require payment in the normal way.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many invalidity benefit claimants are aged under 58 years and do not receive the higher rate of the care component of the disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 17 January 1994]* On 4 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 765,000 people under the age of 58 receiving invalidity benefit[1]. Reliable estimates of the number of invalidity benefit claimants not receiving the higher rate care component of disability living allowance are not available.

Note:

[1] Based on 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of invalidity benefit claimants have adult dependants, by age of dependant.

Mr. Scott *[holding Answer 17 January 1994]:* The Information is in the table.

Adult Dependency Increases Paid with Invalidity Benefit

Invalidity Benefit recipients at 4 April 1992	*Number*	*Number as a percentage of all Invalidity Benefit recipients*
Total caseload	1,440,000	100
Recipients receiving an adult dependency increase	445,000	31
Increase payable for adult dependant aged under 30	10,000	1
Increase payable for dependant aged 30-39	40,000	3
Increase payable for dependant aged 40-49	55,000	4
Increase payable for dependant aged 50-59	135,000	9
Increase payable for dependant aged 60-69	195,000	14
Increase payable for dependant aged over 70	5,000	*

Notes:

(i) All figures are rounded to the nearest 5,000; totals may not sum due to rounding.

(ii) Percentages are rounded to the nearest 1 per cent. "*" denotes a figure of less than 0·5 per cent.

Sources:

(a) Estimates of the age of adult dependants using data drawn from the 1989, 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys.

(b) Estimates of the total number of invalidity benefit recipients, and the total number receiving adult dependency increases, are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain at 4 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of invalidity benefit claimants have adult dependants under the age of 60 years where no allowances for child dependants are in payment.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The information is in the table.

Adult dependency increases paid with Invalidity Benefit

Invalidity Benefit recipients at 4 April 1992	*Number*	*Number as a percentage of all Invalidity Benefit recipients*
Total caseload	1,440,000	100
Recipients receiving an increase for an adult dependent under the age of 60, where no increase for a child dependant is payable	170,000	12

Notes:

i. All figures are rounded to the nearest 5,000.

ii. Percentages are rounded to the nearest 1 per cent.

Sources:

a. Estimates of the age of adult dependants obtained using data drawn from the 1989, 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys.

b. Estimates of the total number of invalidity benefit recipients, and the total number receiving adult dependency increases, are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain at 4 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, rounded to the nearest thousand.

War Pension Unit

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how claims being processed by the war pensions unit at Norcross, Blackpool have been affected by asbestos being found in a Ministry of Defence building where records are kept; when he expects the claims will be processed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. George Foulkes, dated 19 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the effect of asbestos in a Ministry of Defence (MOD) building on claims being processed by the War Pension Unit.

In June 1993, asbestos contaminated dust was discovered at the MOD Records, Hayes. Since that date, the MOD have been unable to provide full service documents for War Pension claims.

In September 1993, contingency plans were introduced which included the MOD going into the contaminated areas to retrieve the relevant documents for particularly urgent claims, such as those from the terminally ill.

The decontamination exercise started on 10 January 1994 and is due to be completed by April 1994. Those claims not covered by the contingency plans will be dealt with as a matter of urgency as the MOD records become available.

I hope my reply has been helpful.

EMPLOYMENT

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in her Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The level of charges for ministerial cars is determined centrally by the Government car service. In the two financial years since 1990-91, there have been two major price rises which have increased our costs. An additional factor is that from April 1991, car charges were subject to the higher rate of VAT. In the same period, there has been no increase in the number of allocated vehicles.

Wages

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of *(a)* manual, *(b)* non manual, *(c)* all, *(d)* male, *(e)* female, *(f)* full and *(g)* part-time workers on adult rates earn less than £2·40, £2·60, £2·80, £3·00, £3·20, £3·40, £3·60, £3·80, £4·00, £4·40, £4·80, £5·20, £5·60 and £6 per hour, including and excluding overtime, in Yorkshire and Humberside, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Humberside, the north and Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available from the new earnings survey is contained in tables. I have arranged for copies to be available in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of full-time *(a)* male, *(b)* female, *(c)* manual, *(d)* non-manual and *(e)* all workers on adult rates earn less than £100, £120, £140, £150, £160, £170, £180, £190, £200, £210, £220, £250, £300 and £340 per week, including and excluding overtime, in Yorkshire and Humberside, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Humberside, the North and Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information from the new earnings survey can be found in tables. I have arranged for copies to be available in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average hourly and weekly pay, including and excluding overtime, for both full-time *(a)* manual, *(b)* non-manual and *(c)* all men and women on adult rates in Yorkshire and Humberside, the north and Great Britain in 1970, 1975, 1984 and the latest available year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested for 1975, 1984 and 1993 can be found in part E of the new earnings survey for each of those years. Details of average weekly earnings and of the overtime component together with average hourly earnings excluding overtime are published in tables 108 to 113. Details of average hourly earnings including overtime are published in tables 122 and 123.

Average earnings excluding overtime is not available for 1970. Average weekly and hourly earnings including overtime for 1970 is provided in the table:

Full-time employees—pay unaffected by absence: April 1970

	Average gross weekly earnings		Average gross hourly earnings	
	including overtime £	*excluding overtime* £	*including overtime* £	*excluding overtime* £
Manual men				
Yorkshire and Humberside	25·8	—	0·54	—
North	26·3	—	0·56	—
Great Britain	26·9	—	0·57	—
Non-manual men				
Yorkshire and Humberside	32·9	—	0·83	—
North	33·5	—	0·85	—
Great Britain	35·8	—	0·90	—
All men				
Yorkshire and Humberside	27·9	—	0·61	—
North	28·5	—	0·63	—
Great Britain	30·0	—	0·67	—
Manual women				
Yorkshire and Humberside	12·6	—	0·32	—
North	12·6	—	0·31	—
Great Britain	13·4	—	0·33	—
Non-manual women				
Yorkshire and Humberside	16·3	—	0·44	—
North	16·4	—	0·43	—
Great Britain	17·8	—	0·48	—
All women				
Yorkshire and Humberside	14·9	—	0·39	—
North	15·0	—	0·39	—
Great Britain	16·3	—	0·43	—

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the latest figures for numbers of full-time employees on adult rates in *(a)* Greater Manchester, *(b)* Merseyside, *(c)* Cheshire, *(d)* Lancashire and *(e)* the north-west region whose weekly earnings excluding overtime were less than £220 and less than £200 under the headings of manual males, non-manual males, all full-time males, manual females, non-manual females, and all full-time females, giving total numbers of employees in the sample in each case; and what is the number of part-time employees on adult rates in (i) Greater Manchester, (ii) Merseyside, (iii) Cheshire, (iv) Lancashire and (v) the north-west region whose hourly earnings excluding overtime were less than £6 and less than £5.30 under the headings of manual females, non-manual females, all part-time females, manual males, non-manual males, and all part-time males, giving total number of employees in the sample in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information available from the new earnings survey is provided in the following tables:

Full-time employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey pay period
Number in sample and percentage with gross weekly earnings (exluding overtime) below the following amounts: April 1993

	£200		£220	
	Number in sample	*Per cent.*	*Number in sample*	*Per cent.*
Manual men				
Greater Manchester	592	38·2	799	51·5
Merseyside	231	32·4	311	43·6
Cheshire	217	34·1	269	42·3
Lancashire	340	40·9	450	54·2
North West region	1,380	37·0	1,829	49·0
Non-mauual men				
Greater Manchester	285	16·0	352	19·9
Merseyside	162	19·1	205	24·2
Cheshire	66	8·9	93	12·6
Lancashire	147	18·6	177	22·3
North West region	660	15·9	828	19·9
All men				
Greater Manchester	877	26·4	1,152	34·6
Merseyside	393	25·2	516	33·1
Cheshire	283	20·6	362	26·3
Lancashire	487	30·0	627	38·6
North West region	2,040	25·9	2,657	33·7
Manual women				
Greater Manchester	298	81·9	390	87·9
Merseyside	108	76·6	123	87·2
Cheshire	97	77·0	109	86·5
Lancashire	154	80·6	171	89·5
North West region	657	79·9	723	88·0
Non-manual women				
Greater Manchester	661	41·3	830	51·9
Merseyside	329	39·0	417	49·4
Cheshire	250	42·2	303	51·2
Lancashire	335	47·1	404	56·7
North West region	1,575	42·0	1,954	52·1
All women				
Greater Manchester	959	48·8	1,150	58·6
Merseyside	437	44·4	540	54·8
Cheshire	347	48·3	412	57·4
Lancashire	489	54·2	575	63·7
North West region	2,232	48·8	2,677	58·6

Part-time employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was not affected by absence for the survey pay period
Number in sample and percentage with gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) below the following amounts: April 1993

	£5·30		£6·00	
	Number in sample	*Per cent.*	*Number in sample*	*Per cent.*
Manual women				
Greater Manchester	327	91·1	342	95·3
Merseyside	222	93·3	229	96·2
Cheshire	133	85·3	143	91·7
Lancashire	195	92·9	201	95·7
North West region	877	91·1	915	95·0
Non-manual women				
Greater Manchester	420	69·7	459	76·1
Merseyside	211	60·8	243	70·0
Cheshire	174	65·4	191	71·8
Lancashire	192	61·7	225	72·3
North West region	997	65·3	1,118	73·2
All women				
Greater Manchester	747	77·7	801	83·3
Merseyside	433	74·0	472	80·7
Cheshire	307	72·7	334	79·1
Lancashire	387	74·3	426	81·8
North West Region	1,874	75·3	2,033	81·6
Manual men				
Greater Manchester	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Merseyside	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

	£5·30		£6·00	
	Number in sample	*Per cent.*	*Number in sample*	*Per cent.*
Cheshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lancashire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North West region	116	82·9	126	90·0
Non-manual men				
Greater Manchester	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Merseyside	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cheshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lancashire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North West region	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
All men				
Greater Manchester	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Merseyside	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cheshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lancashire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North West region	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which his Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of Lewisham's work force were employed in jobs in central London for each year from 1975.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is only available from the special workplace statistics from the census of population. The 1981 census of population shows that 73 per cent. of the economically active residents in the London borough of Lewisham had their workplace within the Inner London boroughs, including Lewisham. Data from the 1991 census of population are not yet available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for six-monthly periods from January 1979 to date how many of the vacancies notified to jobcentres in the United Kingdom were *(a)* full time and part time and *(b)* permanent and temporary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 20 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of vacancies notified to Jobcentres since 1979.

The Employment Servcie (ES) collects information for Great Britain rather than the United Kingdom. I enclose tables showing

(a) part time and full time vacancies, and

(b) temporary and permanent vacancies

notified to Jobcentres in Great Britain from April 1986.

There are differences in the six monthly periods used to compile the two tables. This is because until March 1992 the data was compiled at the end of alternative quarters.

Prior to 1986 the figures for vacancies notified to Jobcentres were collected manually. To obtain this information would require direct approaches to my local offices. Given the size of the ES network this would incur disproportionate costs.

I hope this is helpful.

Details of part-time and full-time vacancies

Date	*Part-time vacancies*	*Full time vacancies*
April—June 1986	187,058	423,706
July—December 1986	403,005	947,479
January—June 1987	349,218	832,774
July—December 1987	401,764	1,005,099
January—June 1988	348,598	883,485
July—December 1988	392,548	1,024,335
January—June 1989	336,320	864,697
July—December 1989	401,504	1,027,841
January—June 1990	328,216	809,571
July—December 1990	351,608	807,837
January—June 1991	325,348	593,159
July 1991—March 1992[1]	456,191	924,557
April—September 1992	323,651	695,470
October 1992—March 1993	305,278	592,673
April—September 1993	371,027	794,856

[1] In March 1992 the system of collection of information was changed bringing the accounting periods into line.

Details of permanent and temporary vacancies

Date	*Permanent vacancies*	*Temporary vacancies*
April—September 1986	836,250	471,085
October 1986—March 1987	790,519	388,473
April—September 1987	970,193	437,786
October 1987—March 1988	852,430	357,497
April—September 1988	1,088,605	372,541
October 1988—March 1989	950,838	289,433
April—September 1989	[1]1,028,703	[1]409,877
October 1989—March 1990	[1]878,333	[1]331,594
April—September 1990	989,679	258,667
October 1990—March 1991	713,730	237,365
April—September 1991	828,290	263,010
October 1991—March 1992	694,625	218,167
April—September 1992	821,263	197,858
October 1992—March 1993	712,847	185,104
April—September 1993	913,127	252,756

[1] Estimated.

Youth Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the numbers and percentages of youth training trainees in each training and enterprise council area in the north-west who have employed or trainee status, shown by sex, ethnic origin and disability;

(2) what is the latest information on the destinations of youth training trainees in each training and enterprise council area in the north-west, showing the destinations of trainees by ethnic origin, sex and disability.

Miss Widdecombe: As the information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Access to Work Scheme

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the results of research carried out by his Department on the attitude of disabled employees and prospective employees on the introduction of employer's contributions under his Department's access to work proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *858*.

Careers Services

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the organisations *(a)* which tendered and *(b)* which were chosen to provide careers services in each of the pathfinder areas.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on organisations tendering to provide careers services is commercial-in-confidence. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce those organisations with whom he will contract when negotiations are finalised.

Pit Closures

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job losses have occurred in each of the Durham coal mines as a result of *(a)* closure and *(b)* proposed closure.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply. British Coal has supplied me with the following information concerning its deep-mines in the Durham area:

Colliery	*Men on colliery books at 13 October 1992*	*Men on colliery books at 15 January 1994*
Easington	1,331	0
Vane Tempest	873	0
Wearmouth	929	27
Westoe	1,170	0

PRIME MINISTER

Councils of Ministers

Q5. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has made, in the light of the decisions of the European Councils in Edinburgh 1992 and Brussels 1993, to increase the transparency and accountability of decision making, including the recording of votes of each member state, at meetings of European Community Councils of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We supported the Council decision of 6 December on the publication of Council votes; and we shall routinely provide to Parliament all consequent published information, which will be made available in the Library of the House. We have also encouraged the Danish and Belgian presidencies in holding a number of open Council sessions.

Honours List

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what is *(a)* the number of each honour granted in the new year's honours list and *(b)* the number of each such honour was awarded to (i) public servants, (ii) civil servants, (iii) officers of the armed forces, (iv) other members of the armed forces and (v) for political services.

The Prime Minister: My honours recommendations for the new year list contained 970 names. The breakdown of awards is as follows:

	Number
Life Peer	2
Privy Counsellor	2
CH	3
Knight	30
GCB	1
KCB	2
CB	14
GCMG	1
CMG	2
DBE	3
CBE	98
OBE	241
MBE	571

Around 180 awards were granted to public servants—people working, for example, in health, education, the police, the fire service, public transport and local government—and 170 awards to state servants, including civil servants. These awards were given for their work as public and civil servants. Some of the awards given for voluntary work may also have gone to public or state servants, but it is not possible to identify these. Forty-nine awards went to individuals either for their political or for their political and public service. Awards to members of the armed forces are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Value Added Tax (Domestic Fuel)

Ms Jowell: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel.

The Prime Minister: I have received a substantial number of representations on this subject.

Arms Sales Register

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Prime Minister if he will report what progress he has made in establishing the register of arms sales announced after the European Council meeting on 8 May 1991.

The Prime Minister: I called for a United Nations register of conventional arms transfers at the Luxembourg European Council on 8 April 1991.

The United Nations General Assembly voted on 9 December 1991 to establish such a register, covering seven major weapons systems, with first returns due on 30 April 1993. The United Kingdom submitted its return to the United Nations Secretary-General on 29 April 1993. The return covered arms imports and exports for the calendar year 1992, including background information; a copy was placed in the Library of the House.

The report of the United Nations Secretary-General, published last October, included returns from some 80 countries.

The United Kingdom will seek to build on this successful start to the initiative to improve its effectiveness; we will be represented on a United Nations panel of experts shortly to discuss the operation and expansion of the register.

Mr. Frank Machon

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what record his Office has of telephone conversations held between his predecessor and Mr. Frank Machon of Glasgow in *(a)* October 1988, *(b)* February 1989 and *(c)* March 1989.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to him on 18 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *456*.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 20 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what medical evidence he has received from the doctor accompanying the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) on his recent visit to Iraq, from Harvard medical school, and from the hon. Members for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and for Linlithgow; and if he will reconsider his policy on United Nations sanctions against Iraq.

The Prime Minister: We have received various reports about the health conditions in Iraq and are aware that they continue to deteriorate. No medical evidence was passed to us by the doctor accompanying the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) on his recent visit to Iraq.

Medical supplies have never been subject to sanctions. Our quarrel is not with the people of Iraq but with Saddam's regime.

The Security Council again concluded on 18 January that there were no grounds for lifting sanctions against Iraq.

British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Prime Minister what public funds are currently made available *(a)* through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and *(b)* through other channels to finance the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body; what has been the level of such fundings in each of the years since it commenced; what is the purpose of those funds; what information he has relating to the expenditure by that body upon travel, hotel accommodation and refreshments in each of those years; by whom that expenditure was incurred; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* The British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body is funded jointly by the British Government, through a grant in aid from Her Majesty's Treasury administered by the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and by the Irish Government's Department of Foreign Affairs. The body was established in 1990 to provide a forum for British and Irish parliamentarians to discuss Anglo-Irish relations. Twenty-five Members of Parliament and 25 members of the Oireachtas belong.

Two plenary conferences are held each year, one in the United Kingdom and one in Ireland. There is a steering committee and four separate committees tasked to study and prepare reports on a range of issues including political, economic, social, cultural, educational and environmental matters. Since 1990 British Government expenditure has been as follows:

	£
1989-90	
Total expenditure	45,757
Accommodation	7,006
Travel/transport	1,442
Refreshments	8,489
1990-91	
Total expenditure	64,998
Accommodation	639
Travel/transport	10,826
Refreshments	2,539
1991-92	
Total expenditure	98,310
Accommodation	16,150
Travel/transport	23,280
Refreshments	11,214
1992-93	
Total expenditure	78,352
Accommodation	9,616
Travel/transport	13,798
Refreshments	4,814

1993-94

Final expenditure figures for the year are not yet available but are forecast to fall within the budget.

Correspondence

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Prime Minister when he will reply to the letter of 18 January 1993 from the hon. Member for North Cornwall on the subject of compensation for Gulf war widows; and if he will give reasons for the delay.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* As the hon. Member knows, he has received replies

from my principal private secretary and from me. I am aware, however, that a decision is awaited on the matter at issue and I hope that conclusions can be reached shortly.

DEFENCE

Land Mines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many land mines were exported to the former Yugoslavia from 1975 to the imposition of the trade embargo; and what information he has as to their deployment.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no record of any exports of land mines to the former Yugoslavia.

Defence Organisations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the benefits to the United Kingdom of continued membership of *(a)* NATO, *(b)* the Western European Union and *(c)* politico-military co-operation within the European Union; and what is the annual cost of United Kingdom participation in each defence organisation.

Mr. Hanley: This Government are committed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation—NATO—which remains essential to peace and stability in Europe, and is the principal guarantor of our security. We also support the development of a European security and defence identity compatible with NATO, and will therefore continue to play a full part in developing the Western European Union—WEU—as a means of strengthening the European pillar of NATO and as the defence component of the European Union. As a member of the European Union, the United Kingdom will participate in the development of a common foreign and security policy—CFSP. Under the terms of the treaty on European Union, issues with defence implications are for the WEU to elaborate and implement. Decisions in this area must be compatible with the security and defence policies of NATO.

As to the annual costs, I will write to the hon. Member.

Ukraine

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding the total quantity of military grade fissile materials in the Ukraine; and what are the comparable data for the United Kingdom stockpile.

Mr. Aitken: We do not believe that weapon-grade fissile material is held in Ukraine other than that embodied in former Soviet nuclear warheads still on Ukrainian territory. It would not be in the national interest to make public details of the amount of weapon-grade fissile material held by the United Kingdom. We do not hold significant stocks of fissile material which is not required for our operational stockpile of weapons.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many different types of land mine are manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Defence Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many letters he has received from members of the public on the export of arms, military and dual-use equipment to Iraq and Iran since November 1990; and what has been the average length of time taken to respond to the inquiries.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many questions to him for *(a)* ordinary written answer and *(b)* priority written answer have been answered within one working day since October 1993.

Mr. Hanley: From 18 October 1993 to 13 January this year, 49 questions for ordinary written answer have been answered within one working day of the day on which they are tabled for answer. Within the same time scale, 306 questions for priority written answer or for answer on named days have been answered within one working day.

Elipton Super-weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the capability and technical nature of the Elipton super-weapon developed by Russia.

Mr. Hanley: I have no information other than comments attributed to Vladimir Zhirionvsky.

Naval Support Command

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the planned new build for the Naval Support Command HQ will go ahead.

Mr. Hanley: A number of options remain under consideration for the long term accommodation of the Naval Support Command headquarters. The decision on the way forward will be taken in the light of the outcome of the defence costs study currently in hand.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will reconsider the geography of the Naval Support Command with a view to making greater use of existing sites.

Mr. Hanley: Studies have shown that the integration of functions which are presently geographically dispersed into the Naval Support Command headquarters will produce significant operational and financial benefits. The business case for this change remains robust, and I see no reason to reconsider it. Options for housing the collocated headquarters in the Bath area include making use of existing MOD sites.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the new premises for the Procurement Executive are to go ahead.

Mr. Aitken: Contracts for the site infrastructure and main construction of the Procurement Executive's new

headquarters at Abbey Wood have been placed, and work is proceeding to time and cost. On current assumptions, occupation of the new facilities will begin in the autumn of 1995 and will be completed a year later.

International Military Services Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times he and his predecessors have attended the annual general meeting of International Military Services Ltd. since 1984; on how many occasions he was represented by others; and on how many occasions he was neither present nor represented.

Mr. Aitken: Since 1984 the Secretary of State for Defence has been represented at each annual general meeting of International Military Services Ltd.

Landing Platform Helicopter

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when negotiations on contract specifications for the landing platform helicopter contract awarded in 1993 began; how many proposed specification changes have so far been requested; and how many of these changes were asked for by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: Post contract award discussions with VSEL have begun. As the design progresses, it is normal for a number of changes to the detail of the specification to be discussed. So far two minor changes have been agreed, one of which was requested by my Department.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the originally agreed pre-production milestones on the landing platform helicopter contract awarded in 1993 have so far been achieved.

Mr. Aitken: All scheduled milestones required by the contract to date have been achieved on time.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what request has been made to change the pre-production milestones on the landing platform helicopter contract awarded in 1992.

Mr. Aitken: No such request has been made.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make arrangements for the Data Protection Registrar to inspect relevant contracts with suppliers of IT services that involve the use of personal data held by his Department in order to check whether all appropriate arrangements in relation to the Data Protection Act 1984 have been made, and whether such contracts make provisions for the registrar to make random inspections in order to check the suppliers' compliance in with the eighth data protection principle.

Mr. Aitken: The Data Protection Registrar has a wide range of powers, under the Data Protection Act 1984, to ensure that all individuals and organisations holding personal data on computer systems are registered and observe the data protection principles as required by the Act. When IT services are contracted out by a data user, the contractor and the user will be subject to the application of the data protection principles, and the registrar's powers to ensure compliance with them, as provided for in the Act. It is for the registrar to decide how he will use his powers under the Act, and I do not consider that further arrangements are necessary for him to discharge his duties effectively.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to a fall in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Hanley: The reduction of £25,000 in the cost of providing ministerial cars since 1990-91 is due essentially to the number of Ministers in the Department falling from five to four since 1990-91, resulting in a cost saving of £11,000, and the return to normal usage following heightened ministerial requirements during the Gulf conflict, which accounts for a reduction of £14,000.

Armies

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, in order of strength, the 10 countries understood to have the largest armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: It is not the Government's practice to publish their assessments of the strengths of the armed forces of other states. The principal public source of such information is "The Military Balance", issued annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies and widely regarded as authoritative.

NATO

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the proposed formula for financial contributions to the NATO organisation by countries acting in partnership.

Mr. Hanley: Assuming the hon. Member is referring to NATO's partnership for peace initiative, we expect the costs of the programme to be shared between allies and those states who chose to participate on terms which are being developed.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations in the United Kingdom low flying system where low flying regulations require aircrew to make radio contact with air traffic control at a civilian airfield prior to or during transit of a specified area; and which civil airfields possess UHF radio facilities for this purpose.

Mr. Hanley: The low flying regulations require military aircrews to contact the following civilian airfields prior to or during transit of specified areas within the United Kingdom low flying system: Aberdeen, Dunsfold, Farnborough and Keevil. All these airfields possess UHF radio facilities.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date United States Air Force units stationed in the United Kingdom ceased using fixed low flying routes.

Mr. Hanley: United States Air Force units based in the United Kingdom continue to make limited use of fixed low

flying routes. In accordance with the United Kingdom low flying regulations, such routes are replaced at regular intervals.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what level of command assessments are made of the minimum amounts of low flying required to acquire and maintain the necessary skills; what criteria are used in these assessments; and if he will make a statement on the current specified minimum requirement for low flying training in the continuation training syllabuses for *(a)* the Tornado GR1 and *(b)* the Tornado F3.

Mr. Hanley: Assessments of the minimum amounts of low flying required to acquire and maintain the necessary skills are made by Service Command and Group Headquarters. The criteria used in such assessments include variations in average aircrew ability and experience, the type of aircraft, its role and projected changes in its role. The current minimum requirement for low flying continuation training for all military aircraft, including the Tornado GR1 and Tornado F3, is based on the experience of specialist air staffs taking these factors into account.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what year the Hawk aircraft was first authorised for flight in the United Kingdom low flying system at less than 250 ft; what is the current minimum authorised altitude for this aircraft type in the Royal Air Force; and if he will make a statement on the nature of the operational requirement for flying at less than 250 ft by Royal Air Force Hawks.

Mr. Hanley: Hawk aircraft have not been authorised to fly at less than 250 ft ins the United Kingdom low flying system. The current minimum authorised altitude for the aircraft is 100 ft above ground level, but this is reserved for the synchronised pair of the Royal Air Force aerobatic team and would be flown only within an airfield traffic zone or temporary restricted airspace. An operational requirement exists for Hawk aircraft to fly at less than 250 ft within designated air weapons ranges, but this does not extend to the United Kingdom low flying system.

RAF Warfare Strategy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library an unclassified version of the Cosgrove report on the Royal Air Force's air warfare strategy.

Mr. Hanley: The report is classified for internal management use and an unclassified version could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Royal Air Force tactical air warfare doctrine follows the procedures laid down in allied tactical publications 27B, 33 and 42.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom subscribes to the procedures in allied tactical publications—ATP—27B, 33 and 42 and this is reflected in the Royal Air Force's tactical doctrine and training.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent changes have been made in provision for the study of, and training in, air warfare doctrine in the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Hanley: As a result of experience gained during the Gulf conflict the air warfare centre—AWC—was formed on 1 October 1993. The AWC draws together several existing organisations to provide the focus for all RAF air warfare matters including the study of and training in air warfare doctrine.

Tornado Aircrew

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the secondary roles in which Tornado GR1B aircrew will be required to maintain currency.

Mr. Hanley: The Tornado GR1B squadrons will be declared to NATO in both the martime attack and overland strike/attack roles and as such aircrew will be required to maintain currency in all these roles.

Air Weaponry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the types of air weaponry approved for release on each of the air-to-ground weapons ranges in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Range and Types of Weaponry Approved for Release

Ballykelly
Guns

Castle Martin
Guided Missiles and Guns

Cowden
Practice bombs and Inert bombs

Donna Nook
Guns, Rockets, Practice bombs and Inert bombs

Garvie Island/Cape Wrath
Bombs and Guided Missiles

Holbeach
Guns, Rockets, Practice bombs, Inert bombs and Guided Missiles

Larkhill
High Explosive bombs, Practice bombs, Guns, Rockets and Guided Missiles

Lilstock
Practice bombs

Lulworth
Guided Missiles and Guns

Otterburn
Guided Missiles and Guns

Pembrey Sands
Guns and Practice bombs

Rosehearty
Rockets, Practice bombs and Inert bombs

Salisbury Plain Training Area
Guided Missiles and Guns

Shoeburyness
Guided Missiles

Tain
Guns, Rockets, Practice bombs and Inert bombs

Wainfleet
Guns, Rockets, Practice bombs and Inert bombs

West Freugh
High Explosive bombs, Practice bombs, Cluster bombs, Dispensers, Guns and Rockets

Wiley Sike
Practice bombs

Aircrew Pay Enhancements

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what pay enhancements are granted to aircrew operating in areas of actual or potential combat operations.

Mr. Hanley: United Kingdom service personnel are not paid danger money. However, the Xfactor which they receive throughout their careers irrespective of where they are stationed, which is currently 11·5 per cent. of basic salary, contains an element which recognises the need for them to serve on occasions under difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Military Air Traffic Zones

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to altering the size and shape of military air traffic zones around military airfields; and what criteria are being used in any such assessment.

Mr. Hanley: The national air traffic service—NATS—has in hand a review to assess whether changes to the existing shape of military air traffic zones—MATZs—would enable more efficient use to be made of the available airspace. The criterion being applied is that the current volume of MATZ airspace should not increase, and where possible should decrease.

Any changes resulting from the review would be promulgated in the United Kingdom "Aeronautical Information Publication" and published in an aeronautical information circular.

RAF Depots

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects a final decision will be announced following the end of the consultation period on the recommendations of the equipment support depot report into RAF depots.

Mr. Hanley: A final decision on the recommendations of the equipment support depot study will be made as soon as possible after the end of the consultation period on 18 March 1994, having given proper consideration to all representations received.

Redundancies

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundancies are planned in the armed services in *(a)* 1994, *(b)* 1995 and *(c)* 1996.

Mr. Hanley: We anticipate that in the financial year 1993-94, 8,482 service personnel and in the financial year 1994-95, 4,639 naval and Air Force personnel will leave on redundancy terms. The number of Army personnel to leave on redundancy terms in the financial year 1994-95 has not yet been determined. There are currently no plans for redundancies in the financial year 1995-96.

Departmental Properties, Huntingdon

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Ministry's properties there are in the Huntingdon constituency area; and how many are empty.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 December 1993, there were 1,508 service married quarters in the Huntingdon constituency area, of which 51 were vacant. Of these, 30 were awaiting major maintenance work and three were allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition, there were 26 properties which were formerly married quarters but are now used as single accommodation, storage and welfare facilities. Of these, five were vacant as they were uninhabitable.

Helicopter Noise Insulation Scheme

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will give details of the results of the review of the helicopter noise insulation scheme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence noise insulation grant scheme has now been extended at the helicopter landing sites as Bessbrook, Forkhill and Crossmaglen. Details of the scheme have been passed to the Newry and Mourne district council. A meeting is being arranged with the council when a detailed explanation of the scheme will be given. All householders concerned will be notified about the scheme and how to apply for a grant.

Loch Long

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will estimate when local fishermen, including members of the Clyde fishermen's association, will be allowed to fish Loch Long, using demersal gear; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions have taken place concerning the removal of debris from the floor of Loch Long; in what proportions the costs will be shared between Her Majesty's Government and the USA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Annual licences issued by the Queen's harbour master—QHM—Clyde currently permit fishing within Loch Long, including the use of demersal gear.

The hon. Member may have in mind Holy Loch. With effect from July 1993, fishing is now aslo permitted within Holy Loch. We have, however, recently become aware that there is some debris, essentially scrap metal, on the bed of Holy Loch which could pose a hazard to fishing gear. As a precaution, the QHM has issued a local warning notice identifying the area we suspect to be fouled.

We are pursuing this issue as a matter of urgency. If it appears that the debris is related to the erstwhile presence of the United States Navy we shall of course discuss the issue with the appropriate US authorities.

Bullying

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent guidelines concerning the elimination of bullying and intimidation of young recruits and others have been issued to commanding officers in all three services; if he will place a copy of the guidelines in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It has been made clear throughout the three services that bullying and other ill-treatment will not

be tolerated. In October 1993, the Adjutant General issued the Army's discipline and standards paper which set out the standards of behaviour expected from members of the Army. A copy of the paper will be placed in the Library of the House; paragraphs 24 to 26 address the issue of bullying and initiation ceremonies.

No similar guidelines have recently been issued to commanding officers in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. However, current standing orders of the Royal Air Force expressly forbid any form of bullying or participation in initiation ceremonies.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Army and *(c)* the Royal Air Force have been tried and convicted at courts martial for the offence of bullying in each of the past five years; how many were (i) officers, (ii) non-commissioned officers and (iii) other ranks; what was the range of penalties imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Disposal of Land

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the terms upon which his Department disposes of land it no longer requires.

Mr. Hanley: It is our normal practice to dispose of the freehold of surplus land in which there is no former owner or pre-emptive interest on the open market by competitive tender with the most favourable planning permission achievable, so as to maximise the return to the taxpayer. A range of other methods may be used if professional advice indicates that such alternatives would produce better value.

Training

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what current arrangements exist to train service personel in the history and politics of the former Yugoslavia; what plans he has to increase the amount of training in these matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Units warned for duty in the former Yugoslavia receive comprehensive briefing, which includes the history, geography, ethnic make-up and political and socio-economic development of the region. In addition, units undergo a special UN training programme, which includes information on the region and its peoples. Individuals nominated as UN military observers undergo extra training to prepare them for their specialist role. I am satisfied that these arrangements meet current needs.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many liaison officers with training in Serbo-Croat are currently attached to 1 Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

Mr. Hanley: There are 16 civilian and seven military liaison officers trained in Serbo-Croat currently attached to 1 Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what current arrangements exist to train service personnel in Serbo-Croat; what plans he has to increase the amount of training in Serbo-Croat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The present arrangements include six-month courses for military interpreters at the Defence School of Languages, basic "language survival" courses as part of pre-deployment training, the issue of word lists, and low-level training for all personnel in theatre. These arrangements meet the current operational requirements of the three services and there is no reason for an increase in training. If, however, the requirements change then additional training in Serbo-Croat would need to be addressed.

Military Exercises

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military exercises involving the operational use of both HMS Intrepid and HMS Fearless have been held in each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As HMS Intrepid and HMS Fearless have alternated between being fully operational, and being refitted or held in a state of extended readiness, there have been no exercises, in the time period specified, in which both ships have participated.

Defence Research Agency

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken in the last two years to improve the formal quality and project management of the Defence Research Agency and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply directly to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Chisholm to Dr. David Clark, dated 20 January 1994:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying to your question about formal quality and project management improvements in the Defence Research Agency.

When the Agency was set up in April 1991 it had no formal customer/supplier relationship and no requirement for formal quality certification. It became clear from the results of the satisfaction surveys we carried out that our customers' perceived our ability to manage their programmes and our lack of formal quality certification as a weakness. We decided that if the DRA was to survive as a trading organisation in a competitive environment what was needed was a strong quality culture within the DRA and a major reorientation in our work practices so that customer care and management of customer programmes became key drivers. I will deal with the quality initiative first.

The key to effective change is establishing the mechanisms that empower people at all levels in the organisation to contribute to improving effectiveness and efficiency. The Total Quality Process initiative we instituted in 1992 is the vehicle that allows this to happen. This initiative is not just about achieving formal quality standards such as BS 5750 though these are important to our customers; it is about identifying, developing and implementing the simplest and most cost effective ways of carrying out our business. The DRA has made a promising start and our goal is to establish TQP throughout the organisation by March 1995 and formal quality BS 5750 certification by December 1996.

The changes we have introduced to the way we manage our research projects are based on the need to respond flexibly and quickly to customer requirements; to put together teams to address particular issues or tasks; and to empower those teams to manage their projects efficiently. A major element in all this is a comprehensive training programme to equip our managers with the necessary commercial and project management skills to do

the job effectively; this should be completed by the end of April. We are also looking at the best way of identifying and addressing any weaknesses or problems in the way we manage our projects.

Both these initiatives are unlikely to yield quick results but we believe we have laid the foundations which will provide a lasting improvement in efficiency and effectiveness that will be of considerable benefit and value to our customers.

Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, columns *344-45*, if he will give details of the various Heckler and Koch weapons that were built at the royal small arms factory, Enfield, and subsequently sold to Heckler and Koch (UK), listing the number and type of weapons sold in each year between 1970 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is not available from official sources.

Performance Review (Indicators)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *349*, if he will publish declassified copies of the indicators of military capability and readiness for forces and headquarters that are used as the basis for the quantitative aspect of performance review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Data on military capability and readiness must remain classified, and cannot therefore be published.

Ministry of Defence Flights

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, columns *347-48*, how many non-MOD personnel are passengers on any of the weekly scheduled flights to Washington, Belize and Decimomannu; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The number of non-MOD personnel travelling as passengers on the weekly scheduled flights to Washington, Belize and Decimomannu varies in accordance with availability of seats and the demand.

Non-MOD passengers can be grouped into two categories:

(a) Staff employed in support of MOD contracts, and
(b) Staff of other Government Departments.

Figures for the 12 months to October 1993 for return journeys for these two categories are as follows:

	(a) Contractors	*(b) OGDs*
Between Brize Norton and Washington	125	361
Between Brize Norton and Decimomannu	9	16
Between Brize Norton and Belize	11	32

In addition, MOD personnel and their dependants are entitled to use empty seats on a fill-up standby basis at a nominal administrative cost to the individual. It is not possible to differentiate between MOD personnel and their dependants without disproportionate cost.

Background Briefing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *343*, what criteria he used to select the journalists who were given a background briefing on 20 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The criterion for the invitation to journalists to the briefing on the defence costs study was that they should be specialist defence correspondents from national media organisations.

Sea Harrier

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he proposes to take to maintain the capability of the Royal Navy's Sea Harrier force.

Mr. Aitken: In order to sustain the Royal Navy's Sea Harrier force well into the future, I am pleased to announce the decision to purchase a total of 18 new FRS2 aircraft and to convert a further five FRS1s to FRS2 under the current mid-life update programme. Contracts for the programme are being placed as satisfactory terms are agreed, under the Department's no acceptable price, no contract—NAPNOC—procedures, in order to secure best value for money. The contract for the 18 new aircraft has now been placed with British Aerospace at a value of some £200 million.

Trident

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of the Trident programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The current estimate of the total project cost of the Trident programme is £11,631 million, if all expenditure, including payments already made, is brought up to current prices and a common exchange rate of £1=$1·44, as assumed in the long-term costing of the defence programme. If payments already made are expressed at the prices and exchange rates actually incurred, the equivalent estimate is now £9,937 million. Expenditure on the Trident programme to 31 August 1993 represented some 67 per cent. of the overall estimate.

After allowing for the effects of inflation and exchange rate variations, the revised estimate of £11,631 million represents real cost reduction of £24 million compared to that announced last year. The increase in cash terms is £955 million, primarily as a result of a less beneficial exchange rate. The reduction in real terms since the original 1982 Trident II estimate, including the savings resulting from the decision to have United Kingdom missiles processed in the United States facility at Kings bay, Georgia, now stands at some £3.5 billion.

The proportion of the estimate for work undertaken in the United Kingdom has decreased from 74 per cent. to 70 per cent. reflecting the change in exchange rate.

I am pleased to say that the Trident programme remains on schedule to enter service in the mid-1990s. There has been no slippage in the in-service date since the decision to purchase Trident II was announced in March 1982. I am, as in previous years, sending to the Chairmen of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence a more detailed report on the programme. I am also placing a copy of this report in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of all the representations he has received from other Governments *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* opposed to THORP; and if he will indicate whether any intergovernmental correspondence arose in each case.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answer given to the hon. Members for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on Monday 29 November, *Official Report,* columns *385-86.* In addition, letters have been received from the Governments of Japan and Iceland. All have been notified of the decisions of the Secretary of State and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food concerning discharge authorisations for the Sellafield site, as has the Environment Minsiter of each EC member state and the EC environment commissioner. Correspondence between the United Kingdom and overseas Governments or the EC Commission is treated in confidence.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report,* column *449,* how many civil servants were involved in the preparation of the United Kingdom submission to the European Commission on article 37 on radioactive waste discharges from THORP; and what was the cost of preparing the document.

Mr. Atkins: A number of civil servants were involved in preparing the "General Data relating to the arrangements for Disposal of Radioactive Wastes" as called for under article 37 of the Euratom treaty. The cost of preparing the document is not readily ascertainable.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the responses to which he refers in his report on BNFL Sellafield further public consultation, published on 15 December, were submitted in a language other than English; and what arrangements were made to translate such submissions.

Mr. Atkins: A few responses in German were received and read. About 1,300 proforma responses were also received from Japan in English as well as in Japanese.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the basis of his statement in paragraph 26 of his decision document on THORP of 15 December, that there are no risk-free options for energy supply; and if he will list the risks for each energy production or conversion technology.

Mr. Atkins It is evident that industrial activities in the energy sector will involve risks, both for workers and the public. These will inevitably arise from such activities as construction and transport and may also arise from the disposal or discharge of wastes or combustion products. There may also be major accident risks, as exemplified by the Aberfan and Piper Alpha disasters.

As regards the hon. Member's request for quantification of the various risks, information is available from a number of published studies. Among these are the Health and Safety Executive's 1992 publication "The Tolerability of Risk from Nuclear Power Stations" and the document "The Safety of Nuclear Power"—safety series no. 75—INSAG—5—published in 1992 by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Market Charters

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names and addresses of those making complaints regarding market charters since 1 January 1993 and give details of the basis of each complaint.

Mr. Baldry: I refer to the answers given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on Tuesday 18 January. The additional information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the energy expenditure for 1990-91, and for 1992-93, for each Government Department set out as in the first column of table 1 of his answer of 20 October 1993, *Official Report,* columns *257-58.*

Mr. Atkins: Energy expenditure by each Government Department for the periods requested, and also for 1991-92, is shown in the table:

Departmental energy expenditure

£ million

Department	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
MAFF—Main Estates	3·2	3·6	3·9
—Buffer Depots	0·1	0·1	0·1
Cabinet Office	0·4	0·5	0·5
Customs and Excise	2·1	3·4	3·6
Defence—Civil	4·5	5·5	5·9
—Royal Navy	167·7	195·8	200·7
—Army			
—RAF			
—Procurement Executive	22·9	11·0	11·3
—Defence Research Agency		13·9	11·5
Education	0·5	0·7	0·5

Department	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Employment	9·3	10·4	9·8
Environment	2·0	2·1	2·0
Foreign and Commonwealth	0·9	1·1	1·0
Health	0·7	1·1	0·8
Home Office—Non-Prisons	1·9	2·4	2·6
—Prisons	20·1	23·5	24·4
Inland Revenue	9·9	12·0	12·7
Lord Chancellor's	5·2	6·2	6·4
Overseas Development Administration	N/a	0·7	0·7
National Heritage	—	—	N/a
National Savings	1·2	1·2	1·3
Northern Ireland Office	10·4	10·0	10·4
Scottish Office	0·9	0·7	1·0
Scottish Courts	N/a	1·0	1·0
Scottish Prisons	2·5	2·6	3·3
Social Security	12·5	14·2	15·6
Trade and Industry	5·2	6·0	5·5
Transport	3·7	4·3	4·3
Her Majesty's Treasury	0·4	0·4	0·3
Welsh Office	0·6	0·6	0·6
TOTAL	288·8	355·0	341·7

Notes:

1. Figures are actual expenditure: no adjustments have been made for weather correction, fuel price changes or changes to estate size. The Energy Efficiency Office's performance indicators, £ per square metre, takes account of these factors, and Departmental progress towards the Government's estate 15 per cent. energy efficiency target using this indicator was set out in the written answer dated 20 October 1993. Performance against two further indicators, using CO_2 emissions, was also published.
2. Some figures are revisions to those previously published. Equally, 1992-93 figures may be subject to revision.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes have taken place since 1979-80 in the method of recording the cost of the Government car service.

Mr. Baldry: Until 1 April 1989, the Government car service costs were recorded as part of the Crown suppliers trading fund.

On 1 April 1989, the Government car service transferred to the PSA. Since then, costs have been separately recorded as part of the vote and a separate GCS memorandum trading account has been developed. The GCS now produces full commercial-style accruals accounts for management purposes.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to him by my right hon. Friend on Friday 3 December 1993—*Official Report*, column *759*—and on Thursday 16 December 1993—*Official Report*, column *827*—in which he indicated that the cost of cars for Ministers in the DOE was £270,000 in 1990-91 and £265,000 in 1992-93.

There are two main factors which have led to an increase in the cost per car for Ministers in my Department. The first is the effect of inflation on GCS costs, particularly on pay, vehicles and fuel. The second is that, during this period, the GCS restructured its charges to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its full costs in 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the Government car service in 1988-89 and 1989-90; how many vehicles were in the fleet; what was the cost of the Government car service in 1980-81; and how many vehicles were in the fleet.

Mr. Baldry: In 1988-89, there were some 187 cars in the GCS fleet. During this year, the GCS was the responsibility of the Crown Suppliers—TCS—and its costs were consolidated into the TCS trading fund. Separate cost information is not readily available.

In 1989-90, there were some 189 cars in the GCS fleet. In this year, the GCS became the responsibility of the Property Services Agency and separate financial records were started for the GCS. The cost of the GCS was approximately £6·7 million.

Comparable information is not available for 1980-81.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pool cars and pool drivers were in the Government car service pool service in 1990-91; and what was the cost of the pool service.

Mr. Baldry: In 1990-91, there were some 28 cars and 24 drivers in the GCS pool. At that time, pool costs were not identified separately from other GCS costs.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes for rent are planned to be provided by the Housing Corporation in each of the next three years.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation's approved development programme provides homes for rent in two ways: new homes for rent provided by the new rental programme; and new lettings freed up through the tenants' incentive scheme and 60 per cent. of the do-it-yourself shared ownership programme which help existing housing association and local authority tenants to become full or partial owner occupiers. The Housing Corporation estimates that in the next three years, its approved development programme will provide homes for rent within the following ranges:

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
New homes for rent	37,600 to 46,000	28,700 to 35,100	23,800 to 29,200
Properties freed up by:			
Tenant's incentive scheme	6,500 to 7,500	6,500 to 7,500	6,500 to 7,500
Do-it-yourself shared ownership[1]	2,520 to 3,120	4,200 to 4,920	4,500 to 5,220
Total	46,620 to 56,620	39,400 to 47,520	34,800 to 41,920

[1] 60 per cent. of total do-it-yourself shared ownership.

Electric Cars

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department has given to the PSA (Peugeot)/City of Coventry electric car project research into the viability of a pay-as-you-drive electric car hire system.

Mr. Atkins: None.

National House Building Council

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department makes to the National House Building Council.

Sir George Young: The National House Building Council receives no financial support from the Government other than through research contracts let to the NHBC through competitive tender. The NHBC is an independent body, and the Government have no general powers to intervene in its affairs. Officials from my Department sit as observers on the NHBC council and on its standards committee.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the operation of the National House Building Council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In the past two years, the Department of the Environment has received representations concerning the National House Building Council in relation to 37 dwellings.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will conduct a review into the operation of the complaints procedure adopted by the National House Building Council.

Sir George Young: The operation of its complaints procedure is a matter for the National House Building Council.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes are covered by the Buildmark guarantee scheme operated by the National House Building Council in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Sir George Young: At the end of 1993 the total number of homes in England and Wales covered by the Buildmark guarantee scheme operated by the National House Building Council was approximately 1·53 million. Prior to 1986, the figures recorded for numbers of homes covered by the scheme did not differentiate between the member countries of the United Kingdom. It is thus not possible to give separate figures for homes under warranty in England and Wales.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many building firms participate in the Buildmark guarantee scheme operated by the National House Building Council.

Sir George Young: On 31 December 1993 there were 20,832 building firms registered with the NHBC in England and Wales.

Oil Pollution, Bournemouth

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent pollution by oil of Bournemouth's beaches; and what plans he has to investigate responsibility for this.

Mr. Atkins: Oil pollution at the tideline was found on a stretch of beach from Hengistbury head to West cliff. Mudeford harbour beaches were also affected. The local authorities cleared the oil from the beaches and a number of oiled birds were taken away for cleaning. It was not possible to identify the source responsible and no further action is, therefore, planned.

Water Abstraction

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publish information on the volume of water abstracted from rivers and boreholes

in England and Wales, and the limits in the relevant licences for such abstractions, under section 201 of the Water Industry Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Aggregate figures, by the regions of the National Rivers Authority, are published annually in the digest of environmental protection and water statistics. Under section 204 of the Water Resources Act 1991 it is an offence to disclose, without its consent, information of this kind provided by an individual or business except, inter alia, under arrangements for the publication of information about water undertakers under section 201 of the Water Industry Act 1991. I am considering whether it would be appropriate to make such arrangements.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Mr. Atkins: The JNCC is composed of an independent chairman and three independent scientists appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment; two representatives form each of the three country nature conservation bodies, one from the Countryside Commission and two non-voting representatives from Northern Ireland. The current membership of the Committee is:

Earl of Selborne—Independent Chairman
Professor John Harper—Independent Assessor
Professor John Knill—Independent Assessor
Professor Robert May—Independent Assessor
Lord Cranbrook—English Nature—Council Chairman
Dr. D. Shaw—English Nature
Mr. Magnus Magnusson—Scottish Natural Heritage—Council Chairman
Professor G. Dunnett—Scottish Natural Heritage
Mr. Michael Griffiths—Countryside Council for Wales—Council Chairman
Professor D. Bowen—Countryside Council for Wales
Sir John Johnson—Countryside Commission—Commission Chairman
Dr. J. Faulkner—Northern Ireland Observer—Non-voting—Dept. of the Environment for Northern Ireland
Professor P. Newbold—Northern Ireland Observer—Non-voting—Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, NI.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Black Country Limestone Advisory Committee.

Mr. Baldry: The Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel is chaired by Sir Edward Parkes, ScD, FIMechE, FEng, former vice-chancellor, university of Leeds. The other members are:

Professor D. I. Blockley, BEng, PhD, MICE, FIStructE, Professor and Head of Department of Civil Engineering, University of Bristol;
Professor J. B. Burland, DSc, FEng, FICE, MIStructE, Professor of Soil Mechanics in the Department of Civil Engineering, Imperial College of Science and Technology, University of London;
Mr. O. Gregory, OBE, FRICS, CEng, FIMinE, retired consultant, Minerals Manager and Chartered Surveyor;
Mr. D. A. D. Reeve, CBE, FEng, FICE, FIWES, FInstWPC, formerly a Member of and Chief Executive of the Severn Trent Water Authority;
Mr. J. Trustram-Eve, MSc(Econ), FRICS, formerly Joint Senior Partner and now Consultant to Grimley J. R. Eve, Chartered Surveyors.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the London Pensions Fund Authority.

Mr. Baldry: The members currently appointed to the London Pensions Fund Authority are:

Mr. C. J. Messer—Chairman
Mr. M. C. Roberts—Vice Chairman
Professor R. Franklin
Sir Nigel Althaus
Councillor A. King
Councillor E. D. Barkway
Councillor A. S. Lourie
Councillor S. Bullock
Ms C. Burton

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the London residuary body.

Mr. Baldry: The members currently appointed to the London residuary body are:

Sir Godfrey Taylor—Chairman
Mr. M. C. Roberts—Vice Chairman
Mr. W. J. Mackenzie
Mr. J. Wolkind

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Atkins: The members are:

Lord Crickhowell—Chairman
Mrs. R. Blomfield-Smith
Mr. P. Brandt
Lady Digby, DBE, DL
Professor R. Edwards, CBE
Mr. E. Gallacher—Chief Executive
Lord Gregson, DL
Mr. D. Mitchell
Mrs. K. Morgan
Mr. J. H. M. Norris, CBE, DL
Mr. W. Rogers-Coltman, OBE
Mr. R. J. F. Taylor
Professor R. K. Turner
Mr. J. Wheatley, CBE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Nature Conservancy Council for England, English Nature.

Mr. Atkins: The current membership of English Nature is:

Earl of Cranbrook—Chairman
Professor Jonathon Anderson
Ms Janet Barber
Professor Janet Kear
Mr. James Teacher
Mark Thomasin-Foster
Dr. Duncan Shaw
Mr. Alan Swindall
Miss Jane Kelly
Professor Chris Wilson
Earl Peel
Mr. Lindsay Waddell
Dr. Robert Chaplow
Mr. Nicholas Woolley

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Rural Development Commission.

Mr. Atkins: The current members of the Rural Development Commission are as follows:

Chairman
Lord Shuttleworth

Deputy Chairman
Mr. Robin Thompson

Members
Dame Anne Mueller
Professor Howard Newby
Dr. Barbara Marsh
Rt. Reverend Anthony Russell
Mr. Miles Middleton
Mr. Richard Best
Mr. David Fletcher
Mr. Andrew Stewart
Mrs. Jane Bradford

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on 25 November, *Official Report*, column *206*. I regret to announce that since that date Mr. Christopher Haskins, chairman and chief executive of Northern Foods, has withdrawn from the committee due to other commitments.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Atkins: The members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee are as follows:

Sir John Knill—Chairman
Director, Donaldson Associates.

Dr. Jack I. Abernethy
Member, Institute of Professionals, Managers and Specialists; Total Quality Management Co-ordinator, Thorp Division, BNFL.

Professor Gerald E. Adams
Director, Medical Research Council Radiobiology Unit, Chilton.

Dr. Helen ApSimon
Reader in Air Pollution Studies, Imperial College, London.

Professor Andrew Blowers
Professor of Social Sciences, Open University.

Professor Keith Boddy OBE
Head of Regional Medical Physics Department, Newcastle General Hospital, Northern Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Wilfred Cassidy MBE
Formerly Scientific Advisor and County Analyst, Somerset County Council.

Professor Roger H. Clarke
Director, National Radiological Protection Board; and Chairman, International Commission on Radiological Protection.

Dr. Martin Courtis
Director of Environmental Services, Carlisle City Council.

Dr. Ron H. Flowers
Nuclear Technology Consultant; formerly Chief Technologist (Nuclear), AEA Technology.

Mr. Michael Folger
Managing Director, UK Nirex Ltd.

Dr. Eleanor James
Formerly Lecturer in Mathematics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth; member of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales.

Professor Gilbert Kelling
Professor of Geology, University of Keele.

Miss Angela M. Killick
Chairperson, Enfield Community Care NHS Trust.

Dr. John McKeown
Director of Projects, Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

Mr. George J. Medley OBE
Formerly Director, World Wide Fund for Nature UK.

Dr. Les A. Mitchell
Director of Technology, Nuclear Electric plc.

Dr. William L. Wilkinson CBE
Non-Executive Director, BNFL.

Professor David R. Williams OBE
Professor of Applied Chemistry, University of Wales.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Commons Commissioners.

Mr. Atkins: Appointments to the Commons Commissioners are made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. The present appointees are:

Chief Commons Commissioner
Mr. Martin J. Roth
Commons Commissioner
Mr. I. L. R. Romeer
Commons Commissioner
Mr. D. M. Burton

Empty Homes Task Force

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many of the homes identified by the task force on empty homes have been sold to private developers;

(2) how many of the homes identified by the task force on empty homes have been made available to local authorities;

(3) how many of the homes identified by the task force on empty homes have been sold to housing associations;

(4) how many former empty homes identified by the task force are now occupied by previously homeless families.

Sir George Young: The task force on Government Departments' empty houses is expected to present its final report to Ministers shortly. I understand that the task force has agreed with the relevant Department's targets for the disposal or occupation of empty residential property. I expect the final report to include details of these targets, and of the number of properties brought back into use, but it is unlikely to identify categories of purchaser or occupier.

Air Quality

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report on air quality undertaken for him by Professor Roy Harrison.

Mr. Atkins: Shortly.

Estate Action

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what effect the transfer to the new single regeneration budget will have on the future funding of estate action schemes currently in operation;

(2) what effect the transfer to the new single regeneration budget will have on the future funding of housing action trusts currently in operation.

Sir George Young: The draft bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget, issued on 14 January, reaffirms that commitments under existing programmes, such as estate action and housing action trusts, for 1994-95 and future years will be met.

Coastal Erosion (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his departmental officials will assist the Isle of Wight's staff to prepare geological reports on the landslips and coastal stability problems on the Isle of Wight and to detail what exceptional grants may be available in view of the serious and extensive nature of the problem.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Member is aware of my Department's earlier research on landslip potential assessment in part of Ventnor and Luccombe village. This has developed the techniques which I am pleased to see that the local authority have been taking forward in extending that work to other parts of Ventnor. It is for the local authority, rather than my Department, to continue to take that work forward in respect of areas which have not yet been covered in so far as it is necessary to do so.

Any requests which may be made by Isle of Wight local authorities for special financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme in relation to the recent landslides will be considered on their merits. However, there are no other statutory means by which exceptional grants can be made available to assist in the problems now being experienced. The landslips are natural phenomena and grant aid could be considered by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food only if the prime cause were found to be coastal erosion.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider applying the Bellwin rules to the problems facing the Isle of Wight local authorities following the extensive coastal landslips.

Mr. Baldry: No applications have been received from Isle of Wight authorities for assistance under the Bellwin scheme in connection with the recent coastal landslips. Authorities have been informed that they should apply individually to the Department for assistance if they have incurred an undue financial burden as a result of dealing with an emergency. Each application which is received will be considered on its merits.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his advisers will visit the Isle of Wight to report on the extensive landslips and cliff erosion and to advise the local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: I am asking my officials to report to me on the recent landslips in the Isle of Wight within the next few weeks. I will write to the hon. Member when that report is received. However, I understand that the local authorities concerned have considerable expertise within their engineering departments and that they have also commissioned consulting engineers to advise them.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are for the Countryside Commission to send a team to the Isle of Wight to assess the loss of coastal footpaths and beach access and to see what assistance and advice they can give the island's local authorities in time for the Easter holiday visitors.

Mr. Atkins: The Countryside Commission has recently sent a team to the Isle of Wight, in the light of damage caused by the recent severe weather to the islands coastal paths and access to beaches. They discussed with council officials the possibility of assistance and the commission is now considering the council's formal application for grant aid for restoration.

Natural Habitats (Conservation)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the measures he intends to take to implement the European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora in the United Kingdom, indicating whether they will be introduced through *(a)* primary legislation, *(b)* secondary legislation, *(c)* planning guidance notes or *(d)* some other means; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government set out their proposals for implementing the EC habitats directive in the consultation paper issued on 4 October 1993, a copy of which is in the Library. Final decisions will be taken when the responses to the consultation have been fully evaluated. We propose that the necessary measures will be introduced by a combination of regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, official guidance notes and public policy statements.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to involve the voluntary nature conservation organisations in the selection of sites to be designated as special areas of conservation under the European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is the function of the statutory nature conservation agencies to advise the Government on the selection of sites for inclusion on the United Kingdom's list of candidate SACs. The voluntary nature conservation organisations will be included in the consultation process which will commence before the list is submitted to the Commission.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to restore habitats to be protected under the European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora in the United Kingdom to a favourable conservation status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The directive intends the Natura 2000 network as a whole to enable the maintenance or, where appropriate, restoration of the natural habitat types and species listed in annexes I and II to a favourable conservation status. We are engaged in discussions with the Commission and other member states about what is necessary to ensure the network achieves this. The nature conservation agencies are currently engaged in evaluating the information and data they hold to advise the Government on the United Kingdom contribution to the network.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the costs of implementing the European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora to *(a)* the United Kingdom Government and *(b)* the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Until the nature conservation agencies have completed evaluation of the information they hold and drawn up their advice to Government on candidate sites for designation under the directive, it will not be possible to make a meaningful assessment of the costs of implementing the directive.

Westminster and Wandsworth (Housing Strategies)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the housing strategy documents submitted by the City of Westminster and Wandsworth councils to his regional office for each of the past seven years.

Sir George Young: The housing strategy statements submitted by housing authorities to my Department as part of the annual housing investment programmes are placed in the Library as a matter of course. Those for Westminster and Wandsworth for each of the past seven years are already in the Library.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the forms HPI, HPI (supplement) and HP2, all revised 4/93, that were completed and submitted by the City of Westminster and Wandsworth councils to his regional office for 15 June 1993, together with the equivalent completed forms, HPI, HPI (supplement) and HP2 for each of the preceding six years.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme forms submitted each year by housing authorities to my Department are, as a matter of course, placed in the Library together with the authorities' housing strategy statements. The HIP forms for Westminster and Wandsworth for each of the past seven years are already in the Library.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals were successful in the last year for which figures are available; what percentage this represents of the total number of appeals and what were the corresponding figures 10 years ago.

Mr. Baldry: The provision of information on planning appeals is the responsibility of the planning inspectorate. I have asked the inspectorate's chief executive, Mr. Stephen Crow, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from H. S. Crow to Mr. Robert Hicks, dated 19 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the outcome of planning appeals.

The information is set out below. The latest figures available are for the financial year ended 31 March 1993. Ten years ago this information was only kept by calendar year, I have therefore provided figures covering both 1982 and 1983.

	Planning appeals allowed	*Percentage of total planning appeal decisions Per cent.*
1992-93	5,979	33·5
1982	4,003	31·0
1983	3,633	32·4

Building Regulations

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce a decision with regard to the extension of part M of the building regulations to new and existing residential property.

Mr. Baldry: At my request, the Building Regulations Advisory Committee is at present examining the desirability and practicability of extending the provisions in part M of the building regulations to new dwellings. I hope to be in a position to make a statement on this before Easter. There are no proposals to extend part M to existing dwellings.

Focsa Services (UK) Ltd.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he, or any of his Ministers or officials have had with Focsa Services (UK) Ltd. regarding compliance by councils with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has had no discussions with Focsa Services (UK) Ltd. regarding compliance by councils with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total value of compulsory competitive tendering contracts in England and Wales awarded to Focsa Service. (UK) Ltd.; how many jobs this represents; what examination he has undertaken of the financial stability of this company; what representations he has received regarding the contracts awarded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend does not require local authorities to inform him to whom CCT contracts are awarded, unless such information is requested in connection with his responsibility for investigating potential breaches of the CCT legislation. The Department does not therefore maintain a comprehensive record of either the number or the value of CCT contracts awarded to specific private sector contractors.

It is for local authorities to assess the financial and technical suitability of potential contractors, and then once a contract is awarded, to monitor the performance of contractors. Where a contractor fails to meet the conditions of a contract, an authority may terminate such a contract, but there are no requirements for my right hon. Friend to be informed.

Packaging Industry

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of his Department's expenditure on research and development was spent on the packaging industry for each year since 1980.

Mr. Atkins: My Department does not fund research which might be construed as near market research or in general on particular industries. However, packaging is an important component of the domestic waste stream and my Department sponsors a programme of research in this area, of which one example is the national household waste analysis programme, part of a series of measures designed to improve waste statistics. This project receives additional financial support from the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment, INCPEN.

Bromley Children's Homes

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his oral statement of 13 January, *Official Report,* column 350, whether the proposed review of district auditors' conduct will cover the auditor's involvement in the case of the privatisation of children's homes in Bromley.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend is not proposing to review the conduct of any individual audit or auditor; he has no role in such matters. If general lessons about the audit process are drawn to his attention in the light of a specific case, he will consider them when this can be done without prejudice to the case in question.

Council Services (Contractors)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts have been awarded to private contractors for street cleansing or refuse collections in *(a)* Brighton, *(b)* the Cotswolds, *(c)* the Derbyshire dales, *(d)* Devon, *(e)* Hinchley and Bosworth, *(f)* Stockport, *(g)* Torbay, *(h)* West Devon and *(i)* Wychavon; what has been the performance of such contractors; which contracts have been subsequently withdrawn; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend is aware that refuse collection and/or street cleansing contracts have been awarded to private contractors in the following authorities from those listed: Brighton; the Cotswolds; Hinckley; Stockport; Torbay; West Devon; and Wychavon.

Street Cleaning, Stockton

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he or his officials have had with Stockton borough council concerning its street cleaning contract; what was the outcome of those discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend gave Stockton borough council a direction on 27 July 1993, under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988, requiring the authority to retender its street cleaning work by 1 August 1994, and to seek the Secretary of State's consent by 30 April 1994 if it wished to assign the work to the authority's direct service organisation. Correspondence with the authority took place both before and after the direction was given.

Refuse Collection, Stockport

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning problems regarding refuse collection in Stockport; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has received no representations concerning problems regarding refuse collection in Stockport.

Local Government Corruption

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about local government corruption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Last month my right hon. Friend received a copy of the Audit Commission's very useful report "Protecting the Public Purse" which contains valuable guidance on the avoidance and detection of fraud and corruption in local government. I also receive representations from time to time in relation to individual cases which, where appropriate, I refer to the relevant investigating authorities as I have no responsibility for pursuing such cases myself.

Homelessness

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his consultation paper about reforming the homelessness legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have placed in the Library of the House today copies of a consultation paper setting out the Government's proposals to reform the homelessness legislation, to introduce arrangements that ensure fair access to local authority and housing association accommodation for all who need it, to make better use of the private sector, and to encourage local authorities to play a more active role in the prevention of homelessness.

The current homelessness legislation provides an important safety net for families and vulnerable individuals who find themselves at risk of losing their home. But the homelessness legislation also provides those people, once they are accepted as statutorily homeless, with access to a permanent home ahead of others in as great or greater need who are on the housing waiting list. The Government believe that there should be a distinction between providing the necessary assistance for those faced with the prospect of having nowhere to live, and providing access to permanent housing. The tenancy of a council or housing association property is a real asset. We want to ensure that these tenancies go to those with the best claim to them.

We want a fairer system, in which, while retaining essential safeguards, local authorities have the flexibility to allocate the long-term housing under their control to those with the best claim to it. Once a household has been given help in finding suitable short or medium-term accommodation, its claim to permanent housing will be assessed alongside others on the waiting list who may be living in difficult circumstances, but who are not in need of immediate help; we propose to develop a clear framework within which authorities will be able to manage their allocations.

I have also placed in the Library of the House today a newly published research report on the allocation of local authority housing. It shows clearly that those entering council housing through the homelessness route do so more quickly than those relying on the waiting list. Consequently, the homelessness route has become increasingly attractive. The housing of those accepted as statutorily homeless accounts for an ever-increasing proportion of lettings, and in some parts of the country it is now virtually impossible for anyone other than statutorily homeless households to obtain a council or housing association tenancy.

Our proposals will continue to provide for families and vulnerable individuals who are without other suitable accommodation in a crisis; it is not acceptable that such people should have nowhere to live. For some disabled,

elderly or mentally ill people, who have no prospect of ever finding accommodation for themselves, a local authority's duty to provide accommodation will be enduring.

An essential element of our strategy for meeting the needs of those who are badly housed is to make the best use of all forms of existing housing stock. This is not confined to local authority and housing association property. There is considerable scope for developing the private rented sector to meet housing needs. Our proposals therefore encourage partnerships between local authorities and private landlords in order to increase access to good quality housing in the private rented sector. We also envisage a more positive role for local authorities in ensuring the provision of housing advice that will help prevent people becoming homeless.

The Government are proposing a fairer and more effective system for meeting the housing needs of those who rely on rented housing, within the resources available. Our proposals would allow local authorities to make better use of the stock at their disposal, and end the unfairness that occurs under present arrangements.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is placing in the Library of the House a consultation paper setting out parallel proposals for Wales. He and I are sending copies of our consultation papers to all hon. Members with English or Welsh constituencies respectively. We both look forward to a constructive public debate on these proposals.

Earth Summit

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be publishing the Government's response to the agreements made at the Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992.

Mr. Gummer: We shall be publishing the sustainable development strategy for the United Kingdom on 25 January. We shall be publishing the United Kingdom's climate change programme, biodiversity action plan and forestry programme on the same day. We shall lay the documents before the House in the normal way.

Commercial Leaseholds

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to the consultation paper on commercial leaseholds; and if he will list the people or organisations concerned.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply, 15 December 1993, c. 730.]:* I am correcting the information given about the number of responses to my Department's consultation paper on commercial property leases. Some 241 individuals or organisations have responded, while a further 18 respondents have asked that their replies remain confidential. I have placed a revised list in the Library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 21 January 1994

NATIONAL FINANCE

Forward: Civil Service Catering

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has identified a prospective purchaser for Forward: Civil Service Catering.

Mr. Nelson: A number of offers were received from prospective purchasers on 17 January. I have considered these offers in consultation with KPMG Corporate Finance, the financial advisers to the privatisation, as a result of which detailed negotiations are under way with Sutcliffe Catering Group Ltd., a subsidiary of Granada Group plc, with the intention of reaching final agreement for an early completion of the sale to Sutcliffe of the business of Forward: Civil Service Catering.

Uncollected Tax

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax remained uncollected at the end of each fiscal year since 1978-79; and how much was written off in each of those years.

Mr. Dorrell: The amount of tax remaining uncollected at the end of the fiscal year and the amount of tax written off since 1978-79 are as follows:

Year	*Amount remaining uncollected at end of year in £ millions*	*Amount written off in each year in £ millions*
1979	847·3	60·3
1980	986·7	73·0
1981	1,653·6	82·5
1982	1,691·5	133·6
1983	2,052·5	146·0
1984	2,553·3	195·3
1985	3,210·1	229·1
1986	3,273·3	299·8
1987	3,841·0	333·3
1988	3,990·5	629·2
1989	3,979·8	530·9
1990	4,323·4	568·8
1991	4,185·6	883·9
1992	3,740·2	1,694·2

The amount of tax uncollected represents the amount of tax which was not collected during each year but which was available to be collected.

Tax Fraud

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many investigations were carried out for tax fraud in each year since 1978-79; and what was the success rate of those investigations.

Mr. Dorrell: Inland Revenue investigations into possible or actual tax fraud, and the percentage of those investigations which resulted in monetary settlements or recoveries of tax, are shown in the table.

Year	*Number of investigations*	*Percentage success rate*
1985-86	70,446	92·0
1986-87	67,798	92·0
1987-88	67,752	92·0
1988-89	71,085	91·0
1989-90	76,738	92·0
1990-91	81,277	92·0
1991-92	81,333	91·0
1992-93	75,649	91·0

Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Earnings Statistics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the percentage of gross earnings going in *(a)* income tax, *(b)* national insurance contributions, *(c)* VAT, *(d)* other indirect taxes and *(e)* local taxes, of (i) a single person, (ii) a married couple who are both working and (iii) a married couple with two children on (1) 50 per cent., (2) 75 per cent., (3) 100 per cent., (4) 150 per cent., (5) 200 per cent., (6) 500 per cent. and (7) 1,000 per cent. of average earnings in each year since 1978-79 including estimates for 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) on 19 January 1994 for the latest estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95. For earlier years I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 15 December 1992, *Official Report,* columns *120-26;* to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 17 December 1991, *Official Report,* columns *121-24* and on 8 January 1990, *Official Report,* columns *558-64* and to the information placed in the House of Commons Library as noted in the answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) on 13 April 1989, *Official Report,* column *624.*

Mortgages

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 2 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *115,* to take into account changes in the mortgage rate and further changes to the rate of relief announced in the autumn Budget, giving *(a)* numbers in receipt of MIRAS, *(b)* the average amount received and *(c)* the total cost (i) for 1994-95 and (ii) 1995-96, by income range as defined in the original question.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates based on the conventional assumption that mortgage interest rates remain at their current levels are in the tables.

Mortgage interest relief by range of total income[1]:

Range of total income[1] (lower limit)	*Number of single people or married couples benefiting from mortgage interest relief*	*Average mortgage interest relief*	*Cost of mortgage interest relief*
£	thousands	£	£ million
1994-95			
0	840	290	250

Range of total income[1] (lower limit)	Number of single people or married couples benefiting from mortgage interest relief	Average mortgage interest relief	Cost of mortgage interest relief
5,000	1,050	260	270
10,000	2,080	310	650
15,000	2,230	350	770
20,000	1,440	370	530
25,000	890	380	340
30,000	780	390	310
40,000	690	400	280
Total	10,000	340	3,400
1995-96			
0	830	220	180
5,000	940	200	190
10,000	1,870	250	470
15,000	2,130	290	610
20,000	1,600	300	480
25,000	920	320	290
30,000	950	320	300
40,000	860	330	280
Total	10,100	280	2,800

[1]Total income of husband for married couples

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each scheme operated by his Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury operates no such schemes.

Carbon Dioxide Energy Tax

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will discuss with the European Commission the relationship in fiscal terms of implementation of the carbon dioxide energy tax as proposed by the European Commission White Paper on employment to the yield of VAT on household fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: A Commission proposal for a tax on carbon/energy has been under discussion for some time, and was considered most recently at the ECOFIN Council in December 1993. The Government have made it clear that the United Kingdom does not need a carbon/energy tax to fulfil our obligation on CO_2 emissions under the United Nations convention on climate change, and could not agree to an EC-wide tax as proposed by the Commission.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a regional breakdown of the revenue forgone from relief for private medical insurance premiums in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) of 6 December, *Official Report*, column 16, regarding the cost of tax relief on private medical insurance, how many people are in receipt of tax relief for private medical insurance in each region.

Mr. Dorrell: No information is available on the regional breakdown of the 350,000 people claiming tax relief on private medical insurance for those aged 60 or more each year since relief was first granted in 1990-91. Similarly, there is no information on the regional breakdown on the cost of the relief.

Mr. Brian Charrington

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances all charges relating to the importation and possession of illegal drugs were withdrawn on 28 January 1993 against Mr. Brian Charrington.

Sir John Cope: Mr. Brian Charrington was arrested after consultation with the police and full consideration of the available evidence by lawyers acting for Customs and Excise. When additional evidence was forthcoming, further legal advice was sought. At this stage, it was concluded that there was no longer a realistic prospect of securing a conviction and the charges were withdrawn.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been convicted of drug offences where evidence was given on behalf of the prosecution by Mr. Brian Charrington.

Sir John Cope: Brian Charrington has never given evidence to support a prosecution by Customs and Excise.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been convicted of drug offences where assistance in the Customs and Excise investigation and detection was given by Brian Charrington.

Sir John Cope: It is not the policy of Customs and Excise to disclose sources of information. In the circumstances, I can neither confirm nor deny whether Brian Charrington has given assistance to Customs and Excise.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Ministers signed public immunity certificates in relation to Brian Charrington; and if he will make a statement as to the circumstances requiring such immunity.

Sir John Cope: No public immunity certificates have been signed by Ministers in relation to Brian Charrington.

Cocaine Seizure

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were arrested following the interception early in 1992 by Customs and Excise of ingots stored in a warehouse in Stoke on Trent of 95 per cent. pure Colombian cocaine.

Sir John Cope: Twenty-six persons were arrested by Customs and Excise and police during the investigation that followed the discovery of 907 kg of cocaine concealed in a consignment of lead ingots imported from Venezuela.

Mr. Joseph Kasser

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Ministers signed public immunity certificates in relation to the case which led to the conviction of Joseph Kasser at Newcastle Crown court in January; and if he will make a statement as to the circumstances requiring such immunity.

Sir John Cope: No public immunity certificates were signed by Ministers in this case.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Gerry Adams

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Prime Minister if a response has yet been made to the letter he received from Mr. Gerry Adams dated 7 January; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I received an unsigned letter on Mr. Adams's headed notepaper, dated 7 January 1994, last week. I have placed in the Library a copy of that letter and of a reply from my private secretary which was sent on 20 January. Mr. Adams seeks to open issues for renegotiation by pointing back to a position which he asserts the Irish Government put forward in June last year.

The joint declaration of 15 December was the result of many months of discussion between the United Kingdom and Irish Governments. It is a fair and balanced statement of constitutional principles and political realities, which safeguard the interests and aspirations of both sides of the community. As the Taoiseach and I have made clear, there can be no question of renegotiation of the joint declaration.

"Back to Basics"

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what are the implications of the Government"s "Back to Basics" policy for his office during 1994.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the scope and effectiveness of his "Back to Basics" social policy.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what working definition of "back to basics" he uses; and what he has done in the past three months to implement the policy.

The Prime Minister: "Back to basics" is intended to ensure that Government policies are based firmly on the common sense values of the British people and, in particular, that they encourage individual responsibility. The "back to basics" policy is especially important in such areas as education, law and order, and the provision of public services, but it applies across a range of other Government policies as well.

Paymaster-General

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the Departments to which the Paymaster-General has been attached since 1979.

The Prime Minister: The Departments to which the Paymaster-General has been attached are listed.

Date and Department to which responsible

April 1976 to May 1979
Department of Education and Science

May 1979 to January 1981
None

January 1981 to September 1981
None

September 1981 to June 1983
None

June 1983 to September 1984
Not applicable: post vacant

September 1984 to September 1985
None

September 1985 to June 1987
Department of Employment

June 1987 to July 1989
Her Majesty's Treasury[1,2]

July 1989 to July 1990
Her Majesty's Treasury[1]

July 1990 to November 1990
Her Majesty's Treasury[1]

November 1990 to April 1992
Northern Ireland Office

April 1992 to date
Her Majesty's Treasury[1]

Note: Except where noted, responsibility for Customs and Excise held by other Treasury Ministers.

[1] Included responsibility for Customs and Excise.

[2] Responsibility for Customs and Excise passed to the Economic Secretary in 1988.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Prime Minister what are the procedures which apply in *(a)* the United Kingdom Parliament and *(b)* the European Parliament on the ratification of the Uruguay round of the GATT.

The Prime Minister: The Government intend to present a White Paper to Parliament on the results of the Uruguay round later this year. The agreements will also be laid before Parliament, as with other international agreements. The European Community decision approving the results of the round will also be subject to United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny in the usual way. The European Parliament is likely to be consulted, but the procedure used will depend on the treaty provisions which apply.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Prime Minister whether he intends that all Secretaries of State should have a duty to comply with the requirements of the European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Secretaries of State will have duties, both general and specific, as appropriate and commensurate with the requirements of the directive.

International Year of the Family

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what steps the Government are taking to encourage and promote the International Year of the Family.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on 6 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *29-30*.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the political balance of magistrates in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster, *(c)* Rotherham, *(d)* Sheffield, *(e)* Humberside, *(f)* North Yorkshire and *(g)* West Yorkshire.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield, Humberside, North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire on the latest information available is as follows:

	Conservative	*Labour*	*Liberal Democrats*	*Independent/ Not known*
Barnsley	46	50	15	3
Doncaster	101	62	23	6
Rotherham	46	52	62	38
Sheffield	101	118	52	84
Humberside	153	73	37	49
North Yorkshire	233	62	93	29
West Yorkshire	572	397	220	163

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report". On an individual contract basis, much of the information is commercially confidential.

Legal Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost of legal aid provided to persons accused of *(a)* fraud and *(b)* theft exceeding £100,000 in each year since 1980.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information sought is not available in the form requested. It is not possible to identify individual cases involving fraud or theft exceeding £100,000. Information on legal aid expenditure by type of offence is only available for the last six years, and is set out for the more serious cases of theft and fraud prosecuted in the higher courts. It is not possible to break down legal aid expenditure in magistrates courts by type of offence.

	Theft (theft and obtaining by deception) £	*Fraud (fraud and forgery)* £
1988-89	19,839,017	6,597,099
1989-90	23,660,073	8,021,737
1990-91	26,149,491	13,477,167
1991-92	28,982,870	16,778,569
1992-93	32,490,267	28,961,611

Lord of the Manor

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the current statutory rights of holders of the title of lord of the manor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No rights are conferred by statute on any person holding the title of lord of the manor. Although certain pre-existing rights and liabilities were preserved by the Law of Property Act 1922, the nature of those rights and liabilities will depend in each case on the particular customs of the manor in question.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages (London)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average wage of *(a)* a male and *(b)* a female working in London for each year from 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is published in tables 110 and 113 of the new earnings survey part E reports for each of the years requested. Copies of these can be found in the Library.

EC Training Programmes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total budgets of the European Commission's training programmes of *(a)* CEDEFOP, *(b)* COMETT, *(c)* DELTA, *(d)* EUROTECNET, *(e)* FORCE, *(f)* IRIS, *(g)* PETRA and *(h)* TEMPUS in each year since

their establishment; and what proportion of each was granted to (i) the northern region and (ii) the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It would require disproportionate time and cost to collect the information on the total budgets of the various training programmes mentioned in each year since their establishment.

It is not possible to calculate accurately what proportion of those programmes was allocated to the United Kingdom, or to individual regions in the United Kingdom.

Where available for the programmes listed, total budgets for the preceding three years are provided in the table:

Total budget (Million ECU)

Programme name	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
CEDEFOP	10·350	10·800	12·850
COMETT	41·750	55·100	40·500
DELTA	0·900	0·120	—
EUROTECHNET	2·300	1·250	0·967
FORCE	13·850	17·500	20·300
IRIS	0·500	0·500	—
PETRA	21·100	26·500	30·700

Total funding for the TEMPUS programme in the period 1990 to 1993 was 192 million ecu.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total budget awarded under the European social fund to the European Commission's vocational training initiatives of *(a)* EUROFORM, *(b)* HORIZON and *(c)* NOW in each year since their establishment; and what was the total budget of each awarded to (i) the northern region and (ii) the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total budget from the European social fund—ESF—for EUROFORM is £218 million, for HORIZON £211 million and for NOW £109 million. These are global amounts allocated by the European Commission for the period 1991 to 1993.

The allocation in Great Britain for each initiative is £25·5 million for EUROFORM, £20 million for HORIZON and £6·3 million for NOW. The figures given relate to Great Britain. The ESF in Northern Ireland is administered separately by the Department of Economic Development.

The grants awarded to projects in the northern region amount to £920,519 for EUROFORM, £1,119,442 for HORIZON and £697,505 for NOW.

Employment Statistics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer given to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *212*, if he will give a breakdown for the same periods as in that question of the total numbers of temporary and permanent vacancies for each region by industrial classification as employed by his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Margaret Beckett, dated 21 January 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the numbers of vacancies notified from April 1987, broken down by region, industrial classification and whether temporary or permanent.

I am sorry I am unable to supply information in the form requested. Prior to April 1992, information was not collected in a way which fitted in with the sub-divisions which you are interested in. From April 1992 onwards, it has been collected but it is not collated in a way which fits your requirements. I am afraid it could only be provided at a disproportionate cost as a large number of separate returns are involved.

You may like to know that information about the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of vacancies notified to Jobcentres, covering the period April 1987 to February 1992, is held on the National On-Line Manpower Information System (NOMIS). Information for vacancies in each region by SIC is available, but it cannot be further broken down to distinguish between temporary and permanent vacancies. Information can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons library.

Similar information can be provided by the Employment Service in respect of the period from April 1992 onwards. If you would like to have this please let me know.

I hope this is helpful.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Population Projects

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the Government have for *(a)* mobilising additional resources and *(b)* involving new donor agencies in this country and in other member states in the European Union to increase official development assistance on population projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are continuing to encourage the mobilisation of additional resources for population in all appropriate international fora, including the European Community. We are making full use of the preparatory process for the international conference on population and development—taking place in Cairo in September 1994—to encourage greater commitment to population issues.

We are working with the European Commission to increase the support of other member states of the Community for population activities. We would greatly welcome the involvement of more United Kingdom non-governmental organisations in family planning and reproductive health programmes.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have for encouraging other member states in the European Union to start funding family planning and related projects as part of their development and co-operation budgets.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are playing a leading role in pressing for concrete action to result from the 1992 EC resolution on population. Officials participate in regular expert meetings in Brussels to strengthen co-operation among member states and the Commission. We are also helping the Commission to organise a seminar for EC member states and senior Commission officials on 28 February.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in her Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the second paragraph of the reply given on 20 January by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry).

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes she intends to make to the compensation arrangements for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Soames: I am proposing to modity the BSE compensation arrangments from 1 April 1994. At present under the BSE Compensation Order 1990, the amount of compensation paid for an animal which is compulsorily slaughtered because it is suspected of having BSE is subject to a ceiling based on an average market price, calculated each month from actual market prices of commecial grade. Friesian cows and heifers in milk and in calf sold in specified markets. With an increasing proportion of older cattle being slaughtered as BSE suspects, we now need to reflect this in the calculation of the compensation price. I will, therefore, be consulting interested organisations on the proposed new arrangements whereby the price of older cattle being sold for slaughter rather than for breeding would be included in the calculation of the compensation ceiling.

We propose to continue the arrangement whereby in the case of a slaughtered animal not confirmed for BSE the compensation paid would be subject to an enhanced ceiling. The new method of calculation would still result in a compensation price higher than the price the farmer would get for a dairy cow sold for meat so that farmers would not be discouraged from reporting all suspect BSE cases.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Cones Hotline

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many calls have been received by the traffic cones hotline to date; and what action his Department has taken in response to those calls.

Mr. Key: Since its introduction in June 1992 until 15 January 1994, 383 calls registered as formal inquiries have been received by the cones hotline. Inquiries which cannot be answered immediately have been followed up by the regional office responsible for the particular road scheme; and written replies have been sent, or for recent inquiries are in the process of being sent, to each caller. Until recently, other calls received by the hotline have not been recorded, but they are currently running at two to three times the number of formal inquiries about specific road works.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial commitment the Government are prepared to make to the channel tunnel rail link project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government are prepared to provide substantial financial support to the channel tunnel rail link. The precise amount required will be determined by the competition for a private sector promoter which was announced on 11 November 1993.

Transport Safety

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all organisations to which his Department sent, and from which it has received responses regarding the consultation paper on a new system for approving safety of railways and trams, together with the addresses of each such organisation.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* My Department issued 59 copies of the consultation paper to transport operators, passenger transport executives, trade unions, and manufacturers and we received 15 responses. In addition, a further 25 inquiries were received leading to nine further representations. It is not our practice to identify those organisations or individuals who respond to consultation exercises.

Noise Regulations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all organisations to which his Department sent, and from which it has received responses, regarding the consultation letter on noise insulation regulations for new railways and other guided systems, together with the addresses of each such organisation.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* My Department issued 42 copies of the consultation paper to transport operators, PTEs, trade unions, the police, magistrates and the medical profession and we received 27 responses. It is not our practice to identify those organisations or individuals who respond to consultation exercises.

Bus Services

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all organisations to which his Department sent, and from which his Department has received responses, regarding the consultation paper on a bus strategy for London, together with the addresses of each such organisation.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* In 1991 my Department issued some 2,500 copies of the consultation paper to: all London Members of Parliament; London local authorities; bus companies; trade unions; organisations representing business, freight transport operators, consumers, motorists, the disabled, public transport users; and individuals. We received 156 responses from organisations, and 49 responses from individuals. The consultation paper indicated that responses would be treated as public unless marked "confidential", and a list of those who had responded was deposited in the Library in July 1991.

RUCATSE Report

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the responses in relation to the current consultation on the report of the RUCATSE—runway capacity in the south-east—working group, will be made public; and whether a summary of the responses will be published.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 20 January 1994]:* The individual responses to the consultation on the report of the RUCATSE working group will not be published by the Government, although it will, of course, be open to respondents to make public their responses if they wish to do so. When the Government make their own response to the consultation, they will make public a summary of the responses received.

Beach Pollution

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps his Department is taking to discover the origin of oil which has recently polluted beaches in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to discover the exact nature and source of the pollution which has recently affected marine life and beaches at Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire.

Mr. Norris *[holding answers 20 January 1994]:* A small area of oil pollution measuring 2 ft wide on Amroth beach, Carmarthen bay, was first reported to the Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit on 3 January. On 4 January oil pollution in the form of tarry lumps covering four to five miles was reported at Pendine beach and the following day a "slick" two miles long and 4 yd wide was reported on the sea close to Pendine beach. The MPCU arranged for its aerial surveillance aircraft to be diverted to the area. No oil was reported at sea, and no vessels were seen in the area. MPCU has discussed the incident with Dyfed county council, who took action to clean the affected beaches. Despite prompt action to discover the source of the pollution, it has not proved possible to identify the cause.

EDUCATION

Nursery Education

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children aged three and four years were in receipt of nursery education; and what percentage of the total number of children in that age group that constituted *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in each education authority in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information about the provision of nursery education in maintained nursery and primary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1993 is shown in the table. Similar information for years 1980 to 1992 is published in statistical bulletins, copies of which are available in the Library. National results for January 1979 are shown in statistical bulletin 5/81. Information for each LEA in January 1979 is not readily available. Information on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pupils under five in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in maintained primary schools in each Local Education Authority in England
January 1993

LEA	*Pupils in Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes*[1]	*Percentage of population*
Camden	1,073	27
Greenwich	3,245	48
Hackney	2,354	39
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,521	42
Islington	1,888	40
Kensington and Chelsea	886	30
Lambeth	2,456	34
Lewisham	2,620	38
Southwark	2,948	42
Tower Hamlets	3,100	53
Wandsworth	2,356	39
Westminster[2]	1,145	33
Barking	1,797	40
Barnet	2,456	30
Bexley	1,225	20
Brent	2,527	38
Bromley	172	2
Croydon	1,431	16
Ealing	3,323	44
Enfield	1,693	23
Haringey	2,670	47
Harrow	955	18
Havering	357	6
Hillingdon	3,242	48
Hounslow	2,425	42
Kingston upon Thames	1,132	33
Merton	2,677	57
Newham	4,927	64
Redbridge	1,104	18
Richmond upon Thames	745	18
Sutton	1,711	36
Waltham Forest	2,584	40
Birmingham	10,429	35
Coventry	2,266	26
Dudley	2,951	37
Sandwell	4,681	57
Solihull	1,802	35
Walsall	4,309	60
Wolverhampton	3,780	54
Knowsley	2,556	51
Liverpool	6,181	48
St. Helens	1,655	36
Sefton	2,470	32
Wirral	2,285	25
Bolton	3,058	40
Bury	1,505	30
Manchester	7,531	57
Oldham	2,473	38
Rochdale	2,049	33
Salford	3,611	54
Stockport	1,885	25
Tameside	2,499	39
Trafford	1,988	35
Wigan	2,138	25
Barnsley	2,955	50
Doncaster	3,397	41
Rotherham	3,162	44
Sheffield	5,768	44
Bradford	6,252	43
Calderdale	1,849	34
Kirklees	4,343	41
Leeds	8,979	46
Wakefield	4,427	50
Gateshead	1,861	37
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,016	43
North Tyneside	2,672	55
South Tyneside	2,208	53
Sunderland	3,309	40
Avon	5,052	20
Bedfordshire	5,283	33
Berkshire	5,900	28
Buckinghamshire	2,683	15

LEA	Pupils in Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes[1]	Percentage of population
Cambridgeshire	2,205	12
Cheshire	5,526	21
Cleveland	9,312	57
Cornwall[3]	1,674	14
Cumbria	3,035	25
Derbyshire	9,467	39
Devon	2,790	11
Dorset	810	5
Durham	7,072	46
East Sussex52	1,465	8
Essex	2,549	6
Gloucestershire	0	0
Hampshire	1,959	5
Hereford and Worcester	1,296	7
Hertfordshire	8,409	31
Humberside	9,118	38
Isle of Wight	186	7
Kent	2,008	5
Lancashire	7,239	19
Leicestershire	5,473	22
Lincolnshire	1,431	10
Norfolk	861	5
North Yorkshire	3,713	21
Northamptonshire	2,852	17
Northumberland	3,044	40
Nottinghamshire	13,498	49
Oxfordshire	2,635	17
Shropshire	1,897	17
Somerset	322	3
Staffordshire	6,787	24
Suffolk	3,097	17
Surrey	2,860	11
Warwickshire	2,179	17
West Sussex	796	5
Wiltshire	586	4
ENGLAND	339,914	26

[1] Excludes pupils who became five years of age by 1 January 1993.
[2] Includes Corporation of London.
[3] Includes Isles of Scilly.

Parental Ballots

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was *(a)* the lowest bid and *(b)* the highest bid from companies invited to tender for the running of parental ballots over proposals for schools to move to grant-maintained status;

(2) whether he will list by registered name those companies invited to tender to conduct parental ballots over proposals for schools to move to grant-maintained status;

(3) for what period Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd. has been contracted to run parental ballots over proposals for schools to move to grant-maintained status;

(4) by what tendering process was Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd. appointed to conduct parental ballots over proposals for schools to move to grant-maintained status;

(5) when he next intends to invite tenders for the running of parental ballots over proposals for schools to move to grant-maintained status;

(6) what is the scale of charges made to his Department by Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd. for running parental ballots over proposals for schools to move to grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Education Reform Act 1988 gave parents the right to vote on whether their children's school should become grant maintained. The Electoral Reform Society's company, Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd., is the body currently prescribed in regulations to make the necessary arrangements for ballots of parents on the question of whether schools should apply for grant-maintained status. The Electoral Reform Society has had this function since 1988.

Following implementation of the parts of the Education Act 1993 which streamline the arrangements for schools to acquire grant-maintained status, the Department is reviewing details of the balloting arrangements and considering seeking tenders for future contracts for balloting services.

Charging arrangements between the Department and Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd. are commercial in confidence.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the information held by his Department on the typical cost to schools of holding parental ballots on proposals to move to grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: A small survey undertaken by the Department last year indicated that the governing body of an average-sized primary school typically spends approximately £900 and the governors of an average secondary school approximately £1,500 in the process of applying for grant-maintained status. Most of this is spent on providing information for parents, including in meeting the statutory requirement to place a summary statement about proposals to become GM in a local newspaper.

From 1 January 1994, governing bodies of schools in the process of balloting for GM status or preparing statutory proposals may apply to the Department for a grant to help cover the expenses incurred.

Bentley Drive Primary School

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what current financial difficulties prevent a purpose-built block to be built at the Bentley Drive primary school, Walsall to replace the mobile classrooms.

Mr. Forth: Decisions on capital spending at a county school such as this are entirely a matter for the Walsall local education authority.

Teacher Training

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students were recruited to courses of initial teacher training in 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: A survey undertaken by my Department shows that 29,266 students entered courses of initial teacher training in universities and colleges in England this autumn, some 5 per cent. above target. I have placed a copy of the survey report in the Library.

Compared to 1992-93, recruitment to primary ITT courses fell by 5 per cent., to 15,775, and recruitment to secondary courses increased by 5 per cent., to 13,491. These figures reflect the pattern of intake targets for 1993-94 adopted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England—HEFCE—at the request of the Secretary of State.

Of the main secondary shortage subjects, mathematics increased recruitment by 4 per cent. to 1,769, science by

10 per cent. to 2,373 and modern languages by 13 per cent. to 1,542. English, religious education and music also increased recruitment, but technology fell by 7 per cent. to 2,057.

The survey did not cover distance learning PGCE courses at the Open university and ITT courses by consortia of schools and city technology colleges, which are being run for the first time this academic year. These courses are expected to recruit 1,220 and 220 students respectively, including 115 in technology under the CTC trust's smallpiece programme.

Taken together, this means that overall intakes for each of the secondary shortage subjects—mathematics, science, modern languages and technology—are higher this academic year than in 1992-93.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Asbestos Pollution

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General what discussions he has had with Lloyd's about outstanding and impending compensation claims for asbestos pollution from companies; and what assessment he has made of the prospects for compensation claims for mesothelima.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

Underwriters at Lloyd's are required to maintain assets estimated to be sufficient to meet all liabilities arising from valid claims that may arise from current and past policies. In accordance with the Insurance Companies Act 1982, the adequacy of these reserves is certified annually by auditors, in accordance with rules approved by the Secretary of State. This process was successfully completed last summer for the year ended December 1992. The basis of reserving is reviewed annually, and it has recently been approved for the accounts to be submitted later this year.

ENVIRONMENT

Tenant Incentive Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many tenant incentive schemes grants have gone to people moving to homes overseas;

(2) if he will list by country to which they moved the number of tenant incentive grant schemes going to tenants who have bought properties overseas.

Sir George Young: The information requested, based on returns to the Housing Corporation, for 1992-93 and 1993-94 to 17 January 1994 is as follows:

	Number
1992-93	
Australia	2
Canada	2
Chile	6
Colombia	2
Cyprus	6
Egypt	1
Eire	34
France	6
Ghana	3
Gibraltar	2
Guyana	2
India	1
Jamaica	7
Malaysia	1
Malta	2
New Zealand	1
Poland	1
Portugal	2
Spain	6
St. Lucia	1
Turkey	1
Uganda	1
USA	2
Unspecified	18
TOTAL	110
1993-94 (to 17 January 1994)	
Antigua	1
Australia	3
Barbados	1
Boliva	1
Colombia	2
Cyprus	2
Egypt	1
Eire	31
France	2
Germany	1
Ghana	2
Gibraltar	1
India	1
Iran	1
Jamaica	3
Mauritius	1
Nigeria	1
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Seychelles	1
Spain	6
Sri Lanka	1
St. Lucia	1
Trinidad	2
USA	3
Unspecified	20
TOTAL	91

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are the members currently appointed to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution.

Mr. Atkins: Current members of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution are:

Sir John Houghton—*Chairman*
Sir Geoffrey Allen
Professor Henry Charnock
Professor Dame Barbara E. Clayton
Mr. Henry R. Fell
Mr. Peter R. A. Jacques
Professor John H. Lawton
Professor R. B. Macrory
Professor J. G. Morris
Mr. Donald A. D. Reeve
Emma Rothschild
Professor Z. A. Silberston
The Earl of Selborne

Government Offices

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of Government office accommodation in *(a)* the SW1 postage district of London and *(b)* the remainder of the United Kingdom is now vacant; and what is the estimated annual net cost of these vacancies.

Mr. Baldry: Office accommodation for general government use is managed on the common user estate. Including properties undergoing refurbishment, 5·8 per cent. is vacant in SW1 at an estimated cost in 1993-94 of £4·9 million. In the remainder of the United Kingdom, 9·6 per cent. is vacant at an estimated cost in 1993-94 of £51· 9 million.

National House Building Council

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent to which the interest of consumers is being met by the National House Building Council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: This is a matter for the council itself, which is an independent body. A number of consumer interest groups are represented on both the council and its standards committee and are therefore able to influence the standards set.

Estate Action

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the estate action schemes currently in operation which have projected spend estimates beyond 1995-96.

Sir George Young: Of the estate action schemes given full approval on or before 4 January 1994, the following have projected spend estimates beyond 1995-96:

Local Authority	*Estate/Scheme*
Barnet	Grahame Park—phase 3
Birmingham	Ladywood—phase 2
Birmingham	Newtown—phase 2
Birmingham	The Firs—phase 4
Blackburn	Bennington Street
Bradford	Canterbury
Bristol	Barton Hill
Bristol	Lawrence Weston/Orlebar Gardens
Burnley	Trafalgar Gardens
Carlisle	Botcherby
Cheltenham	St. Pauls
Chester	Poet's Corner—phase 2
Darlington	Skerne Park
Derby	Austin
Derby	Harvey Road
Doncaster	Stainforth—phase 3
East Yorkshire	South Back Lane
Great Yarmouth	Middlegate
Hackney	Clapton Park—phase 4
Hackney	Holly Street
Hackney	Trowbridge
Haringey	Broadwater Farm—phase 3
Harrogate	Broadacres
Hounslow	Highfield
Hull	The Garths
Knowsley	Kirby
Knowsley	Lickers Lane
Lambeth	Penwith Manor
Lambeth	Thorlands
Lambeth	Myatts Field
Lewisham	Evelyn
Lewisham	Milton Court—phase 1
Lewisham	Pepys
Liverpool	Belle Vale
Liverpool	Dingle
Liverpool	Dovecot/Baycliffe and Southdene
Liverpool	Netherley
Liverpool	Norris Green/Sedgemoor
Liverpool	Norwood
Manchester	Benchill North—phase 2
Manchester	Monsall
Manchester	Newbank Street
North Tyneside	Meadowell—phases 1 and 2
Nottingham	Bridgeway/The Meadows
Nottingham	St. Anns
Preston	Callon—phase 2
Redbridge	Tiptree/Clayhall Avenue
Rochdale	College Bank—phase 2
Salford	Amersham Street
Salford	Ordsall—phase 4
Southwark	Gloucester Grove—phase 6
St. Helens	Peasley View
Tower Hamlets	Watney Market
Vale Royal	Over/St. Johns Gardens

Tenant Management Organisation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those tenants and residents associations which received grant to develop a tenant management organisation in 1992-93, showing for each *(a)* the value of the grant in 1992-93, *(b)* the aggregate value of any previous grants and the years in which they have been paid, *(c)* the value of any grant paid in 1993-94, *(d)* the local authority, *(e)* what organisations are advising the association, *(f)* what progress has been made towards the successful establishment of a tenant manager co-operative or estate management board and *(g)* when the activity was first brought to the Department's attention.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows:

Tenants' organisation	Authority	[1]Agency	Units	[2]Start date	[3]Progress	Development cost Total £	[4]1991-92 £	1992-93 £	1993-94 £	[5]EMB	[6]TMC
Abbey Road	Camden	(None)	279	May 1992	June 1992	22,186	22,186	0	0	—	1
Agar Grove	Camden	CATCH	247	January 1994		7,692	0	0	7,692	—	1
Alderwood	Langbaurgh	BOW	20	TD	September 1992	13,900	13,900	0	0	—	1
Alpha	Sheffield	YCHS	255	TD		5,913	0	0	5,913	—	1
Angell Town	Lambeth	PEP	844	August 1991		52,750	21,011	31,739	0	1	—
Arica Co-op	Southwark	HEXAGON	82	April 1992		25,118	0	8,713	16,405	—	1
Ashb'ne and Buxton	Trafford	TPAS	118	October 1993		8,580	0	0	8,580	—	1
Atholl and Braemar	Westminster	PIC SERVS	42	November 1992		24,073	0	10,585	13,488	—	1
Bancroft	Tower Hamlets	SOLON CHS	628	September 1990		19,898	19,898	0	0	—	1
Berryfields	North Cornwall	CPT	273	July 1993		11,957	0	0	11,957	1	—
Bethnal Green	Tower Hamlets	PCHA	158	January 1994		4,726	0	0	4,726	—	1
Birch Green	West Lancashire	PEP	1,175	June 1993		24,023	0	0	24,023	1	—
Blackbrook	Warrington	PEP	809	November 1992		40,767	0	12,838	27,929	1	—
Botcherby	Carlisle	BOW	539	April 1992		35,323	0	24,041	11,282	1	—
Boulter Crescent	Oadby/Wigston	LHA	140	January 1994		4,875	0	0	4,875	—	1
Broadwater Farm	Haringey	P W'HSE/T A	1,063	June 1993		27,174	0	0	27,174	1	—
Browning	Southwark	CHURCH	433	TD		26,394	16,435	9,959	0	1	—
Brunshaw	Burnley	PEP	1,904	May 1993		31,917	0	0	31,917	1	—
Burrows St/Green L	Walsall	BCHS	259	June 1992		29,315	0	18,290	11,025	—	1
Carol Street	Camden	(None)	36	January 1992	June 1992	10,662	10,662	0	0	—	1
Carrbrook	Manchester	CHS (NW)	127	TD	February 1993	9,806	9,806	0	0	—	—
Cartergate	Nottingham	LFHS	52	TD	February 1992	10,146	10,146	0	0	—	1
Chalkhill	Brent	TPAS	1,800	April 1992		53,089	0	29,536	23,553	1	—
Chelsea Manor CT	RBKC	PEP	83	Failed		9,776	0	9,776	0	—	—
Chuckery	Walsall	BCHS	213	September 1992		25,755	22,397	3,358	0	—	1
Church Court	Bradford	YCHS	32	April 1992	In abeyance	21,892	0	17,006	4,886	—	1
Clapton Park	Hackney	PEP	1,594	January 1992		60,255	8,122	31,363	20,770	1	—
Claybrow	West Lancashire	CDS (LIV)	512	July 1992		35,324	0	9,697	25,627	—	1
Cleveland Est	Tower Hamlets	TENANT	287	April 1993		20,632	0	0	20,632	—	1
Colesborne	Liverpool	PEP	1,173	January 1994		10,113	0	0	10,113	1	—
Colwell Action G P	Liverpool	CDS (LIV)	340	July 1992		30,462	0	17,147	13,315	—	1
Cottington Close	Lambeth	SLFHA	227	November 1992		25,730	0	9,598	16,132	—	1
Cowley	Lambeth	SLFHA	515	April 1993		21,025	0	0	21,025	—	1
Cranbrook	Tower Hamlets	HEXAGON	435	August 1993		14,626	0	0	14,626	—	1
Crusader	Lewisham	CHISEL	156	April 1991		28,490	17,105	11,385	0	—	1
De Beauvoir	Hackney	PEP	877	January 1992		47,821	3,656	26,317	17,848	1	—
Digby Greenways	Tower Hamlets	HEXAGON	890	April 1993		18,632	0	0	18,632	1	—
Ewart Road	Lewisham	HEXAGON	182	TD		1,590	1,590	0	0	—	1
Fenside	Boston	LHA	955	April 1993		21,059	0	0	21,059	1	—
Field Bottoms	Hyndeburn	PEP	525	October 1993		11,489	0	0	11,489	1	—
Five Ways	Lewisham	CHISEL	181	March 1993		26,802	0	5,809	20,993	—	1
Gascoyne	Hackney	CHURCH	243	Failed		28,905	0	19,594	9,311	1	—
Gloucester Grove	Southwark	TIDE	714	April 1993		36,422	0	0	36,422	1	—
Godwin/Crowndale	Camden	PEP	173	July 1990	June 1992	13,516	13,516	0	0	—	1
Goscote	Walsall	PEP	422	October 1993		13,706	0	0	13,706	1	—
Greave Estate	Rochdale	TPAS	268	April 1993		18,610	0	0	18,610	—	1
Halton Moor	Leeds	PEP	1,319	November 1991	July 1993	26,912	26,912	0	0	1	—
Harford House	Westminster	PIC SERVS	104	April 1993		24,562	0	0	24,562	—	1
Haslingden	Rossendale	PEP	1,461	April 1992	July 1992	33,927	33,927	0	0	1	—
Higginshaw Village	Oldham	PEP	339	October 1991	November 1993	33,790	11,327	18,522	3,941	1	—
Holland Rise	Lambeth	PEP	94	June 1992		22,626	0	18,788	3,838	—	1
Holland Town	Lambeth	SLFHA	300	January 1993		22,729	0	5,645	17,084	—	1
Hollin	Rochdale	PEP	1,200	September 1990	May 1993	30,698	30,698	0	0	1	—
Holts Village	Oldham	CHS (NW) (Local	925	April 1992		46,108	0	33,750	12,358	1	—
Hornsey Lane	Islington	Authority)	173	April 1990	August 1992	13,139	13,139	0	0	1	—
Ironbridge	Liverpool	CDS (LIV)	227	July 1993		14,893	0	0	14,893	1	—
Kennington Park House	Southwark	HEXAGON	40	TD	April 1992	15,803	15,803	0	0	—	1
Kilburn Square	Camden	CATCH	268	July 1991		28,056	21,488	6,568	0	—	1
Kingsmead	Hackney	PEP	976	July 1992		45,349	0	12,452	32,897	1	—
Lancaster West	RBKC	PEP	829	July 1991	August 1993	43,208	20,542	20,547	2,119	1	—
Langridge	Middlesbrough	BOW	60	TD	December 1993	4,997	4,997	0	0	—	1
Leather Market Gardens	Southwark	TPAS	1,659	October 1993		27,740	0	0	27,740	1	—
Lillestone	Westminster	PPCR	73	November 1993		6,870	0	0	6,870	1	—
Lockner	Hackney	FED HACK	186	April 1993		19,649	0	0	19,649	—	1
Loggans	Penwith	CPT	97	April 1993		15,706	0	0	15,706	1	—
Magdalen	Lambeth	SOLON W	126	March 1993		26,276	0	1,000	25,276	—	1
Maiden Lane	Camden	PEP	479	July 1990	May 1992	19,794	19,794	0	0	—	1
Menzies	Liverpool	CDS (LIV)	265	August 1993		14,460	0	0	14,460	1	—
Mowmacre	Leicester	PEP	1,079	June 1992	In abeyance	47,715	0	22,821	24,894	1	—
New Park Village	Wolverhampton	(None)	415	July 1992	December 1992	26,055	15,286	10,769	0	—	1
Nightingale CR	Bromley	CHISEL	34	TD		13,169	13,169	0	0	—	1
North Garths	Hull	TPAS	1,082	December 1993		11,689	0	0	11,689	1	—
North Peckham	Southwark	PEP	1,429	October 1991	In abeyance	54,350	18,206	36,144	0	1	—
Old/New Loughborough	Lambeth	PEP	1,209	August 1991		48,703	22,675	26,028	0	1	—
Oslo Court	Merton	SOLON W	16	TD	In abeyance	11,423	11,423	0	0	—	1
Parc Mellan	Penwith	CPT	39	April 1993		11,928	0	0	11,928	1	—
Park View	Tower Hamlets	HEXAGON	307	June 1993		12,416	0	0	12,416	1	—
Parkwood Rise	Bradford	YCHS	192	October 1991		26,446	6,065	20,381	0	—	1

Tenants' organisation	Authority	[1]Agency	Units	[2]Start date	[3]Progress	Development cost Total £	[4]1991-92 £	1992-93 £	1993-94 £	[5]EMB	[6]TMC
Pembroke Res	Plymouth	DEVON CDA	153	October 1992		34,244	0	14,046	20,198	1	—
Perronet	Southwark	TIDE	102	April 1993		29,654	0	0	29,654	—	1
Pinehurst	Liverpool	CDS (LIV)	750	August 1993		18,243	0	0	18,243	1	1
Pleck	Walsall	BCHS	434	October 1992		32,278	0	11,246	21,032	1	—
Ridings Way	Bradford	YCHS	134	April 1992		24,711	0	24,711	0	—	1
Rossmere	Middlesbrough	BOW	35	April 1993		17,165	0	0	17,165	—	1
Rothbury Road	Middlesbrough	BOW	16	June 1991	December 1993	13,800	13,800	0	0	—	1
Saint Georges	Southwark	TIDE	567	April 1993		33,503	0	0	33,503	1	—
Saint Giles	Lincoln	LHA	1,383	October 1993		14,728	0	0	14,728	1	—
Saint Marks	Leicester	LHA	439	April 1992		49,200	19,805	11,023	18,372	1	—
Saint Pancras Court	Camden	CATCH	49	April 1992	[illegible]1992	22,874	22,874	0	0	—	1
Saint Pauls	Cheltenham	CHURCH	274	October 1992		22,451	0	11,195	11,256	1	—
Samuda	Tower Hamlets	PEP	505	May 1990	February 1993	16,754	16,754	0	0	1	—
Sandbank	Birmingham	BCHS	253	April 1993		23,169	0	0	23,169	—	1
Scotland Gate	Carlisle	BOW	265	March 1993		31,069	0	9,011	22,058	—	1
South Bank	Langbaurgh	PEP	865	July 1990	September 1992	20,435	3,080	17,355	0	1	—
South Hornsey	Haringey	PEP	668	July 1993		18,720	0	0	18,720	1	—
Springfield Horseshoe	Wolverhampton	PARTNERS IC	128	October 1992		32,191	0	16,931	15,260	—	1
Staincliffe	Kirklees	PEP	628	September 1990	July 1992	27,875	27,875	0	0	1	—
Stamford Hill	Hackney	PPCR	460	September 1993		19,224	0	0	19,224	1	—
Stockwell Park	Lambeth	SOLON W	998	May 1993		28,551	0	0	28,551	1	—
Suffolk Estate	Hackney	FED HACK	259	February 1993		27,095	0	3,094	24,001	—	1
Sutton Park 'A'	Birmingham	(Self)	250	April 1992		26,644	0	13,238	13,406	—	1
Tabard Gardens	Southwark	TENANT ACT	1,433	November 1991		81,673	10,790	43,954	26,929	—	1
Tanhouse	West Lancashire	BCHS	533	April 1993	October 1992	28,958	0	0	28,958	1	—
Tanner House	Southwark	PEP	25	July 1993		17,827	0	0	17,827	—	1
Thorlands	Lambeth	PEP	403	July 1993		15,776	0	0	15,776	1	—
Triangle	Bradford	TPAS	255	July 1993		14,704	0	0	14,704	—	1
Trowbridge	Hackney	TENANT ACT	555	January 1992		26,873	3,965	16,433	6,475	—	1
Tustin	Southwark	PEABODY	476	April 1992		33,960	0	25,119	8,841	1	—
Walpole	Greenwich	TENANT ACT	87	September 1993		13,677	0	0	13,677	1	—
Warwick Crescent	Westminster	PIC SERVS	25	December 1992		23,983	0	8,019	15,964	—	1
West Houghton	Bolton	CHS (NW)	534	June 1992		31,391	0	24,805	6,586	1	—
West View	Wyre	PEP	843	October 1991		44,049	10,624	21,467	11,958	1	—
Weston Rise	Islington	SNU	147	April 1993		24,878	0	0	24,878	1	—
Whitworth Valley	Rossendale	PEP	827	July 1990	July 1992	26,165	26,165	0	0	1	—
Woolwich CRA	Greenwich	PEP	1,220	Failed		49,677	26,645	23,032	0	1	—
Wyke	Hackney	FED HACK	415	February 1993		11,863	0	3,333	8,530	—	1
Wyncote	Hartlepool	BOW	15	June 1991		18,987	13,404	5,583	0	—	1
TOTALS	119		56,690			2,893,121	671,662	843,761	1,337,698	59	57

[1] Agency name abbreviations:

BCHS	Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services.
BOW	Bank of the Wear (CHS) Ltd.
CATCH	Catch Ltd.
CDS (LIV)	Co-operative Development Services (Liverpool).
CHISEL	Community Housing in South East London.
CHS (NW)	Community Housing Services (North West).
CHURCH	English Churches Housing Group.
CPT	Community Projects Trust.
DEVON CDA	Devon Co-operative Development Agency
FED HACK	Federation of Hackney Tenants.
HEXAGON	Hexagon Housing Association.
LFHS	Leicester Federation of Housing Services.
LHA	Leicester Housing Association.
P W'HSE/T A	Price Waterhouse/Tenant Action Ltd.
PARTNERS I C	Partners In Change Ltd.
PCHA	Paddington Churches Housing Association.
PEABODY	Peabody Trust.
PEP	Priority Estates Project.
PIC SERVS	PIC Services.
PPCR	PPCR Associates.
SLFHA	South London Family Housing Association.
SNU	Safe Neighbourhoods Unit.
SOLON CHS	Solon Community Housing Services.
SOLON W	Solon Wandsworth Housing Association.
TENANT ACT	Tenant Action Ltd.
TIDE	Tenant Initiatives Development Services Ltd.
TPAS	Tenant Participation Advisory Service.
YCHS	Yorkshire Community Housing Services.

[2] Start date refers to the date on which a tenant management development programme began. TD refers to those developments which commenced under previous grant arrangements.

[3] Date is that on which a tenant management organisation's management agreement received the Secretary of State's approval. Where a date does not appear, this indicates that development is continuing.

[4] Information from previous years is not readily available.

[5] Estate management boards.

[6] Tenant management co-operatives.

Housing Associations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are *(a)* the budget and *(b)* the staff available to the housing associations' ombudsman service from the Housing Corporation for (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1994-95 and (iii) 1995-96.

Sir George Young: The ombudsman service for housing association tenants became operational in November 1993. The operating budget is as follows:

	1993-94 £'000	*1994-95 £'000*	*1995-96 £'000*
Staff Costs	150	227	227
Non-Staff Costs[1]	79	145	143
Mediation/Legal Other Operational Costs	103	123	110
	332	495	480

[1] In 1993-94, there was an additional sum of £24,000 to set up premises.

The total staffing complement available to the ombudsman service is seven.

Council Tenants

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he proposes to introduce to make it easier for local authorities to take action against council tenants displaying anti-social behaviour.

Sir George Young: Local authorities currently have a range of measures at their disposal to tackle anti-social behaviour. We have asked the local authority associations to let us know how their members are dealing with this problem and whether they think that there are any constraints on their ability to do the job effectively. We shall review the position in the light of the associations' response.

Pennine Bridleway

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision regarding the Pennine bridleway national trail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Countryside Commission published its supplementary report to the Secretary of State on 1 July 1993, outlining revised proposals for the bridleway. I am presently considering the matter and I expect to announce my decision shortly.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those district councils whose provisional increase in their standard spending assessment between 1993-94 and 1994-95 is greater than 10 per cent.

Mr. Baldry: Those authorities with a provisional increase in their standard spending assessments of more than 10 per cent. in 1994-95 are listed in descending order.

List of District Councils with a provisional increase in SSA of more than 10 per cent.

Local authority	*Percentage change*
Brentwood	35·9
Tewkesbury	29·6
South Bucks	28·3
North East Derbyshire	25·8
Ashfield	24·8
East Dorset	23·4
Three Rivers	23·4
Blyth Valley	22·6
Basildon	22·3
South Oxfordshire	22·2
Broxbourne	22·1
Welwyn Hatfield	22·0
Mole Valley	22·0
South Staffordshire	21·7
Epping Forest	20·7
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	20·5
Taunton Deane	19·2
Sevenoaks	18·8
Mansfield	18·7
Holderness	18·7
Halton	18·6
Runnymede	18·4
Thurrock	18·3
Wansbeck	17·9
Chiltern	17·7
Hereford	17·7
Eastleigh	17·6
Christchurch	17·5
Copeland	16·7
East Hertfordshire	16·7
Tamworth	16·6
Bolsover	16·5
Adur	16·4
Chesterfield	16·4
Durham	16·3
Rochford	16·2
Crawley	16·1
Lewes	16·0
Restormel	15·8
Hertsmere	15·7
Uttlesford	15·6
Berwick-upon-Tweed	15·5
Stockton-on-Tees	15·3
Rushcliffe	15.0
East Yorkshire	14·8
Chester-le-Street	14·7
Colchester	14·4
Test Valley	14·3
Harlow	14·3
North Kesteven	14·3
Ryedale	14·2
Lichfield	13·9
South Wight	13·8
Scarborough	13·8
Bromsgrove	13·7
Stratford-on-Avon	13·7
Caradon	13·6
Derwentside	13·4
Charnwood	13·3
Canterbury	12·9
Salisbury	12·8
Ba[illegible]tlaw	12·7
[illegible] Sussex	12·5
[illegible]dgefield	12·4
Winchester	12·3
West Dorset	12·3
Wealden	12·2
Dartford	12·2
Tendring	12·1
Gosport	12·1
North West Leicestershire	12·1
Scunthorpe	12·0
Wychavon	11·9
Amber Valley	11·9
Allerdale	11·8

Local authority	Percentage change
Eastbourne	11·7
Lancaster	11·7
South Bedfordshire	11·7
Surrey Heath	11·6
Vale of White Horse	11·5
West Lancashire	11·2
Wyre Forest	11·2
Stevenage	11·1
Chelmsford	11·1
Great Grimsby	11·1
Mid Bedfordshire	10·8
North Cornwall	10·7
Rutland	10·7
Richmondshire	10·7
Purbeck	10·6
Middlesbrough	10·5
Kennet	10·5
West Lindsey	10·5
Glanford	10·3
Worcester	10·2
Cotswold	10·1
Castle Morpeth	10·1
East Lindsey	10·0
Lincoln	10·0

Housing (Westminster)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the figures for council house voids, as a percentage of its total housing stock, submitted to his Department by Westminster city council for each year since 1985.

Sir George Young: The percentage of their own dwellings that Westminster city council reported on its annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns as vacant at 1 April in the years 1985 to 1993 were as follows:

	Per cent.
1985	3·6
1986	3·2
1987	2·8
1988	4·0
1989	5·6
1990	3·4
1991	2·9
1992	1·8
1993	2·0

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, with appropriate dates, the chief housing officers and the housing committee chairmen who have served on the City of Westminster council since 1 April 1985.

Sir George Young: This is a matter for Westminster city council.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the amount of capital receipts spent by local authorities since the relaxation of rules concerning such receipts *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each local authority.

Mr. Baldry: Under the temporary relaxation in the rules, local authorities can spend 100 per cent. of virtually all capital receipts received during the period from 13 November 1992 to 31 December 1993. The receipts can be spent at any time. The information which authorities provide to my Department on the spending of their usable capital receipts relates to financial years; I am arranging for their latest returns to be placed in the Library of the House. On the basis of these returns, authorities provisionally estimated spending of usable capital receipts of about £1 billion in 1992-93 and are forecasting spending of £1·8 billion in 1993-94. It is not possible for my Department to estimate the proportion of these totals relating to receipts received during the relaxation of the rules.

Right-to-Buy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority-owned houses and flats have been sold since the introduction of right to buy in each housing authority in England and Wales.

Sir George Young: A table showing the available information on total right-to-buy sales for each English local authority for every financial year since 1980 and a cumulative total to September 1993 was recently placed in the Library. In addition, the table also gives data on total sales and on the number of flats sold.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to the Secretary of State for Wales.

Council House Sales

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which councils are currently implementing a designated council house sales policy of the type described by the district auditor in his report on Westminster city council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Department does not collect information on voluntary sales undertaken by local authorities in a way which would permit the identification of policies of the type mentioned.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish consultation drafts of the statutory instruments which will implement the compulsory competitive tendering of housing management for consultation.

Sir George Young: On 26 November, I announced—*Official Report,* columns *264-65*—how the Department proposed to proceed with the implementation of compulsory competitive tendering of housing management. My announcement followed detailed consultation with local authorities and their representatives. I am today publishing drafts of the orders and regulations which will put these proposals into effect.

I am also publishing today draft guidance for local authorities designed to avoid anti-competitive behaviour. The guidance seeks to ensure that authorities can continue to deliver comprehensive and estate-based housing services and at the same time ensure that there is free and fair competition for their delivery. The wide-ranging guidance is designed to balance the needs of housing authorities and contractors, and to safeguard the interests of tenants.

Copies of all these documents are being sent to each local housing authority in England. Local authorities and others have until 4 March to let the Department have their views on these documents. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what advice he proposes to give local authorities on the handling of issues related to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 in relation to compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: Today my Department has written to all local authority chief executives enclosing an issues paper on the handling of TUPE issues in relation to compulsory competitive tendering. This follows consultation with representatives of the local authority associations and industries engaged in CCT contracting.

The paper covers, among other matters, the approach which authorities should adopt in relation to: requests for indemnities; the provision of information to contractors about workforce matters; delay to the CCT timetable; the treatment of tenders where there is a disagreement on the applicability of TUPE; and the evaluation of tenders.

The paper also indicated that Department of the Environment circular 10/93 will be amended to provide that local authorities may give a preliminary view of the likelihood of TUPE applying to a contract.

The paper deals with matters of the handling of TUPE-related issues. As regards the substantive issue of whether or not TUPE applies to a particular contract, the position remains that this depends on the detailed facts of each case, as set out in the guidance which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster issued on 11 March last year.

I have today placed a copy of the letter to chief executives and the paper in the Library.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has decided to issue the paper to local authorities in Wales. The Welsh Office has today written to all local authority chief executives in Wales enclosing the paper and indicating that Welsh Office circular 40/93 will be amended in line with DOE circular 10/93.

The Government's view on pension rights in relation to TUPE and market testing of services is set out in "The Government's Guide to Market Testing" published by the Office of Public Services and Science efficiency unit in July 1993, paragraph 5.18. In my discussions, a number of industry organisations have commented on the matter of pensions rights in relation to CCT. I am considering these comments and I will issue further advice on this matter as appropriate.

Flagship Business Park, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he has used to choose the site of the Flagship business park in Nottinghamshire outlined in "Prospects for Coal"; when he will announce this site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* Following the announcement of the intention to establish a Flagship business park in the Nottingham area by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 25 March 1993, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Local Government announced on Tuesday 18 January 1994 that four sites have been selected in the east midlands for designation as enterprise zones. This is subject to the agreement of the European Commission.

The sites have been chosen in areas where the work force has been directly affected by colliery closures, having regard to the need to strike a balance between those sites likely to attract development and generate jobs quickly and those which will make a significant contribution to the reclamation and regeneration of the area.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sports Council

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will report on his consultations with the Sports Council GB following his statement of 9 July 1993, *Official Report,* column *599;* and on what date he expects to announce his fresh proposals.

Mr. Brooke: Discussions with the Sports Council and other interested parties are continuing. I expect to announce fresh proposals for reorganisation around Easter.

Commonwealth Games 2002

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration and representations his Department has undertaken regarding the impact of a common visa list with other EC states on the Commonwealth games in 2002 in either Sheffield, London and Manchester; and if he will make a statement before the venue is announced.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

None. It is too early to say what visa requirements will be in place in 2002.

WALES

Grant-maintained Schools Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance he has granted to the Welsh grant-maintained schools centre in High Wycombe with respect to its activities in granted to the centre; what assistance in kind has been granted to the centre; what proposals he has for further grant in aid; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The grant-maintained schools centre at High Wycombe provides a service for schools in both England and Wales. For the current financial year, the Department has offered a grant of up to £40,000 in respect of advice the centre offers to schools in Wales both prior to and after their incorporation as grant-maintained schools. In addition, the GMSC has been involved in the arrangement of three conferences on grant-maintained status. Details of the costs have yet to be finalised. No assistance in kind has been granted to the GMSC.

No decisions have been taken concerning future levels of Government funding.

Urban Investment Grant

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members of the independent panel of professional advisers who advise on urban investment grants applications above £250,000.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The membership of the urban investment grant appraisal panel is detailed in the publication "Public Bodies: Appointments made by the Secretary of State for Wales".

A copy of this publication has been placed in the Library of the House.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of NHS ambulance trusts about early retirement entitlement for ambulance drivers, control room staff and management aged over 55 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. My right hon. Friend is considering what arrangements might be introduced to facilitate the early retirement of long-serving ambulance staff in Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the rationalisation of the ambulance service in Wales; and what representations he has received on proposed alterations affecting boundaries, numbers of control rooms and senior management personnel required to maximise efficiency in the service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Proposals for the rationalisation of ambulance services in Wales are provided by the services themselves through applications for NHS trust status. Each application is subject to three months' public consultation and the representations received cover a variety of issues relating to the specific proposals for trust status. Every representation is taken into account, alongside the individual merits of the application, before a decision is made on whether to establish a trust.

Applications have been approved in respect of the South and East Wales ambulance NHS trust, which became operational on 1 April 1993 covering services provided in Gwent, Powys and South Glamorgan, and the North Wales ambulance NHS trust which will become fully operational on 1 April 1994 covering services provided in Clwyd and Gwynedd.

In addition, a joint application from East Dyfed and West Glamorgan ambulance services to form the West Wales ambulance NHS trust has been deferred with an invitation to re-present proposals to obtain trust status from 1 April 1995.

Copies of the NHS trust applications have been placed in the Library of the House.

One-Stop Shops

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the setting up of one-stop shops for enterprise support in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answers of 16 December 1993, *Official Report,* columns *854-55,* and 11 January 1994, *Official Report,* column 102.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Animal Health Programme

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to get financial assistance from the EC veterinary fund to assist in his animal health programme.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland sumbitted on application in 1991 for assistance from the EC veterinary fund in respect of expenditure on animal disease eradication. The application was unsuccessful due to the fund being heavily oversubscribed and this was also the position in 1992 and 1993 when the application was carried forward. The Department's bid remains active for 1994.

Badgers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by county the number of badgers shot and gassed in each year since 1988; and what percentage of those badgers were subsequently shown to have tuberculosis.

Mr. Ancram: In Northern Ireland badgers are protected by the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and it is illegal for badgers to be shot or gassed. Since the order took effect, no badger has been shot or gassed for disease investigation purposes and there are no records of any illegal shooting or gassing.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what research he has carried out into the incidence of bovine tuberculosis in badgers in Northern Ireland; and what evidence he has that badgers are a source of tuberculosis in cattle in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Past studies based mainly on road casualty badgers indicated that they do not represent a significant factor in the spread of bovine TB. In Northern Ireland there is no evidence that badgers are a major source of TB infection in cattle. It is estimated that badgers are responsible for some 2 per cent. of herd breakdowns at present.

General Practitioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many general practitioners received gross payments in excess of £200,000 per year in each year since 1991-92.

Mr. Ancram: There were four in 1991-92 and 10 in 1992-93. In each case, the general medical practitioner was a dispensing doctor whose payments, in addition to the normal fees and allowances for providing general medical services, included dispensing fees and reimbursement of the cost of drugs supplied to patients.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Argentina

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of Anglo-Argentinian relations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Relations with Argentina are good. Ministers meet frequently. Trade and investment are growing fast. We co-operate in a wide range of areas. But we reject Argentina's continued claim to the Falkland Islands and other British dependent territories.

China

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total money received in compensation from the Chinese

Government under the Foreign Compensation (People's Republic of China) Order 1987 in respect of losses incurred between 1949 and 1952; what is the total value of claims received; what is the total value of claims allowed; what is the total amount paid out to claims to date; what is the percentage settlement being used; what is the total amount spent on administration; how much interest was earned whilst Ernst and Young deliberated; and what is the current balance of the fund.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1987, the Chinese Government agreed a settlement of £23,468,008 for all British claims arising before 1 January 1980 but had a counter-claim of their own. As a result, the net amount passed to the Foreign Compensation Commission was £21,873,660·35.

The total value of claims received was £152,355,040. The total value awarded by the commission was £40,375,214. The percentage settlement being used is 62·25 per cent. The total amount paid to date is £25,127,550·34.

To date, £3,323,506·97 has been spent on administration. Interest earned was £8,786,835·29 on which £2,198.277·30 has been paid in tax. The commission reports that there is currently £50,058 at the bank. The figure includes unclaimed payments.

It is not possible without considerable research to differentiate the claims for losses incurred between 1949 and 1952.

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many papers have been presented by the United Kingdom Government to the United Nations and the review conferences of the 1972 biological and toxin weapons convention disclosing information on Britain's past biological warfare activities; and why and when these papers were presented.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has twice provided a "Declaration of past activities in offensive and/or defensive biological research and development programmes" to the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva. These declarations were required under the confidence-building measures adopted by the 1991 third review conference of the 1972 bacteriological—biological—and toxic weapons convention. They were submitted in April 1992 and April 1993.

Council of Europe

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) of 17 January, *Official Report,* columns *354-55,* which of the conventions and agreements listed have entered into force.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following have entered into force:

European convention on compulsory insurance against civil liability in respect of motor vehicles
Agreement relating to application of the European convention on international commercial arbitration
European convention of the supervision of conditionally sentenced or conditionally released offenders
European convention on the punishment of road traffic offences
European agreement of "au-pair" placement
European convention on the international validity of criminal judgments
European convention on the transfer of proceedings in criminal matters
European convention on the calculation of time limits
European convention on social security
Supplementary agreement to the European convention on social security
Agreement on the transfer of corpses
European convention on the international effects of deprivation of the right to drive a motor vehicle
European convention on the legal status of migrant workers
European convention on the service abroad of documents relating to administrative matters
European convention on the obtaining abroad of information and evidence in administrative matters
European convention on the control of the acquisition and possession of firearms by individuals
European convention for the protection of animals for slaughter
European outline convention of transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities
European charter of local self-government
European convention for the protection of pet animals
European convention on the general equivalence of periods of university study

Sovereign Islands

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all islands in the world larger than 10,000 sq m that are not subject to a unique sovereignty, setting out the different sovereign powers in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Foreign Compensation Commission

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who are the members currently appointed to the Foreign Compensation Commission.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The currently appointed members of the Foreign Compensation Commission are Mr. A. W. E. Wheeler, CBE—Chairman—and Mr. J. A. S. Hall, DFC.

Law of the Sea Convention

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current status of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea and the British Government's position on the convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations convention on the law of the sea has now been ratified by 60 countries. It will enter into force in accordance with its terms on 16 November 1994. Although the convention contains many provisions of substantial value, we made known to the House in 1984 our objections to part XI of the convention which covers deep seabed mining. We welcomed and have participated fully in consultation under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General aimed at resolving the issues which have prevented industrialised countries from ratifying the convention. We will play an active part in the next round of consultations to be held in New York from 31 January to 4 February.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mining Museums

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that mining museums continue to receive technical expertise, services and material for collection after the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: It will be for the mining museums to establish links with the new coal mining companies when British Coal is privatised.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Coal Task Force.

Mr. Eggar: The Coal Task Force was recently superseded by a new body, the Advisory Committee on Coal Research, whose membership is as follows:

Dr. K. Brown (Chairman)
Energy Technology Support Unit

Dr. J. Billingsley
Power Gen

Dr. H. Davies
British Gas

Dr. B. Gainey
Shell Coal

Mr. R. Haywood
Rolls Royce Power Engineering

Mr. J. Monson
British Steel

Mr. A. Oliver
National Power

Mr. J. Perrin
Babcock Energy Ltd.

Dr. D. Pollard
European Gas Turbines Ltd.

Miss B. Webster
Webster Mining Co. Ltd.

Dr. J. Whitehead
Coal Research Establishment

Prof. A. Williams
Leeds University

Prof. J. Patrick
Loughborough University

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:
Sir Anthony Cleaver—*Chairman*
Mr. J. Bullock
Dr. B. L. Eyre, CBE
Professor Sir Peter Hirsch, FRS
Dr. D. Pooley
Mr. R. Sanderson, OBE
Dr. R. S. Nelson
Professor Sir Roger Elliott
Mr. A. W. Hills
Mrs. V. S. Shirley, OBE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Fuel Cell Advisory Panel.

Mr. Eggar: The members currently appointed to the Fuel Cell Advisory Panel are:

Dr. N A Pratten—chairman
Manager, Energy Efficiency Technical Department
Energy Technology Support Unit

Dr. Gary Acres
Director of Technology Planning
Johnson Matthey plc
Member, Advisory Council on Research and Development—ACORD

Mr. Robert Carpenter
Assistant Manager, Heating Plant Division,
Midlands Research Station
British Gas plc

Dr. David Hodgett
Operations Director
EA Technology

Dr. Susan Ion
Head of Research and Development, Fuel Division
British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. John Loughead
Director, Engineering Research Centre, Stafford
GEC Alsthom Ltd.

Dr. Julian Packer
Engineering Director
Combined Power Systems Ltd.

Dr. Bryn Price
Head of Applied Science Laboratory, Derby
Rolls-Royce plc

Mr. Clive Seymour
Products Development Manager
Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.

Dr. Colin Snowdon
ICI Visiting Fellow, Department of Engineering Science
University of Oxford

Mr. Richard Liwicki—Assessor
Programme Manager, Electrical and Power Industries
SERC—Science and Engineering Council

Mr. Adrian Hyde—Assessor
Electricity Division
Department of Trade and Industry

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Offshore Industry Advisory Board.

Mr. Eggar: The members currently appointed to the Offshore Industry Advisory Board are:

E. A. Blair
President, Hamilton Brothers, Oil and Gas Ltd.

K. A. Bray, CBE
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, European Gas Turbines.

D. Clark, OBE
Chairman, Process and Energy Sector, AMEC.

B. L. Crowe, CMG
International Economic Issues, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

H. W. Dalton
MD, Exploration and Production, British Gas.

J. E. d'Ancona
Director General, Offshore Supplies Office, Department of Trade and Industry.

J. A. Davis
Managing Director, British Steel, Seamless Tubes.

Dr. C. E. Fay
MD, Shell UK Exploration and Production.

R. T. Fox
Vice Chairman, Kleinworth Benson Group plc.

Mrs. L. M. Fraser
Assistant Treasurer, Mobil North Sea Ltd.

R. Garrick, CBE
MD and Chief Executive, Weir Group plc.

Dr. C. S. Gibson-Smith
Chief Executive—Europe, BP Exploration.

D. Hall
Head—Projects and Export Policy Division, Department of Trade and Industry.

K. N. Henry
Chief Executive, Brown and Root Ltd.

Mr. P. E. Kingston
Consultant, Enterprise Oil plc.

W. S. H. Laidlaw
MD, Amerada Hess Ltd.

P. C. K. O'Ferrall, OBE
Chairman, Lloyds Register.

I. Robinson
Chief Executive, John Brown plc

C. M. Smith, CBE
MD, Chevron UK Ltd.

Dr. K. H. Taylor
Chairman and Chief Executive, Esso Exploration and Production UK plc.

Mrs. J. Verdon
Managing Director, ISA Controls Ltd.

J. J. Wildasin
President and Chief Operating Officer, McDermott Marine Construction.

Sir Ian Wood
Chairman and MD, John Wood Group plc

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Boyes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to put nuclear waste materials down non-working pits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I am advised that the nuclear industry has no such plans.

Offshore Operators

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he will take to ensure that offshore operating companies are not able to avoid their legal and financial obligations relating to the payment of fines under health and safety prosecutions if they have been taken over; what time scale he envisages for this action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* I am not convinced of the need to take steps for this purpose.

Safety Regulations

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what responses were received by his Department to his recent consultation on relaxation of the Furniture and Furnishings Fire (Safety) Regulations 1988 and the Night Wear Safety Regulations 1985; which bodies expressed support for relaxing these regulations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on what conclusions his Department has reached on the relaxation of the Furniture and Furnishings Fire (Safety) Regulations 1988 and the Night Wear Safety Regulations 1985.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answers 20 January 1994]:* The recent consultation exercise on the Furniture and Furnishings Fire (Safety) Regulations 1988—as amended—and the Nightwear Safety Regulations 1985, in the context of the deregulation initiative, brought forward responses from a wide range of business and consumer interests. The detailed responses are being analysed and it is too early to reach conclusions on what changes—if any—are appropriate.

HEALTH

NHS Administration

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many managers and administrators are currently employed by *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities and *(c)* family health service authorities; at what cost to taxpayers; and what were the corresponding figures in 1991 and 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the tables.

Table 1
General and senior managers and administrative and clerical staff employed in the Regional/District Health Authority structure at 30 September—whole time equivalents.

	1991	*1992*
General/senior managers	10,640	10,470
Administrative and Clerical	100,660	82,530

Table 2
General and senior managers and administrative and clerical staff employed in Family Health Service Authorities in England at 30 September—whole time equivalents.

	1991	*1992*
General/senior managers	790	1,040
Administrative and clerical	4,650	5,240

Source: DH Form KM49.
Notes:
1. Table 1 provides the numbers of staff in regional health authority and district health authority headquarters and directly managed units; NHS trusts, the London ambulance service, special health authorities and other statutory authorities are excluded.
2. A small number of FHSA staff are employed by the RHAs and are included in table 1. These staff are excluded from the FHSA figures given in table 2.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.
4. 30 September 1992 is the latest date for which information is

Table 3
Salaries and Wages Costs of General and Senior Managers in England

£000s

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Regional Health Authorities	24,142	46,922	59,106
District Health Authorities	223,221	277,179	290,149

Table 4
Salaries and Wages Costs of Administration and Clerical Staff in England

£000s

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Regional Health Authorities	114,146	131,275	109,104
District Health Authorities	1,050,370	1,056,824	920,570

Sources:
1. Annual accounts of RHAs and DHAs for 1990-91.
2. Annual financial returns of RHAs and DHAs for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Notes:
1. The figures are for RHAs and DHAs. They include directly managed units, but exclude NHS Trusts, special health authorities and other statutory authorities.
2. 1992-93 figures are provisional.
3. The figures for general and senior managers should be treated with caution because the national increase in their number—and hence salary costs—is largely due to the reclassification of other professional and administrative staff as general and senior managers.

Table 5
Salaries and Wages Costs of all Staff in FHSA's in England

	1990-91 £000s	1991-92 £000s	1992-93 £000s
Family health services authorities	67,393	88,564	111,480

Source: Annual accounts of FHSAs.

Notes:
1. Salaries and wages costs are not identified in separate categories for FHSA staff. The majority of expenditure will be for administration/management staff.
2. Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.
3. "Salaries and wages costs" represent all employers' costs including gross salaries, national insurance and employers' pension costs.

Alcohol Misuse

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are currently in operation for cross-departmental co-ordination of Government policy in relation to alcohol misuse and its consequences; and what plans there are for future co-ordination.

Mr. Bowis: The Government remain committed to taking effective action to deal with the consequences of alcohol misuse both for the individual and the community.

Action is focused on the promotion of sensible drinking habits including meeting the targets set out in "The Health of the Nation". I therefore welcome my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's decision to transfer responsibility for the co-ordination of Government policy on alcohol misuse to EDH(H), the cabinet sub-committee responsible for "The Health of the Nation" and to expand its membership accordingly.

University College London Hospitals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the further efficiency measures she has suggested to University College London hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have made clear our commitment to retaining University College London Hospitals as a world-class centre of medical teaching and research. UCLH is already undertaking a major cost improvement programme in 1993-94, and North East Thames regional health authority is discussing with the unit how services can be provided most efficiently in future.

Family Health Services Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the budget of each family health services authority convened by the London implementation group for each year from 1990 to 1995.

Dr. Mawhinney: Expenditure for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 of each family health service authority whose area falls wholly or in part in the London initiative zone is shown in the table.

Budgets are not set for family health services as most elements of expenditure are demand-led and funded accordingly. Budgets for FHSA cash-limited expenditure are issued by regional health authorities and are not available centrally.

Gross expenditure of family health services authorities

Authority	Year 1990-91 (£)	1991-92 (£)	1992-93 (£)
Brent and Harrow	55,948,634	51,986,077	60,799,056
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	72,582,053	71,167,352	81,032,384
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	42,428,334	41,604,503	48,133,097
Barking and Havering	39,570,512	38,935,837	44,089,197
Camden and Islington	44,465,457	40,875,179	48,336,119
City and East London	72,327,505	73,706,590	86.561,387
Enfield and Haringey	50,226,717	50,373,635	58,238,102
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	48,575,570	48,033,524	55,881,603
Greenwich and Bexley	44,170,728	45,761,746	51,332,685
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	80,328,536	83,416,519	95,336,498
Croydon	32,996,828	31,720,157	35,950,625
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	63,235,072	66,298,721	74,237,746

Notes:
1. *Source:* Audited accounts of the authorities, total gross expenditure.
2. Payments to general dental practitioners for general dental services are not included in 1991-92 and 1992-93 as the Dental Practice Board assumed responsibility for such payments from 1 April 1991.
3. The authorities included are those which fall wholly or in part within the London initiative zone as defined in "Making London Better", February 1993.

Medical Services Funding

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the funding for general medical services by region in each of the last three years; and what is projected for the next two years.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on general medical services by region for the years 1990-91 and 1992-93 is shown in the table.

Projected expenditure for future years is not available: most elements of general medical services expenditure are demand led and funded accordingly. Budgets for

cash-limited expenditure on the general medical services are issued by regional health authorities and are not available centrally.

General medical services expenditure by region

Region	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Northern	122,989,021	136,007,122	147,860,526
Yorkshire	149,405,550	170,025,108	184,184,461
Trent	190,445,047	213,810,189	234,363,722
East Anglian	89,778,335	102,767,280	113,709,212
North West Thames	158,263,698	177,377,481	194,216,444
North East Thames	164,796,569	181,707,722	203,234,834
South East Thames	156,317,652	179,843,993	196,151,536
South West Thames	121,078,560	141,373,233	149,872,536
Wessex	122,291,245	140,076,992	151,505,080
Oxfordshire	109,953,026	123,917,087	138,089,077
South Western	157,299,584	175,559,932	185,364,931
West Midlands	204,916,256	230,471,586	252,117,604
Mersey	95,638,944	108,302,334	118,200,670
North Western	148,830,792	169,855,541	184,091,576

Notes:

1. *Source:* Family health services authorities' annual accounts.
2. 1991-92 and 1992-93 figures include practice fund management allowances and general practitioner fundholder expenditure in respect of staff costs reimbursements. Expenditure in relation to general practitioner fundholder prescribing and hospital purchases is excluded.

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will quantify the cost of the factors which led to an increase in the cost of cars for Ministers in his Department since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: Four main factors have led to the increase in the cost of Government car service cars for Ministers in the Department. First, the effect of inflation on GCS costs, particularly pay, vehicles and fuel. Secondly, during this period the GCS restructured its charges to reflect the fact that it had been under-recovering its full costs in 1990-91. Thirdly, the rate of value added tax has increased from 15 per cent. to 17½ per cent. Fourthly, there was the provision of an additional vehicle for an extra Minister in 1992, which accounts for some 20 per cent. of the increase.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost to the NHS of the IVF programme over the past four years; how many babies have been born as a result of this programme; and how many embryos *(a)* have been donated, *(b)* are currently in storage and *(c)* were destroyed.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested cannot be separately identified.

Educational Qualifications

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list in rank order for each district council in England the number and percentage of adult residents who have no post-18 educational qualifications.

Mr. Sackville: Information from a 10 per cent. sample from the 1991 census will be placed in the Library. In the table, local authority districts are ranked according to percentage of residents aged over 18, who have no qualifications obtained after age 18—other than those usually obtained at school.

Information

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations underlay her decision not to collect information centrally on *(a)* response times by ambulance services, *(b)* hospitals which failed to treat patients within the waiting time set out in the patients charter, *(c)* the disease optic neuritis, *(d)* the number of child patients unable to receive paediatric intensive care owing to shortage of paediatric intensive care beds, *(e)* the number of general practitioners receiving gross payments of £200,000 or over per year, *(f)* district health authorities running at (i) a surplus or (ii) a deficit on the number of people wishing to be inoculated against influenza, *(g)* waiting times for outpatient treatment by (i) regional health authorities and (ii) district health authorities, *(h)* the use of Concorde flights by health staff and (i) the number of children refused orthodontic treatment because of the limitation on extra-contractual referrals; and if she will reconsider her decision in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main thrust of the national health service reforms is the devolution of responsibility to appropriate levels, allowing those providing services to be fully in charge of planning and delivery. It would be counter to those reforms for the centre to impose unnecessarily restrictive monitoring systems and to require returns for, and about, every step in the process of procuring and delivering health care.

Social Classes

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each district council in England the proportion of the district population in social classes 3G4 and 5.

Mr. Sackville: The available information, based on a 10 per cent. sample from the 1991 census will be placed in the Library. As there is no social class 3G, the table shows social class IIIM—skilled-manual.

GPs (Misconduct)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the length of time on average involved in determining cases involving complaints against general practitioners accused of professional misconduct.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since we announced an independent review of all national health service complaints procedures, chaired by Professor Alan Wilson, a large number of representations have been received by the review committee, many of which have referred to the length of time taken to deal with complaints made by individuals.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by region and district, the responses made to NHS management executive circular EL(93)37 indicating the number of individual services *(a)* currently being market tested and *(b)* planned to be market tested.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to publish this information. As stated in paragraph 2 of the annex to EL(93)37, the information will be available as a source of management information for the national health service and national health service management executive.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place a copy in the Library of the advice circular to the national health service from the Government Actuary's Department in relation to the pension package minimum equivalence with respect to contractors seeking work from a Government Department under market testing and competitive tendering, where the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Regulations) 1981 apply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government Actuary Department has not issued a general circular to the national health service as a result of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981—TUPE.

The national health service management executive issued guidance on TUPE on 5 November 1993, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Although pensions are not covered by the TUPE regulations, the management executive guidance suggests that advice on pensions equivalance may be obtained from the GAD on a case-by-case basis.

Cars

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list in rank order for each district council in England the number of households without a car.

Mr. Sackville: Information from the 1991 census will be placed in the Library. In the table, local authority districts are ranked according to the percentage of households with no car.

Long-term Illness

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many households in each district council in England include an occupant suffering limiting long-term illness; and what percentage this group constitutes of the area's total households in each case.

Mr. Sackville: Information from the 1991 census will be placed in the Library.

Health Authority Expenditure

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the total final cash allocations and *(b)* the actual outturn expenditure for each district health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Cash allocations to districts are issued by regional health authorities and are not recorded centrally. Information on revenue expenditure by district will be placed in the Library.

Abortion

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of terminations of pregnancies were funded by the NHS in 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will shortly be published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in monitor AB 94/1.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Dementia

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people under the age of 20 years in each of the last five years have suffered from Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia; and of these how many had not had any growth treatment previously.

Mr. Sackville: We are not aware of any people under the age of 20 in the United Kingdom proven to be suffering from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in the last five years.

GPs (Staff)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the average reimbursement to GPs for salaries for receptionists, practice managers, secretaries and administrators in each year since 1990-91, excluding the GP fundholding management allowance.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Patients' Notes

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) who, apart from doctors, has access to patients' notes in hospitals;

(2) whether hospital managers have right of access to patients' notes.

Mr. Sackville: Personal health information is handled on a strict "need to know" basis in the national health service. Besides doctors and other health professionals, managers and administrative staff may also need to see patients' notes in order, for example, to plan services and arrange appointments. Individual members of staff should only have access to that part of the information which is necessary for them to carry out their duties. Advice to the NHS on this will be included in the guidance on confidentiality which we hope to issue for consultation shortly.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to the use to which GP fundholders have put surplus funds from 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: All savings must be used for the benefit of patients. The detailed rules setting out the uses for which general practitioner fundholders may use savings are in paragraph 24 of the National Health Service (Fundholding Practices) Regulations 1993, copies of which are available in the Library.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans the Edgware health trust has to build new office premises in the grounds of the Barnet general hospital;

(2) what plans there are for the closure of Edgware general hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Wellhouse Trust comprises the Edgware and Barnet general hospitals. Barnet health agency's five-year strategy proposes the development of Barnet hospital and the reshaping or closure of Edgware hospital. The period of public consultation ends on 31 January. Any formal proposal to close Edgware hospital would be subject to separate public consultation.

Casualty Services, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has received the report of the accident and emergency reference group on casualty services in London; and what plans she has to publish it.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what form the accident and emergency reference group reported for the London implementation group; and if she will publish this report.

Dr. Mawhinney: The accident and emergency reference group was set up to advise the London implementation group on accident and emergency services in London. The group has not been asked to produce a report.

Asthma

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to include the reduction of asthma in the objectives of "The Health of the Nation"; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We believe that further development and research is necessary before national targets in respect of asthma can be set. In 1992-93 the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, spent over £1·5 million on research into asthma and areas which may be relevant to the condition.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to each of the family health services authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Members of family health services authorities are appointed by regional health authorities.

Barnet Health Agency

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost to public funds of the production and distribution of the publication "Focus on Health—A Strategic Framework 1993-1998" by the Barnet health agency in terms of *(a)* managerial costs, *(b)* production costs and *(c)* distribution costs.

Dr. Mawhinney: Barnet health authority is still consulting on its five-year strategy. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Alan Jacobs, chairman of the authority, for details.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she proposes to raise the matter of an upper age limit on the availability of infertility treatment within the European Community; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has stated in its second annual report that it will be addressing the issue of treatment for post-menopausal women in the coming year. The Government will consider this matter further after they receive the authority's advice.

Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy.

Mr. Sackville: Current membership of COMA is:

MEMBERS	
Dr. K. C. Calman—Chair	Government Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health
Dr. P. Aggett	Agricultural and Food Research Council, Institute of Food Research, Norwich
Dr. S. Bingham	Non-clinical Scientist, Dunn Clinical Nutrition Unit, Cambridge
Professor F. Cockburn	Samson Gemmell Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow
Ms A. Foster	Director, Scottish Consumer Council
Dr. G. Fowler	Clinical Reader in General Practice, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford
Professor Grimley Evans	Professor of Geriatric Medicine, Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Oxford
Professor A. A. Jackson	Professor of Human Nutrition, University of Southampton
Professor W. P. T. James	Director, Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen
Professor M. Marmot	Professor of Community Medicine, University College and Middlesex Medical School
EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS	
Professor K. Alberti	Director of Research and Development, Northern Regional Health Authority, Chairman of Nutrition Programme Committee
Dr. J. Chambers	Health Education Authority
Dr. H. Denner	Chief Scientist (Food), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Dr. Hine	Chief Medical Officer, Welsh Office
Dr. M. Kemp	Medical Research Council
Dr. Kendell	Chief Medical Officer, Scottish Office
Dr. McKenna	Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Security, Northern Ireland

NHS (Cars)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many cars have been allocated to the managers, advisers and administrators employed by the NHS trust hospitals in each of the last two financial years;

(2) how many cars have been allocated to NHS managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(3) how many cars have been allocated to NHS nurses in *(a)* the hospital service and *(b)* the community service in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Food Safety

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in her Department's review of food safety and hygiene; and when its conclusions will be reported.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has three major reviews under way in the area of food safety and hygiene. These form part of the Government's food law deregulation plan which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 14 September 1993. These are:

i. a wide-ranging review of all food temperature controls both in domestic and European Community legislation. A consultation on options both for change to United Kingdom legislation and for negotiation in the EC finished on 31 December. We shall make an announcement when the responses have been considered.

ii. As part of the process of drafting regulations to implement the EC hygiene of foodstuffs directive, the Department has undertaken a review of domestic food hygiene legislation. We expect consultation on proposed new regulations will begin in February 1994. We plan to lay regulations before Parliament in the summer of 1994.

iii. Under the EC hygiene of foodstuffs directive, the EC Commission must review the relationship between that directive and product specific food hygiene directives. We and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food aim to consult UK industry and other interests in the spring about options arising from the review before taking them forward to EC forums for discussion.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what decision her Department's review of food safety and hygiene has reached in respect of the responsibility on retailers to check suppliers' storage areas if a product arrived at the required temperature.

Mr. Sackville: There is no requirement in food law for retailers to carry out checks on suppliers' storage areas.

Dentistry

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pregnant women received free dental treatment in each year since 1978-79.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not available centrally on the number of women for whom treatment was provided. The table shows the available information on the number of courses of treatment provided.

General dental services: England
Courses of treatment—expectant and nursing mothers[1] from 1978 to year ending March 1993[2]

	Expectant mothers[3]	*Nursing mothers[3]*	*Total*
1978	—	—	760,030
1979	—	—	771,970
1980	—	—	845,530
1981	—	—	846,690
1982	—	—	879,190
1983	—	—	886,090
1984	—	—	890,470
1985	—	—	903,760
1986-87	—	—	968,720
1987-88	—	—	978,770
1988-89	—	—	1,015,140
1989-90	—	—	1,044,250
1990-91[4]	n/a	n/a	n/a
1991-92	452,555	665,310	1,117,865
1992-93	443,922	672,609	1,116,531

[1] Mothers aged 18 and over.
[2] Data for 1978 to 1985 are available for calendar year only.
[3] Separate data for expectant and nursing mothers are not available before 1991-92.
[4] Data for 1990-91 are not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were registered as national health service dental patients in each region in each year since 1978-79.

Dr. Mawhinney: Registration figures are only available from October 1990. The table shows by region in England the numbers of adults and children registered with national health service dentists at 31 March 1991, 1992 and 1993. Over this period there has been a net increase in patient registrations in every region.

Number of dental patients registered at 31 March by region

Region	*1991*		*1992*		*1993*	
	Adults	*Children*	*Adults*	*Children*	*Adults*	*Children*
Northern	649,578	239,078	1,195,135	389,836	1,341,297	420,265
Yorkshire	882,889	311,465	1,522,004	486,054	1,713,751	524,295
Trent	1,051,920	392,884	1,871,795	621,916	2,114,935	669,783
East Anglia	527,607	213,725	891,571	289,320	969,992	300,802
North West Thames	593,438	224,040	1,252,037	393,974	1,457,164	422,887
North East Thames	614,360	238,172	1,317,709	416,204	1,544,853	450,396
South East Thames	740,094	271,750	1,405,098	433,260	1,525,461	465,907
South West Thames	613,565	240,174	1,139,307	377,684	1,252,572	400,101
Wessex	782,841	273,117	1,278,498	399,876	1,384,686	423,329
Oxford	520,188	235,926	937,978	355,515	1,022,212	376,492
South West	984,063	344,602	1,603,365	497,499	1,694,952	522,918
West Midlands	1,183,315	432,641	2,068,975	666,499	2,294,996	707,725
Mersey	564,545	213,641	1,001,407	334,052	1,134,834	354,292
North West	942,400	391,574	1,621,160	577,496	1,781,811	604,683
England	10,650,803	4,022,789	19,106,039	6,239,185	21,233,516	6,643,875

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practices accepted national health service patients in each region in each year since 1978-79.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. However, there are now more dentists in contract with family health services authorities for the provision of national health service dental treatment than ever before.

Health Service Staff

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns *807-10*, if she will give the total salary costs for each group in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prescriptions

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of prescriptions processed in each year since 1978-79; and of that total, how many were (i) free of charge, (ii) covered by a prepayment certificate and (iii) paid for in some other way.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table.

Number of prescriptions (millions) dispensed in the family health service authorities England 1979 to 1992

Year	Charge at point of dispensing	Chargeable Pre-payment certificate	Chargeable total	No charge made	Dispensing doctor and personal administration	Grand total
1979	108·7	10·4	119·1	185·5	17·2	321·8
1980	90·9	15·2	106·1	197·2	17·6	320·9
1981	76·5	18·3	94·8	205·2	18·0	318·0
1982	76·5	18·4	94·9	216·4	19·2	330·5
1983	70·6	17·8	88·4	226·9	20·0	336·3
1984	69·6	17·5	87·1	233·4	21·8	342·3
1985	63·2	16·9	80·1	238·5	23·2	341·8
1986	60·3	15·7	76·0	246·6	24·1	346·7
1987	60·6	15·6	76·2	259·0	26·3	361·6
1988	61·6	16·1	77·7	268·8	28·9	375·5
1989	61·4	16·8	78·2	273·7	31·6	383·5
1990	60·1	17·6	77·7	282·8	34·3	394·8
1991	56·1	18·2	74·3	296·4	35·8	406·5
1992	55·0	18·6	73·6	313·1	38·3	425·1

Notes:
1. The analysis of the exempt and non exempt categories is based on a 1 in 20 sample of all prescriptions submitted to the Prescription Pricing Authority by community pharmacists and appliance contractors. Dispensing doctor and personal administration prescriptions are not analysed into exempt and non exempt categories.
2. 1979 to 1990 data are based on fees. 1991 and 1992 data are based on items.
3. Figures may not add up due to rounding.

Child Meningitis

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of meningitis in children were recorded in the years 1983 to 1993; and in how many cases this was fatal.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables.

Number of recorded cases of meningitis in children (0-14 years old) in England and Wales from 1983-1992

Year	Notifications
1983	796
1984	795
1985	934
1986	1,462
1987	1,717
1988	1,876
1989	1,776
1990	1,673
1991	1,717
[1]1992	1,693

[1] Data is provisional.
Data for 1993 are not yet available.

Deaths of children (0-14 years) from all forms of Meningitis. [1]ICD's 013·0, 036·0, 047·0, 047·1, 047·8, 047·9, 049·0, 049·1, 053·0, 072·1, 091·8, 094·2, 320 and 322 for 1983-1992 in England and Wales.

Year	Number of deaths
1983	120
1984	95
1985	130
1986	118
1987	132
1988	111
1989	110
1990	90
1991	112
1992	92

[1]International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
Data for 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to reduce the incidence of meningitis in children.

Mr. Sackville: The inclusion of a vaccine against haemophilus influenze type b, Hib-one of the two main causes of bacterial meningitis in young children—in the childhood immunisation programme from 1 October 1992 has resulted in a dramatic drop of over 80 per cent. in cases of invasive Hib disease in children under one year, the main target group for immunisation. Effective vaccines against the commonest form of meningococcal disease—the other main cause of bacterial meningitis in young children—are not yet available; the Department of Health is funding research to assist in the development of these vaccines.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of persons appointed to NHS trusts and authorities in England and Wales, showing name, current employment and whether resident in the relevant trust or authority area.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 17 January at column *385*, for information on chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts in England.

Non-executive members of district health authorities and family health services authorities are appointed by regional health authorities from amongst those who live or work in the area covered by the authority or trust, or have connections with it. Information on the place of residence of those persons appointed to NHS authorities and trusts is available from them.

Details of chairmen and non-executive members of regional health authorities and special health authorities, and chairmen of district health authorities and family health services authorities will be placed in the Library.

The appointment of persons to NHS authorities and trusts in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Clinical Trials

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to reduce the regulations governing clinical trial authorisation.

Mr. Sackville: As part of the deregulation initiative task forces were set up to advise Ministers on priorities for the repeal of simplification of existing regulations so as to minimise the costs on business. The chemicals and pharmaceuticals deregulation task force identified clinical trial authorisation as an area of regulation that might be simplified.

The Medicines Control Agency of the Department of Health is currently consulting on proposals to simplify the operation of the clinical trial exemption—CTX—scheme. Schedule 2 to the Medicines (Exemption from Licenses) (Clinical Trials) Order 1981 lists the areas about which the Licensing Authority must be informed forthwith if the supplier proposes to make changes to an approved CTX. It is proposed to ease these requirements by removing the need to notify the Licensing Authority of changes of investigators and to introduce a usage guideline. The usage guideline will allow the supplier to supply the product for use in a new clinical trial or an on-going clinical trial without the need to notify the Licensing Authority providing that the new conditions of the trial are within the scope of the information contained in the usage guideline. This will allow pharmaceutical companies to carry out clinical trials within defined criteria without the need to notify the Licensing Authority of each and every change before proceeding. Any changes that are outside the terms of the usage guideline will still have to be notified to the Licensing Authority as currently happens.

The consultation will close on 31 January. We will consider carefully the comments received and decide how to carry forward these proposals.

Copies of the consultation letter, MLX203, will be placed in the Library.

NHS Sight Tests

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service sight tests took place in each region of the United Kingdom, in each financial year since 1984-85.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of national health service sight tests paid for in each financial year in Great Britain is shown in the table. The number of NHS sight tests carried out in Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Number of NHS sight tests paid for by financial year

Regional health authority	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*[1]	*1990-91*[1]	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Northern	592,050	599,980	627,570	697,970	740,420	336,840	275,590	314,710	345,890
Yorkshire	722,730	730,350	752,340	843,200	906,140	403,450	311,630	368,240	408,600
Trent	912,550	950,010	980,900	1,095,300	1,166,700	514,960	406,780	483,640	528,080
East Anglia	380,580	408,760	422,030	468,670	493,110	191,460	159,900	194,320	222,090
North West Thames	828,710	853,400	862,330	943,670	1,016,600	384,370	290,210	354,260	397,350
North East Thames	894,530	914,430	943,440	1,027,970	1,054,960	468,230	361,430	440,270	494,040
South East Thames	734,580	761,800	803,560	875,140	927,760	385,600	296,850	359,930	406,730
South West Thames	625,840	648,680	652,880	710,560	735,310	283,000	220,360	267,800	295,330
Wessex	619,230	645,870	697,710	739,430	806,250	343,160	257,990	312,010	348,770
Oxford	489,640	515,570	546,070	607,850	657,320	221,480	205,650	247,540	276,510
South Western	761,550	785,870	826,630	917,220	1,017,480	418,050	324,470	402,870	435,370
West Midlands	1,096,610	1,154,760	1,188,830	1,314,230	1,438,370	633,980	488,220	573,960	640,530
Mersey	449,750	465,660	473,640	531,580	562,130	259,840	204,910	246,340	271,730
North Western	773,810	810,630	837,510	922,020	970,270	435,340	349,690	413,550	456,360
England	9,882,150	10,245,780	10,615,430	11,694,800	12,492,830	5,279,750	4,153,660	4,979,420	5,527,590
Wales	570,860	600,710	626,590	697,280	733,470	292,060	271,170	332,240	372,590
Scotland	884,730	913,900	965,160	1,098,150	1,168,610	466,130	418,130	477,930	521,440

[1] From 1 April 1989 NHS sight tests were restricted to certain eligible groups in the population.
The figures for 1989-90 included 1·82 million sight tests paid for in 1989-90 but conducted in 1988-89 under the previous scheme. The remaining 4·22 million were conducted and paid for in 1989-90 which do not constitute a full 12 months of the new scheme. The figures for 1990-91 which do represent twelve months under the new scheme, are not therefore directly comparable with those for 1989-90.

Nurses

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 6 December, *Official Report*, columns

67-70, how many nurses who finished their training in each year since 1979 were offered a job in the national health service *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region in which they finished their training.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Public Bodies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will update the answers given to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 20 July 1993, *Official Report*, columns *112-14*, on appointment to public bodies of peers, former hon. Members, their spouses and parliamentary candidates.

Dr. Mawhinney: Available information about appointments made since 20 July 1993 is shown in the tables.

National Health Service Authorities and Trusts

FORMER HONOURABLE MEMBERS

Mr. T. Flavell

Chairman, Tameside and Glossop Acute Services NHS Trust, 1.11.93-31.10.97 (Conservative)

SPOUSES OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS

Mrs. S. Biffen

Non-executive director, The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital NHS Trust, 4.1.94-31.10.97

Lady June Onslow

Non-executive director, North Downs Community Health NHS Trust, 1.11.93-31.10.97

SPOUSES OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Lady Butterworth

Director, Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital Trust, 21.12.90-30.11.96

Information concerning appointees to NHS authorities and trusts who have been party candidates for Parliament is not available centrally.

Chairmen of NHS trusts are currently remunerated at a rate between £15,125 and £19,285 per year. Non-executive directors of NHS trusts and special health authorities receive £5,000 per year.

Nadene Chouri

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investigation she has made into the case of the delay in treating Nadene Chouri in casualty at King's College hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 20 January.

Community Care (Assessments)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what data are being collected by her Department, in relation to assessment procedures, number of assessments required and number of assessments being undertaken, by local authorities, regarding care in the community.

Mr. Bowis: We are discussing with the local authority associations ways of including data on assessments in the Department's regular statistical collections.

External Bodies (Funding)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make it her policy to operate a level playing field between opponents and supporters of Government health policies in future funding of external bodies;

(2) if organisations which oppose the introduction of the internal market have been offered financial support.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Department of Health funds external bodies on the merits of the individual applications for funding.

NHS Trust Federation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what powers, and for what purposes, a grant of £5,000 was made to the NHS Trust Federation.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* I understand that the payment was made to the National Health Service Trust Federation to contribute towards its development costs. There was no statutory authority for such a payment, and the federation has repaid the money to the Department.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is normal practice for her Department to operate a clawback procedure where grant-aided organisations generate surpluses in years in which they are grant aided; and whether such a condition applies to the grant of £5,000 made to the NHS Trust Federation.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Department encourages the voluntary organisations which it grant aids to seek additional sources of income. Grants are not necessarily withdrawn or reduced because a voluntary organisation makes a surplus in a particular year, but the Department expressly reserves the right to discontinue a grant and to recover it if it is not used for the purpose for which it is given. The payment to the trust federation, which is not grant aided by the Department, was made without statutory authority and has since been recovered.

Health Benefits Review

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recommendations were made by the health benefits review regarding the period of the certificate of entitlement to prescriptions;

(2) whether the alternative schemes costed by the health benefits review included one based on exemptions and passporting;

(3) whether the terms of reference of the health benefits review include part-payment of prescription charges for low-income persons; and what plans she now has to introduce such help;

(4) when she commenced the review of the health benefits low-income scheme; what was the expected time scale for the review; and what was the expected date of publication of the results.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 22 May 1991 at column *530* that the Department of Health would undertake a review of the administration of the national health service low-income scheme during 1991, and would aim to produce proposals by the end of that year.

The review made a number of proposals for consideration. These were reworked during 1992, as improved statistical information became available, and reconsidered afresh in 1993 as an integral part of the fundamental review of health expenditure. We plan to announce the outcome shortly.

Patients Charter

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the package of key data about the patients charter performance of each district health authority, referred to in her answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, column *458*.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 January 1994]:* We have no plans to publish this health authority-based data which are collected by the national health service management executive for internal management purposes only.

We have already announced our intention to publish this summer NHS performance tables which will include key provider-based information about the patients charter performance of every NHS hospital and trust. We believe it is this information that will be of most use and interest to the general public.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* families, *(b)* pensioners and *(c)* children were living in poverty in Durham in each of the last 14 years.

Mr. Burt: Statistics on patterns of household disposable income, for the United Kingdom as a whole, are provided in "Households Below Average Income 1979—1990-91", published in June 1993, a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not available on a regional basis.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently without accommodation and claiming income support in Durham.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Spending Power

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables, similar to those in his Department's tax benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for each of a single waged married couple *(a)* with two children aged four and six years and *(b)* with three children aged three, eight and 11 years earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110, (vii) £120, (viii) £130, (ix) £140, (x) £150, (xi) £160 and (xii) £170 per week under the benefit system as per its latest uprating.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables.

Single waged married couple with two children aged 4 and 6
Earnings and benefits as at April 1994

Gross earnings	Tax	National Insurance contributions	Take home pay	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Council tax	Council tax benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and council tax
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
60·00	0·00	1·44	58·56	66·70	18·45	32·54	19·11	10·35	6·22	169·04	126·15
70·00	0·00	2·44	67·56	66·70	18·45	32·54	13·26	10·35	4·42	170·39	127·60
80·00	0·00	3·44	76·56	63·30	18·45	32·54	9·62	10·35	3·30	171·23	128·34
90·00	0·00	4·44	85·56	57·00	18·45	32·54	7·87	10·35	2·76	171·64	128·75
100·00	0·13	5·44	94·43	50·79	18·45	32·54	6·14	10·35	2·23	172·04	129·15
110·00	2·13	6·44	101·43	45·89	18·45	32·54	4·77	10·35	1·81	172·35	129·46
120·00	4·13	7·44	108·43	40·99	18·45	32·54	3·41	10·35	1·39	172·67	129·78
130·00	6·44	8·44	115·12	36·30	18·45	32·54	2·10	10·35	0·98	172·95	130·06
140·00	8·94	9·44	121·62	31·75	18·45	32·54	0·83	10·35	0·59	173·24	130·35
150·00	11·44	10·44	128·12	27·20	18·45	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·20	173·97	131·08
160·00	13·94	11·44	134·62	22·65	18·45	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·00	175·72	132·83
170·00	16·44	12·44	141·12	18·10	18·45	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·00	177·67	134·78

Single waged married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11
Earnings and benefits as at April 1994

Gross earnings	Tax	National Insurance contributions	Take home pay	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Council tax	Council tax benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and council tax
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
60·00	0·00	1·44	58·56	85·25	26·70	32·54	16·64	10·35	5·46	192·61	149·72
70·00	0·00	2·44	67·56	85·25	26·70	32·54	10·79	10·35	3·66	193·96	151·07
80·00	0·00	3·44	76·56	81·85	26·70	32·54	7·15	10·35	2·54	194·80	151·91
90·00	0·00	4·44	85·56	75·56	26·70	32·54	5·40	10·35	2·00	195·21	152·32
100·00	0·13	5·44	94·43	69·34	26·70	32·54	3·67	10·35	1·47	195·61	152·72
110·00	2·13	6·44	101·43	64·44	26·70	32·54	2·30	10·35	1·05	195·92	153·03
120·00	4·13	7·44	108·43	59·54	26·70	32·54	0·94	10·35	0·63	196·24	153·35
130·00	6·44	8·44	115·12	54·85	26·70	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·22	196·89	154·00
140·00	8·94	9·44	121·62	50·30	26·70	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·00	196·62	155·73
150·00	11·44	10·44	128·12	45·75	26·70	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·00	200·57	157·68
160·00	13·94	11·44	134·62	41·20	26·70	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·00	202·52	159·83
170·00	16·44	12·44	141·12	36·65	26·70	32·54	0·00	10·35	0·00	204·47	161·58

Note:
Benefit rates for April 1994 are shown, rent and council tax values for 1993 have been used as the values for 1994 are not yet known.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables, similar to those in his Department's tax benefit model table, showing net weekly spending power for a lone mother with two children aged

four and six years under the benefit system as uprated in April 1991 and in each of the following circumstances *(a)* not working after one year on benefits, *(b)*earning £20 a week from part-time working and *(c)* working full time and earning (i) £60, (ii) £70, (iii) £80, (iv) £90, (v) £100, (vi) £110 and (vii) £120 per week.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Lone Parent with two children aged 4 and 6

Earnings and Benefits as at April 1991

Gross Earnings	*Tax*	*National Insurance contributions*	*Take Home Pay*	*Income Support*	*Free Welfare Foods*	*Family Credit*	*Child Benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent Rebate*	*Community Charge*	*Community Charge Benefit*	*Total Net Income*	*Net Income After Rent and Community Charge*
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
[1]0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	57·65	5·27	0·00	21·10	26·03	26·03	4·70	3·76	113·81	83·08
[2]20·00	0·00	0·00	20·00	52·65	5·27	0·00	21·10	26·03	26·03	4·70	3·76	128·81	98·08
[3]60·00	0·00	1·78	58·24	0·00	0·00	57·70	21·10	26·03	8·03	4·70	0·00	145·07	114·34
70·00	0·00	2·66	67·34	0·00	0·00	54·14	21·10	26·03	4·43	4·70	0·00	147·01	116·28
80·00	0·00	3·56	76·44	0·00	0·00	47·77	21·10	26·03	2·66	4·70	0·00	147·97	117·24
90·00	0·00	4·46	85·54	0·00	0·00	41·40	21·10	26·03	0·88	4·70	0·00	148·92	118·19
100·00	0·00	5·36	93·75	0·00	0·00	36·65	21·10	26·03	0·00	4·70	0·00	150·50	119·77
110·00	3·39	6·26	100·35	0·00	0·00	31·03	21·10	26·03	0·00	4·70	0·00	152·48	121·75
120·00	5·89	7·16	106·95	0·00	0·00	26·41	21·10	26·03	0·00	4·70	0·00	154·46	123·73

[1] Not working after one year on benefits.
[2] Earning £20 per week from part-time working.
[3] Working full-time.

Cold Weather Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments have been made in each year since 1978-79 *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each standard region.

Mr. Scott: All the information available on cold weather payments made since their introduction in December 1986 is held in the Library.

Taxation

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *626,* what are the numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women below (i) the tax threshold and (ii) the national insurance contribution threshold, by standard region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hague: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the average duration of sickness for those in receipt of statutory sick pay *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region.

Mr. Hague: The estimated average number of statutory sick pay days paid in Great Britain in the period 1 April 1991 to 4 April 1992 is 15. This information is not available by region.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the total number of firms defined as small for the purposes of special compensation for statutory sick pay *(a)* in total in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in each region.

Mr. Hague: Subject to parliamentary approval, the existing threshold of small employers' relief will rise from £16,000 to £20,000 in 1994-95. We estimate that 750,000 employers in Great Britain will be eligible under the new definition. This information is not available by region. Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Benefits Claimants

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will still be in receipt of special transitional additions in 1994-95 and the percentage of benefit increase taking effect in April.

Mr. Burt: Due to the very small numbers presently in receipt of special transitional addition it is impossible to give an accurate forecast of the number likely to be in receipt in 1994-95. The latest figures available are for February 1993 when 500 people were receiving a special transitional addition. Special transitional additions will increase in April by 3·5 per cent.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time between the date of application and an award from the independent living—1993—fund.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the fund that the average time taken for an application to the independent living—1993—fund to progress from initial contact to an offer of payment is 11 weeks. It takes on average a further five weeks for the offer to be accepted by the client and for payment arrangements to be made by the fund.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the projected underspend of the independent living fund during 1993-94; and if this amount will be carried over into the 1994-95 budget.

Mr. Scott: Total provision for the independent living fund is £124 million in 1993-94. The projected underspend

of the independent living—1993—fund during 1993-94 is £3·5 million. There is no projected underspend for the independent living—extension—fund. Normal Government accounting rules will apply to any unspent provision.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for a review of a current award have been made to the independent living—extension—fund; and how many awards have been increased as a result of this application.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the fund that the information requested is not available. However, in October 1993 the trustees of the fund initiated a programme of reviews for those clients who, for a number of reasons, were not able to make full use of the original amounts offered to them. Increased funding has now been offered to 766 clients, of whom 166 have accepted the offer made. The value of the increases now in payment is £5,958·40 per week, an average increase of £35·89 per week per client.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff are employed by the Child Support Agency;

(2) how many full-time staff on clerical officer grade or below employed by the Child Support Agency are *(a)* male and *(b)* female.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter form R. Hepplewhite to Mr. Dennis Skinner, dated 21 Janaury 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for details about the staffing of the Child Support Agency.

At 1 Janaury 1994, the Agency had 4,937 members of staff, of whom 4,156 were full-time and 781 part-time. Of full-time staff employed in clerical grades and below, 663 were male and 1,696 female.

You may also wish to know that work is undertaken on behalf of the Agency by the Northern Ireland Child Support Agency. On 1 January 1994, 440 members of staff at the Centre in Belfast were engaged on work relating to parents with care who live in mainland Britain. Of full-time staff at clerical grades and below employed in this work, 113 were male and 228 female.

I hope you find this information useful.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many copies of the leaflet on proposed changes to child support maintenance have been printed; when they will be available at local Department of Social Security offices; what has been the cost of the leaflet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Five hundred thousand copies of the leaflet, "Proposed Changes to Child Support Maintenance" were printed. They have been available from local offices since the second week of January. The leaflets were printed at a total cost of £21,691—zero VAT.

Girocheques

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) pursuant to his answer of 10 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *409,* if he will make it his policy that the Benefits Agency shall monitor centrally the number of girocheques issued by the Employment Service agency on behalf of his Department and the number of replacement girocheques issued to claimants;

(2) how many girocheques have been issued by his Department for each of the last five years; and what was the total value of the girocheques issued for each of those years.

Mr. Burt: The administration of payment of benefit by girocheque is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 20 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about girocheques issued by the Department of Social Security.

The number of girocheques issued by the Department of Social Security in each of the last five years are as follows:

	DSS issued (million)	*Value of DSS issues (£ million)*
1988-89	30·884	2,292
1989-90	34·484	2,619
1990-91	14·470	2,814
1991-92	36·190	3,304
1992-93	27·863	3,509

As you will be aware from my reply of 9.12.93., the Employment Service acts as our agent in the provision of girocheques to those who are unemployed and claiming Income Support. Data relevant to the number of girocheques issued cannot be separately identified as some girocheques are paid for a combination of benefits.

We are advised of the number of girocheques issued by Employment Services and we are able to identify the total amount paid in respect of both Department of Social Security and Employment Service benefits. However, as a number of girocheques are issued for a combination of benefits administered by both Agencies, it is not possible to state how many girocheques were issued for Benefit Agency payments only, Employment Service payments only, or a combination of payments in respect of both Agencies.

Within the Benefits Agency we are constantly monitoring the volume of losses of all Instruments of Payment including girocheques. Methods of preventing and reducing Instrument of Payment fraud are being developed in conjunction with Post Office Counters Ltd, Royal Mail and the Employment Services. One of the areas we are seeking to improve is the Management Information System providing details of girocheque issues and losses. We are examining our systems to determine the detail we require to combat girocheque fraud. The decision on what information we collate centrally and subsequent implementation will be made after considering the costs involved and usefulness of such information.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Market Testing

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what stage the market-testing process has reached in the DSS offices in Ayrshire; when he expects contracts to be awarded for these services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The market testing process in the DSS offices in Ayrshire is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 20 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the progress of the market testing exercise in DSS offices in Ayrshire.

The Benefits Agency is market testing accommodation and office services and management training services to all the Agency's offices in Scotland. Tenders for the provision of management training have been received and a contract will be awarded in the near future. Invitations to tender for messenger and security services have been issued and a contract is expected to be awarded in March. Invitations to tender for typing and telephonist services are expected to be issued in about six months time and a contract awarded about two months later.

I hope that my reply has been helpful.

Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each scheme operated by his Department under which loans are available, the objectives of the scheme, the number of unrecovered loans, the total value of unrecovered loans, the average number of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990, the average value of unrecovered loans for each year since 1990 and the annual cost of recovering loans.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Matthew Taylor, dated 20 January 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about loan schemes which are operated by his Department.

The Social Fund (SF) scheme is intended to help people to meet large intermittent or unexpected expenses. There are two types of interest free loans available from the SF—Budgeting Loans (BL) and Crisis Loans (CL). BLs are available to people who have been on Income Support for at least 26 weeks to help with important expenses which are difficult to budget for out of weekly benefit. CLs are available to people who need financial help to meet expenses in an emergency or a disaster, whether they are receiving any benefit or not. However, a CL can only be awarded if it is the only way to prevent serious risk, or serious damage, to the health or safety of that person or a member of his family.

The table at Annex A provides details of the number and total amount of unrecovered loans for each of the financial years ending March 1990 to March 1992 (latest year available).

SF loans are normally recovered by weekly deductions from benefit. Customers can only repay one loan at a time, so recovery of any subsequent loans is deferred to a later date. The amount outstanding therefore includes loans which have been deferred and also loans where recovery is continuing, but which have only been partially repaid.

You also asked for the annual cost of recovering loans. Unfortunately this information is not available.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Annex A

Year End Date	*Number of loans unrecovered (Thousands)*	*The value of the loans unrecovered £ (Millions)*
31 March 1990	814·95	107·691
31 March 1991	992·90	138·783
31 March 1992	1,312·30	178·376

Housing Benefit

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 11 January on housing benefit to private sector tenants, if he will provide a breakdown by each housing authority in Great Britain of the amount of DSS subsidy and local authority expenditure for the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 14 January 1994]:* The information is not available in the form requested for the financial year 1989-90. In view of the amount of data involved, I am arranging for copies of the available information to be placed in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Central Drugs Co-ordination Unit

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans the Government have to set up a central drugs co-ordination unit.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced in a written answer on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *780*, that a central drugs co-ordination unit was to be attached to the Privy Council Office. The unit will come into being on 24 January 1994 and report to me as chairman of the Cabinet Committee on drugs issues.

Parliamentary approval to this new service will be sought in a spring supplementary estimate for the Privy Council vote—class XIX, vote 3. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure, estimated at £40,000, will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Flight ULE 966

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of *(a)* 22 December regarding the detention of passengers on flight ULE 966 from Jamaica and *(b)* 10 January regarding the detention of the pregnant wife of Mr. Graham Doughty of Nottingham.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I replied to the hon. Member's letters of 22 December and 10 January on 12 and 18 January respectively.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what redress he will offer Mrs. Maria Doughty of Honeymead drive, Daybrook Lane, for being held at Gatwick airport on 22 December 1993 before being allowed to join her husband in Nottingham.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* I have written to the hon. Member about this case. I do not believe that any redress is justified.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the Jamaicans, detained from flight JQ001, were transferred to prison detention after leaving the Campsfield detention centre; and which prisons were used.

Mr. Charles Wardle: One who was transferred to HM prison Pentonville.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent flight ULE 966 from Kingston, Jamaica on 21 December 1993 was targeted by immigration officials; and at what level in his Department such decisions are taken.

Mr. Charles Wardle: For the reasons given in my letters of 12 and 18 January to the hon. Member, prior arrangements were made by immigration service managers at Gatwick, in consultation with senior officers at immigration service headquarters to enable a potentially large number of individual interviews to be conducted. Every decision to refuse entry was individually authorised by an officer of chief immigration officer or inspector grade, as the immigration rules require.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the nature of the contingency planning that took place in relation to flight ULE 966 from Kingston, Jamaica, that arrived on 21 December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The contingency planning included arrangements for the disembarkation of the aircraft in stages, the provision of a gate lounge where passengers could sit while awaiting interview, and making available additional immigration officers from the other Gatwick offices. The immigration service was also provided with a passenger manifest 3½ hours prior to the aircraft's arrival. Further details are contained in my letters of 12 and 18 January to the hon. Member.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reason passengers on board flight ULE 966 were segregated into distinct groups before they were allowed to disembark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Passengers on board flight ULE 966—JQ0001—were not segregated into groups before being allowed to disembark. European Community nationals and a number of unaccompanied children were invited to leave the aircraft first. The other passengers were asked to disembark progressively in groups by row number.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific evidence he has linking any of the 178 Jamaicans arriving on flight ULE 966 on 21 December 1993 who were detained, with criminal activity or with drug pushing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no evidence that any of these passengers is involved in criminal activity.

Theft

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department (1) how many prisoners convicted for theft were unemployed at the time of their arrest;

(2) what were the educational attainments of prisoners convicted for theft at the time of their conviction for the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Frank Field, dated 21 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions as to how many prisoners convicted for theft were unemployed at the time of their arrest, and what were the educational attainments of prisoners convicted for theft at the time of their conviction for the latest available date.

No information is held centrally on convicted prisoners' employment status at the time of arrest. However, the National Prison Survey, conducted in January and February 1991, found that 59 per cent. of convicted prisoners whose principal offence was burglary or another offence involving theft were not in paid work just before they came to prison; 31 per cent. said they were unemployed seeking work.

The National Prison Survey can also provide information on prisoners' educational qualifications. It found that qualifications of convicted prisoners whose principal offence was burglary or another offence involving theft were as follows:

	Per cent.
Degree or teaching qualification	1
Other higher qualification	2
A level or equivalent	2
O level or equivalent	36
Apprenticeship	7
Foreign qualification	[1]—
Commercial	[1]—
Any other qualification	3
No qualification	48

[1] Less than one.

About one third of those with O level or equivalent qualifications said that some had been attained in prison, as did about a half of those with higher qualifications.

The National Prison Survey had a total sample of almost 4,000 offenders. The total number of respondents in the sample convicted of burglary and other offences involving theft was 675. The statistics presented here are estimates, and there may be some sampling error. There are no more detailed or up-to-date figures held centrally.

Terrorism

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the incidents of terrorist activity in Great Britain since 21 February 1989 attributable to groups *(a)* connected with Northern Ireland and *(b)* not connected with Northern Ireland.

Mr. Howard: The list classifies acts of terrorism according to the definitions in section 14(2) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Incidents of terrorist activity in Great Britain since 21 February 1989

Date	*Location*	
(a) Connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland		
22 September 1989	Royal Marines School of Music, North Barracks, Deal, Kent	Device exploded. Eleven people killed and 21 people injured.
15 November 1989	Kelso Place, Kensington	Device made safe.
18 November 1989	Married Quarters, Messines Road, Colchester	Device exploded. Two people injured.

Date	Location	
16 January 1990	Army HQ, SE District, Aldershot	Device made safe.
20 February 1990	Combined Services Recruitment Centre, Rutland Street, Leicester	Device exploded. Two people injured.
25 February 1990	Army Recruiting Office, New Road, Halifax	Device exploded.
14 May 1990	Service Education Centre, Eltham, South London	Device exploded. Five people injured.
16 May 1990	Army Recruiting Centre, Wembly, Middlesex	Device exploded. One person killed and four people injured.
1 June 1990	Lichfield Railway Station, Staffordshire	One person killed and two people injured in shooting.
9 June 1990	Honourable Artillery HQ, City Road, London	Device exploded. 19 people injured.
12 June 1990	West Green House, Hartley Witney, Hampshire	Device made safe.
21 June 1990	RAF Stanmore Park, Uxbridge	Device exploded.
25 June 1990	Carlton Club, St. James, London	Device exploded. 20 people injured.
6 July 1990	The Strand, London WC2	Device exploded.
20 July 1990	Stock Exchange, London	Device exploded.
30 July 1990	The Dog House, Hankham, near Pevensey	Device exploded. One person killed.
6 August 1990	Woronzow Road, St. Johns Wood, London	Device made safe.
13 August 1990	Pye Barn, Moulsford, Didcot	Device made safe.
10 September 1990	Army and Navy Recruiting Office, Derby	Device exploded.
17 September 1990	Army Information Office, Finchley, London	One person injured in shooting.
18 September 1990	Milford, Staffordshire	Two people injured in shooting.
27 September 1990	Royal Overseas League, Park Place, London WC1	Device made safe.
24 January 1991	Territorial Army Firing Range, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire	Device exploded.
7 February 1991	Downing Street, London SW1	Three mortar bombs fired. One person injured.
18 February 1991	Paddington Station, London	Device exploded.
18 February 1991	Victoria Station, London	Device exploded. One person killed and 38 people injured.
25 February 1991	Napsbury Lane, St. Albans	Device exploded.
3 April 1991	Preston Railway Station, Preston, Lancashire	Devices made safe.
5 April 1991	Arndale Shopping Centre, Manchester	Devices exploded.
28 June 1991	Beck Theatre, Hayes, Middlesex	Device made safe.
30 June 1991	Royal Navy and RAF Recruiting Office, Fishergate Centre	Device made safe.
5 August 1991	Cambridge Public House, Charing Cross Road, London	Device exploded.
29 August 1991	London Underground Depot, Hammersmith	Devices made safe.
31 August 1991	Bargain Bookshop, Charing Cross Road, London	Device made safe.
15 November 1991	Old Barclays Bank, St. Peters Street, St. Albans, Hertfordshire	Device exploded. Two people killed and one person injured.
1 December 1991	The Discount Furniture Store Habitat, The World of Leather, The Reject Shop, Tottenham Court Road	Devices exploded.
2 December 1991	Littlewoods, Oxford Street, London W1	Devices exploded.
7-8 December 1991	Various locations in Blackpool	Devices discovered.
8 December 1991	Arndale Centre, Manchester	Devices exploded.
14 December 1991	Brent Cross Shopping Centre	Devices discovered.
15 December 1991	Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery, London WC2	Device exploded.
16 December 1991	Railway line near Clapham Junction	Device exploded.
23 December 1991	Ilford Underground Depot	Device exploded.

Date	Location	
	Neasden Underground Depot	Device exploded.
	Train at Harrow-on-the-Hill	Device exploded.
10 January 1992	Whitehall Place London SW1	Device exploded.
17 January 1992	Marquis of Granby Public House, Shaftesbury Avenue, London	Devices exploded.
30 January 1992	Elephant & Castle Underground Depot, London	Devices discovered.
3 February 1992	Neasden Underground Depot	Device discovered.
7 February 1992	London Underground Sidings between Barking & Upney Stations	Device exploded.
11 February 1992	Telephone box, Parliament Street, London	Device made safe.
28 February 1992	London Bridge Railway Station, London	Device exploded. 29 people injured.
29 February 1992	Crown Prosecution Service, Furnival Street, London	Device exploded. Two people injured.
1 March 1992	White Hart Lane BR Station, Tottenham, London N17	Device made safe.
10 March 1992	Near Wandsworth Common Railway Station, London	Device exploded.
6 April 1992	Bridle Lane, near Piccadilly Circus, London	Device exploded.
10 April 1992	St. Mary Axe, City of London	Device exploded. Three people killed, 91 people injured.
11 April 1992	Staples Corner, Junction of M1 and North Circular	Device exploded.
13 April 1992	Army Careers Information Office, Derby	One person killed in shooting.
9/10 May 1992	Metro Centre, Gateshead	Devices exploded.
7 June 1992	Royal Festival Hall, London	Device exploded.
8 June 1992	A64 Leeds-York near Tadcaster, North Yorkshire	One person killed and one person injured in shooting.
10 June 1992	Wilcox Place, Victoria Street	Device exploded.
15 June 1992	St. Albans Street, near Piccadilly Circus	Device exploded.
17/18 June 1992	Marks and Spencer, Leeds	Device made safe.
	Stop and Shop, Leeds	Device exploded.
	Waterstones Bookshop, Leeds	Devices discovered.
25 June 1992	Coleman Street, City of London	Device exploded. One person injured.
30/31 July 1992	Milton Keynes (Shops, Library)	Device exploded.
25 August 1992	Shropshire Regimental Museum and two furniture shops, Shrewsbury	Devices exploded.
6 September 1992	London Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London	Device exploded.
17 September 1992	Madame Tussaud's, Marylebone Road, London	Devices exploded.
	The Planetarium, Marylebone Road, London	Device exploded.
	Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London	Devices exploded.
7 October 1992	Junction of The Haymarket and Panton Street, Piccadilly	Device exploded. Five people injured.
	Near Centre Point, Flitcroft Street, London WC2	Device exploded.
8 October 1992	Tooley Street, London SE1	Device exploded. One person injured.
	Melcombe Street, London NW1	Device exploded.
9 October 1992	Royal British Legion, Nursery Road, Southgate N14	Device exploded.
	Car Park, Arnos Grove Underground Station	Device exploded.
10 October 1992	Paddington Green PS, Harrow Road, Paddington, W2	Device exploded. One person injured.
12 October 1992	Sussex Arms Public House, Long Acre, Covent Garden	Device exploded. One person killed and four people injured.
19 October 1992	Novotel Hotel, Shortlands, Hammersmith, W6	Device exploded.

Date	Location	
	Oxenden Street, London SW1	Device exploded. Two people injured.
21 October 1992	Railway Line, near Silver Street Station, Edmonton	Device exploded. Two people injured.
	Princess Louise Territorial Army Centre, Hammersmith Road, W6	Device exploded. Three people injured.
	Railway Line, near Harrow Road (Junction with Furness Road) NW10	Device exploded.
22 October 1992	Sewage Pipe, Wick Lane, E3	Device exploded.
25 October 1992	25-28 Morpeth Terrace, London SW1	Device exploded.
30 October 1992	Whitehall, London SW1 (near Downing Street)	Device exploded.
14 November 1992	Stoke Newington Road, London, N16	Device discovered. One person injured in shooting.
15 November 1992	Canada Tower, Canary Wharf	Device made safe.
16 November 1992	Collingwood Street, Bethnal Green, E1	Device made safe.
1 December 1992	Stephens Street/Tottenham Court Road	Device made safe.
3 December 1992	Deansgate and Cateaton Street, Manchester	Two Devices exploded. 11 people injured.
9 December 1992	Woodside Park Underground Station, North London	Device exploded.
10 December 1992	Wood Green Shopping Centre, London	Two devices exploded. 11 people injured.
16 December 1992	John Lewis Department Store, Oxford Street	Device exploded. One person injured.
	Cavendish Square, Oxford Street	Device exploded.
22 December 1992	Hampstead Tube Station	Device exploded.
6 January 1993	Reject Shop, Plaza Shopping Centre, Oxford Street	Device exploded.
	Dillon's Bookshop, Northumberland Avenue	Device exploded.
	C & A, Oxford Street	Device exploded.
	Video Shop, 60 Oxford Street	Device exploded.
28 January 1993	Harrods, Brompton Road, SW1	Device exploded. Two people injured.
3 February 1993	Train at Kent House Station, Kent	Device exploded.
	South Kensington Tube Station, London	Device exploded
7 February 1993	Quarry at Westbury-Sub-Mendip, Somerset	Two men arrested attempting to break into explosives store.
10 February 1993	Cadogan Place, London SW1	Device exploded.
26 February 1993	Warrington, Cheshire	One person injured in shooting.
	Warrington, Cheshire	Device exploded.
27 February 1993	Camden High Street, London	Devices exploded. 18 people injured.
20 March 1993	Bridge Street, Warrington, Cheshire	Two small devices exploded in litter bins in shopping area. Two children killed and 55 people injured, four extremely seriously.
7 April 1993	Argyle Square, London WC1	Small device exploded in builder's skip. No injuries.
23 April 1993	North Shields, Northumbria	Small device exploded at oil refinery. No injuries.
24 April 1993	Bishopsgate, London EC2	Very large HME device exploded in tipper truck. One man killed and 44 people injured. Very extensive damage.
24 April 1993	Manor House, N4	Small device exploded in hijacked minicab, no injuries.
24 April 1993	Judd Street, WC1	Small device exploded in hijacked minicab, no injuries.
9 May 1993	Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol	Two incendiary devices ignited causing little damage.
12 May 1993	Reject Shop, Cornmarket, Oxford	Small device discovered—had malfunctioned.
9 June 1993	Gateshead, Tyne and Wear	Device exploded at gas installation. Some damage.
10 June 1993	North Shields, Northumbria	Device exploded at oil refinery.

Date	Location	
28 August 1993	Wormwood Street, London (City)	Small device discovered and made safe. No damage, no injuries.
16 September 1993	Curzon Phoenix Cinema, Charing Cross Road	Two small malfunctioned incendiary devices found. No damage, no injuries.
	MGM Cinema, Shaftsbury Avenue	One small malfunctioned incendiary device found. No damage, no injuries.
2 October 1993	Finchley Road, London	Three small devices exploded. Five people injured some localised damage. One device found and made safe.
4 October 1993	Tottenham Lane, London	Two devices exploded. No injuries. Some localised damage.
	Archway Road, London	Two devices exploded. No injuries. Some localised damage.
	Highgate High Street, London	One device exploded. No injuries, some localised damage. A second device discovered and made safe.
8 October 1993	Junction of Coles Green Road and Humber Road near the North Circular Road junction at Staples Corner.	One device exploded. No injuries. Some localised damage.
	Outside the Blacklion Public House at 295 West End Lane	One device exploded. No injuries. Some localised damage.
	Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London	Devices exploded.
24 October 1993	Reading British Rail Station	One device made safe. One device exploded causing some damage to railway equipment. No injuries.
	Basingstoke British Rail Station	One device made safe.
	Railway line, Dorton near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire	Small device exploded. Minor damage, no injuries.
29 October 1993	Edwardes Square, Kensington High Street, London	Small device exploded beside a car. Extensive damage to car, no injuries.
14 December 1993	Railway line near Woking station.	Small device exploded on railway line. Slight damage to line. No injuries.
16 December 1993	Railway line near Brookwood and Farnborough stations	Two devices discovered disrupted by means of a controlled explosion.
20 December 1993	King Edward Buildings, Sorting Office, London EC1	Postal device discovered. Made safe. No damage, no injuries.
	Travellers Tavern, Elizabeth Street, Victoria, London SW1	6 devices discovered in suitcases. No injuries. One ignited, minor damage.
	Mount Pleasant Sorting Office, Rosebury Avenue, London EC1	Package exploded. No injuries, minor damage.
	Northfields Tube Station, Ealing, London W13	Small device exploded in a litter bin. No significant damage. No injuries.
(b) Other acts of terrorism		
9 April 1989	Haigh and Hochland, Manchester	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
9 April 1989	W. H. Smith, Moseley, West Midlands	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
9 April 1989	Dillons, London	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
9 April 1989	Collets, London	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
9 April 1989	Books for a Change, London	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
13 May 1989	Penguin Bookstore, London	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
6 July 1989	Collets, London	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
3 August 1989	Beverley House Hotel, London	Terrorist killed by own bomb.

Date	Location	
3 September 1989	Liberty's, London	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'. Passer-by injured.
3 September 1989	London Bookshop	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
13 September 1989	Penguin Bookstore, Peterborough	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling the 'Satanic Verses'.
	Penguin Bookstore, York	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
	Penguin Bookstore, Guildford	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling or thought to be selling the 'Satanic Verses'.
14 September 1989	Penguin Bookstore, Nottinghamshire	Firebomb attack on bookshop selling, or thought to be selling, the 'Satanic Verses'.
29 October 1993	Turkish Airlines Office, London	Petrol bomb thrown.
4 November 1993	Turkish Embassy, Belgrave Square, London	Petrol bombs thrown. Minor damage. No injuries.
	Turkish Airlines Office, London	Petrol bombs thrown. No injuries.
	London Islamic Turkish Association Centre, N16	Petrol bombs thrown. Extensive fire damage. No inuries.
	British Telecom Office (wrongly identified as T C Zjraat Bank), EC2	Bricks and petrol bombs thrown. Minor injuries.
	Sabanci Turkish Bank, EC2	Petrol bomb thrown. Minor damage. Member of public injured.

Mr. Keith Whitehouse

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether Keith Whitehouse's name was placed on the police national computer, in accordance with Home Office rules, in order to alert police forces that he was wanted, after he failed to return from home leave in January 1991:

(2) whether Keith Waterhouse was eligible for home leave under the Home Office rules barring leave for prisoners suffering from mental disorder; and when he was given home leave from HMP Risley in January 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tony Blair, dated 21 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the eligibility of Keith Whitehouse for home leave from prison in January 1991 and whether his name was placed on the Police National Computer after he failed to return to Risley prison on 11 June 1991. I have set out the circumstances and background in some detail because I think you will find it helpful in this tragic case.

In January 1991 Mr. Whitehouse, then known as Nico Constantine or Keith Nicholas Constantine, was at Featherstone prison not Risley. He was a category C prisoner and was granted home leave between 18 and 21 January 1991 so that he could arrange a date for his wedding. He returned to Featherstone on time.

He was later transferred to Lancaster prison and then moved to Risley in May 1991. He was allowed another period of home leave between 5-11 June, which had been agreed at Lancaster. The governor of Risley had no reason to interfere with that decision. He failed to return and was unlawfully at large until his arrest on 28 November 1991. He would have been released from prison at the end of his sentence on 29 August 1991.

Prisoners who are "considered to be mentally ill or suffering from mental disorder, or who have been committed to prison as a place of safety" are ineligible for consideration for home leave. The definition of mental disorder is considered to be a condition requiring psychiatric care or treatment under the terms of the 1983 Mental Health Act. Mr. Whitehouse had been described in a report to court in 1990 as having a "psychopathic personality disorder", but he was not considered mentally ill and did not require psychiatric treatment. On each occasion when he was considered for home leave, prison doctors considered his case. They did not find any medical reason to suggest leave should not be granted.

When a prisoner escapes, absconds or fails to return from temporary absence such as home leave it is the responsibility of the governor to inform the local police force. This was done within four hours of Mr. Whitehouse's failure to return on 11 June 1991. The Cheshire Police incident log confirms that Keith Nicholas Constantine was reported as unlawfully at large from Risley. I am advised that it is now impossible to confirm whether Cheshire Police then passed his details to the Police National Computer, as this data would have been deleted from the computer after 13 months.

I naturally regret the very tragic outcome in this case. But I am satisfied that Mr. Whitehouse's requests for home leave were properly considered according to the rules that existed in 1991. His failure to return was properly reported to the police.

Revised instructions now apply to requests for home leave. In particular, governors are required to make a rigorous risk assessment in each case, which is aimed at reducing the likelihood of further tragedies occurring.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female nationals of other European countries were either remand or sentenced prisoners being held in prisons in England and Wales as of 10 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 21 January 1994:

MALE AND FEMALE NATIONALS FROM OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female nationals of other European countries were either remand or sentenced prisoners being held in prisons in England and Wales as of 10 January.

The latest available provisional information is for prisoners in Prison Service establishments on 30 September 1993. On that date there were 1,022 males (of whom 309 were remanded and 713 were sentenced) and 46 females (of whom 17 were remanded and 29 were sentenced) recorded as nationals of European countries other than the United Kingdom. These figures exclude those for whom a nationality was not recorded.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female nationals of each African country were either remand or sentenced prisoners being held in prisons in England and Wales on 10 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 21 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female nationals of each African country were either remand or sentenced prisoners being held in prisons in England and Wales on 10 January.

The latest available information is given in the attached table.

Population in Prison Service establishments by type of prisoner and nationality as at 30 September 1993

	Type of prisoner					
	Male			Female		
Nationality	*Remand*	*Sentenced*	*All*	*Remand*	*Sentenced*	*All*
Angola	—	5	5	—	—	—
Benin	—	—	—	—	1	1
Central African Republic	4	2	6	—	—	—
Ivory Coast	1	1	2	—	—	—
Ethiopia	1	2	3	—	—	—
Ghana	16	41	57	5	18	23
Gambia	—	4	4	—	—	—
Kenya	2	25	27	1	—	1
Liberia	1	2	3	—	—	—
Libya	1	7	8	—	—	—
Morocco	6	18	249	—	1	1
Mauritania	—	2	2	—	1	1
Mauritius	1	8	9	—	—	—
Malawi	—	3	3	—	1	1
Nigeria	37	134	171	14	48	62
Seychelles	1	4	5	—	—	—
Sudan	—	1	1	—	1	1
St. Helena	—	1	1	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	2	7	9	—	—	—
Somalia	9	9	18	—	—	—
Tunisia	—	6	6	—	—	—
Tanzania	4	5	9	1	—	1
Uganda	4	15	19	—	—	—
South Africa	3	17	20	—	2	2
Zambia	4	3	7	—	1	1
Zaire	2	6	8	—	—	—
Zimbabwe	2	9	11	—	—	—
Total	101	337	438	21	74	95

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the foreign language documents available in prisons in England and Wales to be given to people serving sentences who do not speak English; in what languages the documents are available; and what information each contains.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 21 January 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about foreign language documents available to be given to prisoners in England and Wales who do not speak English.

The foreign language documents issued centrally by the Prison Service are listed below, along with details of the languages into which they have been translated and an outline of their content. Further foreign language documents may also have been produced locally by establishments or by other agencies, but details are not kept centrally.

Prisoners Information Pack.

Languages: Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Dutch, French, Gujerati, Hindi, Italian, Punjabi, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Welsh.

Content: useful organisations; starting your sentence; visits, letters and phone calls; requests and complaints; race relations; social security and discharge grants; health and hygiene; welfare and religion; prison discipline; unconvicted and civil prisoners; women prisoners; young offenders; release; and visiting prisoners.

Foreign Prisoners Resource Pack
Languages: staff section—English only; prisoner section—English, Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Italian, Spanish, and Urdu.
Content: the criminal justice system; immigration; customs and excise; embassies and consulates.

The Race Relations Policy Statement
Languages: Arabic, Bengali, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu, and Welsh.
Content: Statement of Prison Service race relations policies.

"Custody, Care and Justice: The way ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales"
Languages: Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, Turkish, and Urdu.
Content: details of the Government White Paper "Custody, Care, and Justice."

How to make a request or a complaint
Languages: Bengali, Dutch, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, and Spanish.
Content: information on request and complaint procedure in establishments.

Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984
Languages: Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.
Content: information for foreign prisoners about the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984.

Assisted Prison Visits Scheme

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to allow homosexual partners to benefit from the assisted prison visits scheme on similar terms to other partners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current assisted prison visits scheme is designed to help prisoners maintain their family ties by paying towards the costs of visits made by their close relatives on low incomes. Under the scheme, close relatives are defined as spouses, children, siblings and partners of prisoners. A partner is defined as a person of the opposite sex who was living with the prisoner for at least four months before imprisonment, or who has a child from the relationship. Consequently, homosexual partners of prisoners do not qualify for assisted visits, although consideration is being given to whether the scheme should be extended.

Murder

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all the people imprisoned for murder since 1967 who have subsequently *(a)* had their conviction overturned on appeal and *(b)* been released by the Home Secretary due to unsound convictions; and what are the total numbers in each category.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is for those originally sentenced to life for murder and whose sentences were subsequently reduced, or lifted on appeal whilst serving their sentences in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. There were 127 cases between 1967 and 1992, of which 19 followed references to the Court of Appeal by the Home Secretary under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. Details of individual cases cannot be given.

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which his Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on accountancy and non-accountancy contracts awarded to all known accountancy firms and merchant banks is not recorded centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Details of contracts awarded during the last two years to the main accountancy firms and merchant banks are set out in the table.

	1992	*1993*	*Total value* £
Merchant banks			
Lazards		Report on attracting private firms for facilities management for secure training centres.	
Accountancy firms			
Touche Ross	Asset survey for ED5	Spectrum sizing study amendment. Police information system strategy study. Team assurance co-ordinator message handling system—EP Division. Radio spectrum sizing study. Project advisor to PSRCP.	228,795
Ernst and Young	Firearms licensing costs. Police roles and responsibilities. ICL Domain review.	PNCO security review. Feasibility study of artificial intelligence study. Feasibility of market testing Hendon Data centre.	376,892
KPMG Peat Marwick	Review of organisation of PNCO.	Scoping study for Design and illustration branch. Privatisation of D/Tels. Radio spectrum study. Public safety radio communication project.	302,000
Price Waterhouse		Development database demo facility. SSADN analyst work on AFIS project.	

	1992	1993	Total value £
		ED1 in-house bid consultation support. Assisting In-house bid for the provision of security at Lunar House. Privatisation of D/Tels Principal advisor. In-house bid support, recruitment of immigration officers.	409,495
Cooper and Lybrand	Market Testing review. Triple CJS report on criminal justice initiatives.	VFM audit of action support. Senior management workshop.	192,000

Crime, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there were in Durham in each of the last 14 years for *(a)* house burglary, *(b)* theft from vehicles and *(c)* robbery; and if he will give the total number of convictions for these offences in Durham during this period as a proportion.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, and 1992 is given in the table. Data for other years would involve disproportionate cost.

Number and percentage of offenders convicted for certain indictable offences in the Durham police force area and England and Wales 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992

Year/Area	Burglary in a dwelling[1] Number	Per cent.	Theft from vehicles Number	Per cent.	Robbery Number	Per cent.	Total indictable [=100 per cent.]
1979							
Durham	279	6	175	4	24	0	4,837
England and Wales	19,310	5	7,368	2	3,188	1	412,346
1980							
Durham	353	6	223	4	25	0	5,477
England and Wales	22,808	5	8,559	2	3,470	1	455,425
1982							
Durham	373	6	263	4	32	1	5,964
England and Wales	24,827	5	2,918	3	4,375	1	475,131
1984							
Durham	316	5	222	4	28	0	5,917
England and Wales	25,842	6	10,970	2	4,282	1	449,449
1986							
Durham	328	7	156	3	27	1	4,774
England and Wales	20,527	5	9,145	2	4,196	1	384,209
1988							
Durham	345	7	89	2	35	1	4,623
England and Wales	19,468	5	8,406	2	4,311	1	386,236
1990							
Durham	265	7	212	6	36	1	3,825
England and Wales	18,386	5	7,622	2	4,806	1	342,759
1992							
Durham	254	7	177	5	39	1	3,641
England and Wales	18,637	6	6,257	2	5,082	2	324,910

[1]Also includes "aggravated" burglary in a dwelling.

Race Relations Act 1976

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action he intends to take following the Commission for Racial Equality's second review of the Race Relations Act 1976;

(2) when he will respond to the Commission for Racial Equality's second review of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are giving careful consideration to the Commission for Racial Equality's recommendations and have discussed the issues raised with them; we will respond formally as soon as possible.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether and how visitors to the United Kingdom detained for questioning by immigration officials are made aware of their right to complain to the immigration and nationality department complaints unit.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Passengers who wish to complain are normally invited to speak to a supervising officer; if they remain dissatisfied they are given the address of the immigration and nationality department complaints unit and advised that they may put their complaint in writing.

Probation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of *(a)* probation orders and *(b)* community service orders successfully ran their course during 1992.

Mr. Maclean: The information published in the 1992 probation statistics for England and Wales, a copy of which is in the Library, shows that 81 per cent. of probation orders terminated successfully in 1992, in the sense that 65 per cent. ran their full course, 3 per cent. were replaced by a conditional discharge and 13 per cent. were terminated early by the courts for good progress. In the same year

72 per cent. of community service orders terminated successfully, in the sense that the specified number of hours was completed without termination of the order for failure to comply with its requirements, conviction of another offence or for other reasons.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it cost to build the three most recently opened probation and bail hostels; and where they were sited.

Mr. Maclean: The costs of the three most recently opened hostels are:

	£
Merseyside bail hostel, Merseyside	934,299
Bunbury House bail hostel, Cheshire	545,537
Scunthorpe bail hostel, Humberside	[1]579,016

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was, or will be, the projected underspend on the hostel expansion budget for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Maclean: In 1992-93 the underspend on the approved hostel expansion programme was £3·26 million. The current projected underspend for 1993-94 is £1·2 million.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what revision was made following a public expenditure survey to the probation accommodation grant scheme as originally set out in the three-year plan for the probation service 1994-97.

Mr. Maclean: Planned provision for the probation accommodation grants scheme as shown in the three-year planning document for the probation service 1994-97 is as follows. The spending plans set out in the 1993-96 planning document published following the 1992 public expenditure survey are shown in parentheses.

	£ million
1994-95	10·8 (11·9)
1995-96	11·7 (13·2)
1996-97	12·0

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons will be made redundant as a result of the bail hostel closure plans.

Mr. Maclean: It will be for the individual probation committees and hostel managing committees concerned, as employers, to decide how to manage the consequences of closures in terms of staff redeployment or redundancy; we have not yet received full accounts of their conclusions.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average occupancy level for bail hostels in England and Wales for each of the last 10 quarters.

Mr. Maclean: Occupancy figures for the period April 1991 to March 1992 are not readily available on a quarterly basis. The occupancy figures for the most recent six quarters are as follows:

	Per.cent
April to June 1992	66
July to September 1992	61
October to December 1992	62
January to March 1993	65
April to June 1993	64
July to September 1993	67

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were remanded to a probation or bail hostel in England and Wales; and how many of these were *(a)* black males and *(b)* black females, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not held centrally and is not readily available.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residents of probation and bail hostels were aged *(a)* under 17, *(b)* 17 to 21 and *(c)* 21 years or over, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not held centrally and is not readily available.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made as to the number of persons who will be received into custody as a result of the proposed bail hostel closures; and what will be the estimated annual cost of such custody.

Mr. Maclean: It remains to be seen whether there are any additional custodial remands. These are decisions for the courts, who will continue to have the option of remanding defendants to other under-utilised bail hostels in the same or neighbouring probation areas.

Drugs

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the average length of custodial sentences in each of the last three years for offences of possession with intent to supply *(a)* class A, *(b)* class B and *(c)* class C substances as defined by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information regarding the average length of custodial sentences for the offence of possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply unlawfully, for the last three years for which figures are available, is contained in the table. The available information does not differentiate between the classes of drug involved.

Table: average length of custodial sentence for possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply unlawfully, United Kingdom, 1990 to 1992

Year	Average length of sentence (months)
1990	21·1
1991	20·9
1992	19·6

Crime Statistics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) of

26 November, *Official Report*, columns *237-38*, how many notifiable offences there were for each police force area in each year since June 1983, *(a)* in total, *(b)* broken down into each category of offence and *(c)* what was the clear-up rate in each category.

Mr. Maclean: Statistics on the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area and offence group are published annually in table 2.5 of the command paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Figures for clear-ups are published in table 2.9 of the volumes for 1991 and 1992 and in table 2.19 of the 1990 volume.

Figures for clear-ups by selected offence groups are published in table 2.19 of the volumes for 1986 to 1989. Information for earlier years is not available centrally.

Copies of the annual command paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" are available in the Library.

Deportees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount paid to private security firms for escorting detainees and their dependants overseas in 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The amount was £257,035, excluding ticketing costs.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which private security firms are used by carriers required by the immigration service to effect the removal of a passenger refused leave to enter;

(2) what checks his Department makes on private security firms employed by carriers required by the immigration service to effect the removal of a passenger refused leave to enter.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Where directions are given to carriers under paragraph 8 of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971 to remove people refused leave to enter, the carrier is responsible for all the arrangements necessary to comply with the directions. This includes making arrangements for any escort considered by the carrier to be necessary, the selection of the escorts and ensuring they are able to perform their duties satisfactorily. Where removal is directed at public expense under paragraph 10 of schedule 2 to the Act, any in-flight escort judged necessary is arranged by the immigration service in accordance with its normal policy.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that medical records of deportees are consulted before drugs are administered.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Where the medical records of a person being deported are available, they are already consulted as necessary before the administration of any medication.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ban the administration of drugs during deportations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The administration of medication to a deportee is a matter for a medical practitioner to decide.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which companies manufacture the arm and leg restraints and body belts with handcuffs used during deportations;

(2) if he will publish his Department's regulations relating to the materials, size and specification of restraints used in deportations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that the body belt and leg restraints are manufactured to a specification developed by the Metropolitan police and manufactured by its stores department. Hiatt and Company Ltd. supplies the Metropolitan police with handcuffs in accordance with standards evaluated by the Home Office police scientific development branch and approved by the Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers in consultation with the Police Complaints Authority. The standard handcuff is manufactured from steel with either a chain or hinge link and the Quick-Kuff is made from steel with a nylon grip.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of in-flight escorts for deportations have been provided by private security firms since August 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period from 1 August to 31 December 1993, 93 per cent. of the in-flight escorts for people being removed at public expense—including deportees—were provided by the private sector.

Crime Prevention

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent in each year since 1978-79 on *(a)* crime prevention and *(b)* public relations by each police authority in cash and in current prices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Joy Gardner

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to the Exchequer of the attempted deportation of Mrs. Joy Gardner.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The cost of the police officers and the immigration officer directly involved in the attempt to deport Mrs. Gardner on 28 July 1993 was £539·79. The cost of the time of other officials of the immigration and nationality department involved in this case could not be established without disproportionate expense.

Ethnic Communities

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what projects have been funded in the London borough of Southwark under section 11 funding for ethnic communities; and what funding those projects will receive from the Home Office in 1994-95;

(2) how much section 11 funding for ethnic communities there was in 1993-94; and what will be the section 11 funding for 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Total provision for section 11 grant in 1993-94 is currently £130·8 million. The corresponding figure for 1994-95 amounts to £111·5 million. This includes funding transferred to the new single regeneration budget.

At present, the following projects in the London borough of Southwark are approved for section 11 grant:

English as a second language and bilingual support project —primary and secondary
Removing barriers to the education achievement of new pupils—primary and secondary
Section 11 support for pupils in special schools
Bilingual and language development support for NCW children under five including those with special needs
Co-ordination and delivery of English for speakers of other languages—ESOL—to adult NCW members/groups in Southwark
Caribbean teachers association teaching and educational project
Southwark Muslim womens association
Mental health project
Child protection project
Translation and interpretation service
Bengal community development project.

The level of grant paid to Southwark in 1994-95 will depend upon actual expenditure incurred by the authority. I shall write to the hon. Member setting out in more detail the position for 1994-95 funding in Southwark.

Immigration (False Imprisonment)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what redress is available to visitors detained at airports but eventually allowed entry in respect of false imprisonment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 20 January 1994]:* Paragraph 16 of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971 provides that a person who may be required to submit to examination may be detained under the authority of an immigration officer pending his examination and pending a decision to give or refuse him leave to enter. It is open to anyone who considers that he has been falsely imprisoned to sue for damages.

SCOTLAND

Large Combustion Plant Directive

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on compliance to date with the Scottish limits in the United Kingdom national plan to meet the requirements of the EC large combustion plant directive.

Sir Hector Monro: None of the Scottish limits set in the plan was exceeded in the years 1991 to 1993 inclusive. However, on 21 December 1993 a transfer was made of 12 kilotonnes of sulphur dioxide from the other industry sector to the power stations sector with effect from 1996, declining pro rata to the existing reductions from 1999 to 2003. The revised figures are set out in the table. This minor technical change recognises the new five year contract agreed between British Coal and Scottish Power and the latter's commitment to fit flue gas desulphurisation equipment at Longannet power station.

Revised LCPD national plan SO_2 limits for Scotland (in kilotonnes)

	Power stations	*Refineries*	*Other industry*
1993	104	14	35
1994	102	14	34
1995	102	14	32
1996	114 (102)	14	19 (31)
1997	114 (102)	14	18 (30)
1998	111 (99)	13	17 (29)
1999	98 (88)	13	17 (27)
2000	86 (77)	13	16 (25)
2001	77 (68)	12	15 (24)
2002	70 (62)	12	14 (22)
2003	63 (57)	12	14 (20)

Note: The figures in the existing national plan are shown in parenthesis, where any change has been made.

DEFENCE

Arms Sales, Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has anything to add to the answer by the Minister for Arms Procurement to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) of 25 January 1991, *Official Report,* column *357.*

Mr. Aitken: No. This issue is being investigated by Lord Justice Scott, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment before the publication of his final report. I can assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that Lord Justice Scott has access to all relevant documents.

Artillery Shell Sales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department holds in regard to the underwriting by the Bank of Credit and Commerce International of the export of artillery shells from British companies to Iran since 1985.

Mr. Aitken: My Department holds no such information.

Canira Technical Company Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he possesses in regard to the ownership and trading activities of the Canira Technical Company Ltd. of Northern Ireland in relation to the Iraqi arms procurement programme.

Mr. Aitken: This issue is being investigated by Lord Justice Scott, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment before the publication of his final report. I can assure the hon. Member, however, that Lord Justice Scott has access to all relevant documents.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence between what hours the night low flying system is activated.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom night low flying system is operational between the following hours each month:

	Start	*Finish*
January	16.30	07.30
February	17.30	07.00
March	18.30	06.00
April	19.30	04.30
May	20.30	03.30
June	21.00	03.00
July	21.00	03.30

	Start	Finish
August	20.00	04.00
September	18.30	05.00
October	17.30	06.00
Novemb[illegible]	16.30	07.00
Decemb[illegible]	16.00	07.30

All times are Greenwich mean time.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for which portion of the flight by 29 Squadron Tornado F3s on 12 April 1993 the specified minimum authorised altitude applied; and who was responsible for issuing the authorisation.

Mr. Hanley: The specified minimum authorised altitude of 2,000 ft applied to the entire duration of the flight by 29 Squadron on 12 April 1993—apart from take-off and landing. Two thousand feet is the minimum altitude down to which all United Kingdom military aircraft can fly without specific authorisation, normally by either the squadron commander or one of his senior officers. On this occasion no such authorisation was given.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions are given to military aircrew concerning use of an air traffic control radar service when descending into the United Kingdom low flying system in visual meteorological conditions in unregulated airspace in the flight information region.

Mr. Hanley: No instructions are given to military aircrew concerning the use of such a service when descending to low level in visual meteorological conditions in unregulated airspace in the flight information region.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the arrangements for separation of low-flying military aircraft from offshore industry support helicopters during the hours of darkness, in the coastal areas around *(a)* the Humber estuary, *(b)* Morecambe bay, *(c)* north-east Norfolk and *(d)* the Aberdeen-Fraserburgh area.

Mr. Hanley: Details of civil helicopter activity in each of the areas specified are brought to the attention of aircrews in the United Kingdom military low flying handbook and on the night low flying chart. Separation from offshore industry support helicopters is achieved by military aircraft operating in separate height bands.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which date low flying area 10 was established in Suffolk; which unit is the controlling authority for the area; and what are the limits on entry of fast jets into the area.

Mr. Hanley: Low flying area 10 was established on 1 September 1993 and is controlled by Wattisham airfield. Fast jets wishing to operate in the area must seek permission from the controlling authority.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if aircrew are permitted to plan entries into particular areas in the night low flying system contrary to the sector-to-sector flow direction when no other aircraft have booked to fly in that area.

Mr. Hanley: The fixed wing region of the United Kingdom night low flying system is divided into a series of numbered night low flying areas, each of which is sub-divided by letter into night low flying sectors. Aircraft crossing from sector to sector must follow the flow direction specified in the regulations except that when an aircraft or formation has exclusive use of an entire NLFA, it may cross the sector boundaries within that area in either direction, but must still comply with the flow direction if crossing to an adjacent area.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum height for military aircraft transitting through the Leeming-Teesside gap at low level; and on what date the current height limit was introduced.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum and maximum heights for fixed wing military aircraft transitting through the Leeming-Teesside gap are, respectively, 250 and 1000 ft. These limits have applied since the introduction of the present United Kingdom low flying system in 1979.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the requirement in the low flying regulations for military aircrew to make radio contact with Brough airfield prior to transitting the Hull-Brough gap, was changed to a requirement to contact Humberside airport.

Mr. Hanley: Military aircrew are strongly advised to call Humberside radar prior to transitting the Hull-Brough gap, but this is not a mandatory requirement. The change from Brough airfield to Humberside radar came into effect on 15 June 1992.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the transit areas established in the daytime low flying system are in force in the night low flying system.

Mr. Hanley: Yes. Transit areas apply equally to military aircraft operating during the day and at night.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what central records are held by his Department of the number of aircraft movements into each numbered low flying area in the night flying system.

Mr. Hanley: Central records are maintained on a monthly basis of the number of aircraft movements into each sector of the United Kingdom night low flying system.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the maximum permitted speeds and minimum permitted altitudes for Royal Air Force Vulcan aircraft, prior to their retiral from the strike/attack role, while operating in the United Kingdom low flying system *(a)* on the fixed tactical routes and *(b)* outside the tactical routes.

Mr. Hanley: RAF Vulcan aircraft were permitted to fly at an absolute maximum of 350 knots and a minimum height of 300 ft in the United Kingdom low flying system. The aircraft did not operate outside fixed tactical routes except when using designated range areas.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations and dates in the last five years on which No. 591 Signals Unit, Royal Air Force, has

conducted covert monitoring of tactical radio frequencies used by aircraft operating in the United Kingdom low flying system; and on how many occasions this has included monitoring of the common low flying frequency.

Mr. Hanley: No. 591 Signals Unit has never been tasked to carry out covert monitoring of tactical radio frequencies used by aircraft operating in the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if night low flying is permitted over *(a)* the Western Isles, *(b)* Orkney, *(c)* Shetland and *(d)* the northern half of the Isle of Man; and what are the reasons for their exclusion from the system of numbered night low flying areas.

Mr. Hanley: With the exception of the Isle of Man, which is designated an avoidance area, aircraft are permitted to overfly the areas listed at low level at night. These areas are not included in the system of numbered night low flying areas because the amount of low flying carried out over them at night is not sufficient to justify their inclusion in the system of procedural deconfliction which exists elsewhere.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level flights in instrument meteorological conditions were undertaken by RAF Tornados from Canadian forces base Goose Bay *(a)* during daylight hours and *(b)* at night during each of the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The records of sorties flown from Goose Bay do not differentiate between those sorties flown under visual flying rules and those flown under instrument meteorological conditions. The statistics requested are therefore unavailable.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the agreed annual number of low-flying sorties over the United Kingdom by aircraft participating in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation tactical leadership programme courses.

Mr. Hanley: The NATO tactical leadership programme holds six courses per year and was permitted in 1993 to fly an average of two low-level sorties per course in the United Kingdom low flying system. Each low-level sortie in the United Kingdom may involve up to 24 aircraft.

RAF Fast-jet Aircrew

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many person-days have been spent by Royal Air Force fast-jet aircrew on operational deployments to actual or potential areas of combat operations in each year since 1981.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Goose Bay Training Base

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amounts paid to the Canadian Government in each year since 1980 for use of the training facilities at Goose Bay, Labrador; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures into *(a)* contributions to personnel, operations and maintenance expenditure, *(b)* contributions to common user building, infrastructure, facility and equipment expenditure, *(c)* payments for dedicated user buildings, infrastructure, facilities and equipment and *(d)* contributions to expenditure on environmental research and mitigation measures.

Mr. Hanley: Amounts paid for financial years prior to 1986-87 are not readily available. For financial years 1986-87 to the end of September 1993 the breakdown is as follows:

RAF(U) Goose Bay—breakdown of costs

	Financial year							
	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94 to end October 1993*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
Personnel	0·560	0·878	0·771	1·066	4·509	3·423	3·876	2·183
O & M + Capital	3·057	2·973	5·406	6·842	4·683	6·245	9·601	4·382
Total contribution payable to Canada	3·617	3·851	6·177	7·907	9·192	9·668	13·476	6·565
Dedicated costs								
Buildings and Infrastructure	1·831	1·414	1·941	1·782	0·608	0·955	2·424	0·816
Facilities	0·530	0·561	1·195	1·123	0·942	0·951	1·439	0·843
Equipment	0·050	0·073	0·144	0·144	0·085	0·127	0·033	0·014
Aviation/Land Fuels	0·015	0·003	1·292	2·810	1·512	1·476	2·608	1·264
Total dedicated costs	2·395	2·051	4·573	5·859	3·146	3·508	6·503	2·936
Common costs								
Buildings and Infrastructure	0·452	0·482	0·160	0·225	0·922	2·131	2·433	1·116
Facilities	0·175	0·207	0·460	0·323	0·141	0·142	0·158	0·064
Equipment	0·034	0·231	0·212	0·438	0·407	0·428	0·393	0·240
Environmental Mitigation Measures	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·067	0·037	0·114	0·025
Total common costs	0·661	0·921	0·832	0·985	1·537	2·738	3·098	1·446
Exchange Rate £ =	C$2·043	C$2·12	C$2·119	C$1·923	C$2·132	C$1·996	C$2·073	C$1·96

Figures shown are based on bills presented by the Canadian Government.

Tornado Incidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the action taken as a result of the incident involving a Scandinavian Airlines MD-80 and a Tornado from the trinational training establishment in the Manchester air traffic control zone in November 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The crew of the Tornado involved in the incident on 4 November 1992 were formally interviewed by their squadron commander upon their return to the Tornado trinational training establishment and extensively debriefed on the procedures for dealing with the situation which had arisen. A review of TTTE procedures was conducted at RAF Cottesmore in particular relating to briefing for low level flying and emergency pull-up procedures. These are re-emphasised at all pre-flight briefings and are rechecked by squadron authorising officers.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the joint airmiss working group report on the airmiss between an Army Lynx helicopter and an RAF Tornado over the North Yorkshire moors on 12 January 1993.

Mr. Hanley: A copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House.

Tornado F3 (Fuel Tanks)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and circumstances of all incidents involving the inadvertent jettisoning of underwing fuel tanks by Tornado F3 aircraft from RAF Leeming.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Date	*Circumstances*
15 January 1991	The cause was not positively determined, although it was considered the most likely cause was the inadvertent hitting of the selective jettison button by the pilot.
5 October 1992	Inadvertent operation of the selective jettison button by the navigator as he tried to resolve a fault in the underwing stores management panel.

Both incidents were fully investigated and the lessons to be drawn were disseminated throughout the RAF.

Phantom

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances of an incident at Bentham, North Yorkshire, in September 1991, in which a Phantom aircraft lost part of its engine during flight.

Mr. Hanley: On 11 September 1991 a RAF Phantom aircraft was flying at 500 ft and 420 knots over north Yorkshire when an explosion was heard from the right engine. The engine was shut down and the pilot diverted to RAF Leeming. On investigation the engine pressure and high pressure turbine assemblies were found to have seized. Small pieces of engine debris fell on the roof and car park of the Angus Fire factory in High Bentham, causing some minor damage. There were eight claims as a result of this incident, all of which have been settled.

Exercise Luce Belle

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the reason for the exclusion of the Buccaneer aircraft from the Exercise Luce Belle noise measurement programme.

Mr. Hanley: The Buccaneer's primary role is maritime strike/attack; it does not conduct a significant amount of low flying over land in the United Kingdom low flying system. It was excluded from Exercise Luce Belle on that basis.

Military Aircraft (Radio Communication)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those military aircraft types in United Kingdom military, and United Kingdom-based United States military service, which do not possess radios capable of communicating on very high frequency civil air traffic control frequencies.

Mr. Hanley: All United Kingdom military aircraft are capable of communicating on very high frequency civil air traffic control frequencies. United Kingdom-based United States F15C and F15E aircraft are not capable of communicating on VHF frequencies, but would communicate with air traffic control using VHF frequencies.

Instrument Meteorological Flights

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations governing flight by military aircraft in instrument meteorological conditions at less than 3,000 ft altitude outside controlled or regulated airspace; and what measures are taken to ensure separation of aircraft flying in these conditions from other air traffic.

Mr. Hanley: Military aircraft are not permitted to operate below 3,000 ft above mean sea level in instrument meteorological conditions outside controlled or regulated airspace except: when they are taking off or landing; when they are descending to or climbing out from authorised low-level flight; or when special dispensation has been granted. In these circumstances, aircrew will as far as possible avoid areas of known airborne activity or will make use of air traffic services to maintain separation from other aircraft. In addition, military aircraft conduct low flying training in instrument meteorological conditions in the highlands restricted area using terrain-following radar.

Military Aircraft (Live Weapons)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each year since 1989 and by *(a)* location and *(b)* aircraft type when a military aircraft carrying live weapons has landed at a civil airport in the United Kingdom as a matter of urgency; and if he will show in his answer the type of weapons being carried.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Skyguard

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* date and *(b)* locations when the Skyguard surveillance system has been operated since its inception.

Mr. Hanley: Since its introduction, Skyguard radar has been deployed to the following locations to monitor low flying:

Location	*Dates*
Knaresborough, North Yorkshire	27 to 29 June 1989
Penrith, Cumbria	1 to 3 August 1989
Alnwick, Northumberland	3 to 5 October 1989
Morpeth, Northumberland	27 to 29 March 1990
Shepton Mallet, Somerset	10 to 13 July 1990
Grange-over-Sands/Carnforth, Cumbria	17 to 20 September 1990
Leeming/Teesside Gap, North Yorkshire	1 to 4 October 1990
Peterborough, Cambridgeshire	13 to 15 November 1990
Richmond/Barnard Castle, North Yorkshire	23 to 25 April 1991
Rhaydar area, Powys	1 to 4 July 1991
Morpeth area, Northumberland	16 to 18 July 1991
Cley and Stiffkey, Norfolk	22 to 24 October 1991
East Fortune, Lothian	10 to 13 February 1992
Duns, Berwickshire	9 to 12 March 1992
Carmarthen, Dyfed	7 to 9 April, 1992
Dumfries area, Dumfries and Galloway	18 to 21 May 1992
Forest of Dean, Gloucester	8 to 11 June 1992
Beverley, Humberside	29 June to 2 July 1992
Conon Bridge, Ross and Cromarty	21 to 24 September 1992
Market Deeping, Lincolnshire	17 to 18 November 1992
Cockermouth, Cumbria	23 to 25 February 1993
Upper Dinmore, Hereford and Worcester	26 to 29 April 1993
Norwich, Norfolk	21 to 24 June 1993
Lake Bala, Gwynedd	12 to 14 July 1993
Thurso, Caithness and Sutherland	20 to 23 September 1993
Alnmouth, Northumberland	27 to 30 September 1993
Chirnside, Berwickshire	25 to 28 October 1993
Hornby, Lancashire	23 to 25 November 1993
Daventry, Northamptonshire	7 to 9 December 1993

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is currently analysing the outcome of the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme with the efficiency unit in the Cabinet Office. Much of the information requested in the question will, once it has been finalised, be published in aggregate form in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report".

Ships (Medical Provision)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what medical provision is provided on board Royal Navy *(a)* aircraft carriers, *(b)* landing ships, *(c)* destroyers, *(d)* frigates, *(e)* minesweepers, *(f)* minehunters, *(g)* patrol boats and *(h)* other small craft in terms of qualified doctors, nurses and other staff.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Aircraft Carriers

2×Medical Officers—1 surgeon, 1 anaesthetist
1×Dental Officer
1×Operating Department Assistant
1×Laboratory Technician
6×Medical Assistants

(b) Landing Ships

1×Medical Officer
1×Dental Officer
7×Medical Assistants

(c) Destroyers and Frigates

The complements of all destroyers and frigates include a medical assistant; in addition, vessels designated to lead destroyer or frigate squadrons and those operating independently, or on directed tasks, carry a medical officer.

(d) Minesweepers, Minehunters, Patrol Boats and Other Small Craft

These ships are classed as minor war vessels and carry no dedicated medical personnel, but all minor war vessels Coxswains undergo special first aid training at the Royal Naval medical staff school.

Pregnant Women

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates he has of the amount of money that will be spent in 1993-94 and 1994-95 in compensation to women who had to leave the armed forces because they became pregnant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to estimate reliably the amount of money that will be spent in 1993-94 and 1994-95 in compensation to women who were compulsorily discharged from the services on grounds of pregnancy between 9 August 1978 and August 1990.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women in each year since 1980 who left the forces because they became pregnant subsequently rejoined the forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women have left each of the armed forces in each year since 1980 because they became pregnant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of women who left the Armed Forces in each year since 1980 because they became pregnant, are as follows:

	Female officers			*Non-commissioned females*			
Financial year	*Royal Navy*	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*	*Royal Navy*	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*	*Total*
1979-80	4	13	7	55	174	162	415
1980-81	6	13	13	72	185	179	468
1981-82	11	21	23	84	250	186	575
1982-83	8	15	16	95	208	186	528
1983-84	5	9	12	103	179	161	469
1984-85	6	14	12	113	195	175	515
1985-86	6	13	15	100	226	156	516
1986-87	6	10	18	104	176	151	465
1987-88	7	15	16	125	205	186	554
1988-89	3	12	18	86	143	160	442
1989-90	4	14	15	84	157	157	431

Financial year	Female officers: Royal Navy	Army	Royal Air Force	Non-commissioned females: Royal Navy	Army	Royal Air Force	Total
1990-91	3	17	12	60	167	124	383
1991-92	4	17	15	78	177	140	431
1992-93	3	16	18	85	204	112	438

Notes:

1. Actual figures for the numbers of female officers leaving on pregnancy are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate effort. The figures provided are therefore estimates based on the percentage of non-commissioned females leaving on pregnancy.
2. Prior to August 1990, service women who became pregnant were compulsorily discharged. In August 1990, maternity leave was introduced and pregnant service women could choose whether to leave or take maternity leave. The figures for 1990-91 cover both those who were compulsorily discharged prior to August 1990 and those who opted to leave after that date.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Ministry has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission about conditions covering women employed in the forces who became pregnant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no formal discussions about conditions for service women who became pregnant between my Department and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The commission was, however, made aware in 1990 of the introduction of maternity leave for servicewomen.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent in compensation to women who had to leave the armed forces because they became pregnant; how many women have received compensation; what is the *(a)* maximum, *(b)* minimum and *(c)* average amount paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A total of £7,822,943 has so far been paid in compensation to women who were compulsorily discharged from the armed forces on grounds of pregnancy between August 1978 and August 1990 when maternity leave was introduced. Compensation has been paid to 1,679 claimants. The average amount paid is £4,659. The maximum awarded by a tribunal is £172,921—but this will be the subject of an appeal by the MOD to the employment appeals tribunal. The minimum payment has been for £500.

Creches

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the military bases where creches are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Creche and child-minding facilities are available to service personnel and dependent parents on bases in the United Kingdom and overseas as a result of local initiatives. Details of these facilities are not, however, held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Child care legislation places no statutory obligation on the MOD to provide creche or child-minding facilities for service personnel or their dependants, and, as with the civilian population at large, service personnel are responsible for making their own arrangements for the care of their children and for meeting the costs involved.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total amount paid out to date in compensation under provisions of the citizens charter *(a)* in total and *(b)* by relevant Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: An estimated £9,383,000 in total has been paid out in compensation under provisions of the citizens charter. This is broken down as follows:

Department	Compensation paid (nearest £000)	From	To
British Rail	4,427	April 1992	30 November 1993
London Underground	184	August 1992	7 January 1994
Northern Ireland Railways	2	November 1992	19 January 1994
HM Customs and Excise	14	January 1992	31 December 1993
Benefits Agency	4,071	April 1992	March 1993
Contributions Agency[1]	76	April 1991	March 1993
Employment Service	89	April 1992	March 1993
Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland[1]	520	April 1991	20 January 1994

[1] These figures represent payments made from April 1991, four months before the Contributions Agency and Northern Ireland Social Security Agency charters were introduced.

In addition, in the financial year 1992-93 the Inland Revenue paid £389,000 in compensation for "serious error" as defined in the code of practice "Mistakes by the Inland Revenue"; and between January 1992 and 31 December 1993 HM Customs and Excise paid £532,000 in repayment supplements.

The privatised utilities also compensate customers for failure to meet service standards. Details of payments are not held centrally.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest estimate of the number of inquiries dealt with to date under the citizens charter *(a)* in total and *(b)* by relevant Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since April 1992, over 5,000 letters have been received in the citizens charter unit. Individual Departments and agencies will, of course, receive their own citizens charter correspondence, but my Department does not hold records on this.

Iraq (Visits)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list each of the visits made by Ministers or officials of his Department to Iraq since 1982, giving details of dates, names of Ministers or officials and the purpose of visit in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to the information available, there is no record of either Ministers or officials of the Office of Public Service and Science having visited Iraq since centralised departmental records were begun in 1986.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 235**

SESSION 1993–94

11th January—21st January, 1994

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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